



NEWS RELEASE

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SPECIALLY EQUIPPED VEHICLE TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AND RESPONSE CAPABILITIES DURING MAJOR EMERGENCIES IN OHIO

COLUMBUS – Director Henry Guzmán, Ohio Department of Public Safety, today presented Franklin County Sheriff Jim Karnes with a new vehicle designed and equipped to improve interoperable communications and response capabilities during major emergencies. This vehicle, paid for with federal homeland security funding, will enable first responders throughout a seven county region in central Ohio, to better communicate and respond to large-scale emergencies such as civil riots, terrorist attacks or weather disasters. Counties within this region include Delaware, Franklin, Licking, Madison, Marion, Morrow and Union.

“If our first responders can not communicate with each other, they can not adequately respond to and recover from any major emergency,” said Guzmán. “The partnership between the Ohio Department of Public Safety and the Buckeye State Sheriffs’ Association has made it possible to develop this interoperable communications vehicle which will greatly benefit not only first responders but Ohio’s citizens.”

"The widespread impact of a natural disaster or a terrorist attack upon a community underscores the need for coordinated response efforts," said Sheriff Jim Karnes. "Today, central Ohio's law enforcement officers and fire fighters have gained another resource to help us protect our citizens and our communities."

Since 2005, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, a division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, working with the Buckeye State Sheriffs’ Association, has stationed eleven interoperable communications vehicles within 50 miles of the greatest percentage of Ohio’s population. The counties where these vehicles are staged include Ashland, Athens, Columbiana, Geauga, Guernsey, Hancock, Lucas, Mercer, Montgomery and Ross.

“Franklin County is proud to be the leader in this multi-jurisdictional approach to emergency communication and response services,” said Franklin County Commission Board President Mary Jo Kilroy. “Franklin County will be primarily responsible for housing and maintaining the interoperability vehicle while facilitating ‘peer to peer’ communications during local emergencies. Intraregional cooperation allows for a more progressive method to local emergency management by crossing jurisdictions in an effort to ensure the safety of residents with disregard to county lines.”

The vehicles have communication gear compatible with all radio frequencies, cellular and land phones, weather monitoring equipment and Internet access. Officials will be able to tape and store video feeds from TV cameras on the roof. The vehicles have space for a crime lab and have the ability to send fingerprint and other evidence via the Internet to national crime computers and police agencies. They also have diesel generators for emergency power.

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