

**Speech as Written for Delivery By
VADM Thomas J. Barrett, USCG (ret.)
Administrator
Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration
U.S. Department Of Transportation
Minnesota State HMEP Grant Announcement
@ 12:30 a.m.
Thursday, November 2, 2006**

Thank you Fire Chief Polzin for that very kind introduction and for hosting our grant announcement today.

I would also like to thank

Congressman James Oberstar,

David Berrisford, Assistant Director for the Field Services Branch, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Minnesota Department of Public Safety,

Mayor David Apitz, City of Isanti, and

the other state, county and local officials, and first responders in the audience today for participating in our event.

I am here today because Congressman Oberstar told me about the outstanding first responder team you have here in Minnesota. He has high praise for the fire fighters and other first responders of Isanti County.

You and your fellow fire fighters are the unsung heroes who ensure the safety of local Minnesota citizens in responding to incidents involving hazardous materials.

So, on behalf of the Bush Administration, and Transportation Secretary Mary Peters, I'd like to tell you that we greatly appreciate the dedication of the first responder community for risking your lives every day.

I am also here today to announce a DOT Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant to the State of Minnesota in the amount of \$262,068 dollars. This grant will fund hazardous materials emergency preparedness planning and training activities for first responders at the state, county and local level.

I've learned from David Berrisford in the Minnesota State Grantee Office that over the past five years, Isanti County and the Isanti Fire Department received over \$11,000 in PHMSA first-responder grant funding. The grants helped local officials develop a hazardous materials annex to the Isanti County Emergency Operations Plan, support a full-scale exercise of the plan, and provide hazardous materials awareness, decontamination and operations training to over 60 first responders. Fire Chief Polzin proudly noted to me earlier that all 30 Isanti volunteer fire fighters are now qualified to the hazardous materials operator level.

This is exactly what the HMEP Grants Program was established to do..., to improve the safety and security of our communities by providing funding for hazmat training and preparedness.

Thank you, Congressman Oberstar, for your strong leadership in Congress to ensure that this Program is fully funded and available to our first responders.

The safe and secure transportation of hazardous materials is a big job, and the Federal government can't do it alone. We rely heavily on the trained and fearless group of professional fire fighters, police, and other first responders found in local volunteer fire departments, like the one here in Isanti.

Our hope is that the funds we provide to Minnesota continues to flow down to the county and local community emergency preparedness units that need the hazmat training and planning the most.

Together with the help of your representatives in Congress, and the brave men and women on the front lines of emergency response, we can advance the safety and security of our transportation systems.

Now I would like to offer the floor to Congressman Oberstar.

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