

## County purchases equipment with homeland security grant

(Taken from Daily Press & Argus article on April 8, 2004. Permission granted to reprint.)

Using a federal grant, Livingston County has ordered nearly \$62,000 worth of specialized equipment meant to protect residents against terrorist attacks.

The purchases of an inflatable shelter, an enclosed trailer with an air compressor to fill up firefighters' and dive teams' breathing tanks, a gas-mask testing apparatus, a computer and geographic information system (GIS) software were approved by the county Board of Commissioners.

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*"The equipment will help protect against all the weapons of mass destruction events that could happen."*

*Richard Winsett  
Emergency Management Director*

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Winsett said the 400-square foot shelter would most likely be used as a place for personnel responding to hazardous material events to put on their protective gear. It also can be used to decontaminate people in chemical and biological attacks.

"It has multiple functions," Winsett said. "We already have one tent, and this is a bigger one."

The trailer with the air compressor can be used at fires or by dive teams, he said. For example, firefighters at the fire at Fortech Products in Green Oak Township in early March had to use similar equipment loaned from South Lyon, Winsett said.

The county is trading in an air-compression trailer it already owns that cannot fill tanks for firefighters.

The equipment that can test whether gas masks fit their owners will save the county money because contracting out that work can cost more than \$20,000 a year. The equipment itself runs about \$12,000.

The computer and GIS software will be set up in the dispatch/emergency center so that it could be used in an emergency, Winsett said. The software can track emergency resources and map emergency responses, he said.

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*All the equipment will be available for use by any public safety department in the county.*

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Before voting on the purchase, commission Chairman Jack LaBelle praised local agencies for their cooperation. Chief Larry Lane of the Brighton Area Fire Department, Director Jeff Boyd of the county ambulance system and Chief James Reed of Howell attended the meeting.

"We're blessed in this county . . . we are very fortunate that people work together." LaBelle said.

Winsett was asked about spending so much money protecting against a terrorist attack that seems unlikely in Livingston County. He said it's important for all areas of the state to be prepared.

"You never know what's going to happen or where there's going to be a strike," he said. "Our equipment and people that are trained could be used to go to Grand Rapids, Lansing or Detroit if something happened there."

Commissioner David Reader underscored the need for emergency equipment by mentioning the foiled plot in London in which the suspects were allegedly planning to detonate a "dirty bomb" laced with deadly chemicals.

"Every first responder without a mask would have been dead," he said.

The county has about \$30,000 left from its 2003 Homeland Security grant. The state announced grant levels for 2004, and Livingston County is due to receive more than \$826,000. Winsett said last year the county got about \$300,000.

"This is quite an increase," he said.

Winsett said he will attend a meeting in Northville to learn exactly how the money can be spent. He said he tentatively wants to use some of the funds to buy gas masks for all police officers in the county, and to buy a mobile command unit. The sheriff's current unit is on loan from General Motors, he said.