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NEWS RELEASE

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Martin County Uses CARES Grant Funds to Provide Technology to Fire Depts. & EMS Squads to Improve Communication with Hospitals

WILLIAMSTON, NC – Martin County has provided Mobile Data Terminals to each fire department and EMS (emergency medical services) squad in Martin County. The equipment will be used to improve communication and share critical information during responses. $79,842.84 in Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) money was used to provide this funding.

The federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was signed into law on March 27, 2020. This law directed funds via the Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) to be used for expenses related to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The North Carolina Legislature's Session Law (SL) 2020-04 and Session Law (SL) 2020-80 appropriated some of the federal CARES funding received by the State of North Carolina to counties and towns.

Martin County developed a Coronavirus Relief Fund Plan, which includes the purchase of computer tablets, which will be used as Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) by fire and EMS personnel. The use of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) has been in use for law enforcement in Martin County for several years and has become a standard for Police, Sheriff, and other Law Enforcement Officers. Fire and EMS personnel will use the computer tablets to assist with telemedicine efforts between hospital staff and themselves.

This hardware and associated software ensure real-time data is available to responders while in route to and on scene of emergency calls for service. The MDT has a direct connection to the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system inside the 911 Center. This allows the responders to not only view incoming information from the caller as it is occurring; it also allows first responders to view patient data, call history, cautionary information, and electronic maps of the area.

The program also allows responders to share notes, document times, and send secure messages to other responders or the 911 Tele-communicator. By expanding the use of this technology to

all facets of emergency services, Martin County is ensuring there is a seamless line of information-sharing from the 911 caller to the first responders in the field.

"As emergency response becomes more technology and data driven, these types of investments in technology will help to ensure that we are providing the best service possible to our citizens," said Jason Steward, Martin County 911 Communications Manager.

Recently, approximately fifty (50) responders from all Fire and EMS Departments in Martin County gathered to train on the tablets and software program. Those trained will take the information they learned back to their departments and train all staff on the use of the technology.

"The ability for our responders to have 'just in time' information from 911, access to the County GIS data, and documentation capabilities in one package is an asset previously not affordable for us. We can now transmit data to hospital staff. Decisions can be made to prep prior to arrival. This speeds up treatment. They can also advise EMS on pre-hospital interventions. Our next push will be for real-time video conferencing connectivity with the hospital staff, providing a level of care rivaling larger communities", said Jody Griffin, Martin County Code Enforcement and Safety Director.

"Every second matters in an emergency, and an investment of this magnitude will have an impact far beyond the immediate needs created by the pandemic," said John Jacobson, interim CEO of Martin General Hospital. "Fire and EMS personnel will have the information they need at their fingertips and be able to share critical details with hospital staff before the patient even arrives at our facility. This type of technology helps improve efficiency and, in turn, could improve patient outcomes."

 "I'd like to thank our Information Technology (I.T.) Department, Emergency Management staff, and especially our emergency responders for embracing this technology," added Jason Steward.

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