

Grant gives Gates firefighters room to breathe

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Federal money will buy state-of-the-art face masks tailored to fit communication features.

GATES – There are, unfortunately, many opportunities – however remote – for catastrophe in Gates. The airport is here and three of the five major interstate routes – 390, 490 and 531 – intersect inside the town's 53 miles of expressway. Heavy truck traffic routinely travels Chili Avenue, Buffalo Road, Lyell Avenue and several other urban arterials.

More?

A major east/west rail route intersects the southern portion of Gates, and the Buckeye Oil Pipeline, one of the nation's largest independent carriers, passes underneath the town.

But the world doesn't need to be coming to an end for Gates firefighters to need the extra protection their latest grant affords them. It could be a call as routine as a natural gas odor or someone's carbon monoxide detector squealing away.

"The health and safety of our firefighters is paramount for us to deliver effective fire suppression and emergency services to the people of our community," Gates Fire Chief James Harrington said.

The Gates Fire District, the administrative and financial arm of the Gates-Chili Fire Department, has received a \$51,837 grant from the U.S Department of Homeland Security. The money will give the district a three-prong approach to improving firefighter safety and effectiveness.

The district will outfit its firefighters with state-of-the-art protective face pieces, specially fit to the individual 87 volunteers and 20 career firefighters in the department. The new masks will fit the facial contours of individual firefighters and have better voice transmission capabilities for improved communication between firefighters, Harrington said. Too, the mask can be used with various types of filter canisters for biological or chemical agents.

"Without proper fit, airborne contaminants can enter a firefighter's face piece," Harrington said. "The existing face pieces don't have some of the built-in features the new models

photos



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Gates Fire Department Firefighter Tom Zampatori is wearing the new model face mask (the AV3000) and holding out the old model (the AV2000). The Gates Fire District has received a \$51,837 Homeland Security grant which it is using to buy these state-of-the-art protective face pieces for firefighters, which are individually fit to firefighters and guarantee nothing contaminates their breathing air.



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An old SCBA air tank bottle (on right) versus the new, lighter air tank, which are being purchased with part of a \$51,837 Homeland Security grant.

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The grant money will also buy a device used to make sure the masks fit each firefighter properly and to purchase new air cylinders. The new air packs are much lighter, Harrington said, which will reduce firefighter fatigue.

The testing unit is only the third such device in use in Monroe County and will be made available to other county fire departments, said Bill Gillette, chairman of the Fire District Board of Commissioners.

"Federal assistance like this provides direct benefits for the safety of our individual firefighters and eliminates the need for us to add the purchase ... into our annual operating budget," Gillette said.

The fire district should get the new face pieces and testing device in May. Harrington said firefighters will be trained on the correct use of the new masks. Firefighters will be tested annually for a correct fit, he said, in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations.