

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TOWNSHIP PURCHASES NEW THERMAL IMAGER WITH GRANT FUNDS

Grand Haven Township, Michigan, December 22, 2005.

In 1995, Grand Haven Township purchased the first Thermal Imaging camera in the West Michigan. This technology allowed firefighters to enhance their abilities to search for fire victims and locate fires within a structure by allowing firefighters to "see" through the smoke. "At a time when most fire departments were limited to searching structures on their hands and knees and hoping to be lucky enough to find a victim before it was too late, GHT firefighters had cutting edge technology," Fire\Rescue Chief Rich Szczepanek explained.

Eventually all seven departments in the Tri-Cities area took Grand Haven Township's lead and purchased thermal imaging technology. "When most departments had not heard of thermal imagers, the Tri-Cities had seven cameras in operation. At the time there were less than 100 cameras in operation throughout the entire United States," Szczepanek continued.

However, even the most cutting edge technology becomes obsolete and needs to be replaced. "While the original camera served the Township fire department well, repairs and maintenance became harder to acquire until we could no longer obtain replacements parts or service from the

original manufacturer,” Szczepanek stated.

Utilizing the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program authorized by Congress for direct assistance to local fire departments, GHT applied for and received funding to replace their aging Thermal Imaging camera. The cost of the thermal imaging camera was about \$10,000.

In addition, the grant allowed Grand Haven Township to purchase two (2) gas detectors capable of detecting explosive gas, low oxygen levels, carbon monoxide and sulphur dioxide. The cost of the gas detectors was about \$1,700.

“These detectors will be utilized in industrial as well as residential settings and will allow us to make some preliminary atmospheric measurements of hazardous materials incident prior to the arrival of the Haz Mat Team,” Szczepanek noted. “In addition, the gas detectors will help rescue workers determine if a residential structure has dangerous levels of carbon monoxide, a problem that is especially prevalent during the winter months,” Szczepanek concluded.

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