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New Federal Grant to Help Train California First Responders to Deal with Hazardous Materials Incidents

Police and firefighters in California will be better prepared to deal with hazardous materials incidents thanks to a new federal grant of over \$964,000, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administrator Thomas Barrett announced today.

Barrett made the announcement during a visit to a municipal fire station today in Tracy, California, where he witnessed a demonstration of firefighter training for a hazardous materials event.

“These funds will help first responders before disaster strikes so they can better protect their communities,” said Barrett.

The grant to California was awarded under the Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant Program administered by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).

Over the last three years, PHMSA grants to San Joaquin County have allowed local and county emergency responders to take over 480 hazardous materials training and qualification courses. As a result, Barrett added, local first responders are now also operators, hazardous materials trainers, incident commanders, decontamination specialists and safety officers. This proved vital when, in 2005 alone, Tracy Fire Department personnel successfully responded to 223 hazardous materials calls.

Nationwide, the grant program helps the nation’s approximately 4,000 local emergency planning committees prepare and carry out hazardous materials emergency response plans and conduct commodity flow studies that identify transportation hazards. Since 1993, approximately 1.9 million responders and others have received training assistance nationwide as a result of the grant program.

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