



Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services *NEWS RELEASE*

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Howard County Receives \$24,000 Grant to Enhance Mass Casualty and Infectious Disease Response

Columbia, MD- The Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS) has been awarded a \$24,000 grant to enhance response during mass casualty events and infectious disease emergencies. The grant, from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's (DHMH) Office of Preparedness and Response, will be used to equip firefighters and paramedics with specialized gear and tools to extend the level of support during large-scale events.

"Making sure that our first responders have the proper protective gear during these large scale and often deadly incidents is critical," said County Executive Allan H. Kittleman. "We are grateful for the state funding as we work towards the same goal that the Office of Preparedness and Response has, which is to prepare for and respond to significant public health events such as pandemics, natural disasters and acts of terrorism."

The funds will allow HCDFRS to purchase 50 "go bags" with biological-grade personal protective equipment so that crews can safely suit up during responses to incidents that involve infectious diseases like Ebola, Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) and tuberculosis. Additionally, the grant will allow the department to extend the life-cycle of our mobile oxygen generator. The mobile oxygen generator can be used during large scale incidents where emergency personnel require oxygen for long durations of time, or in the event that power is lost to an existing facility or an off-site portable hospital is set up and needs an alternate source for oxygen supply.

"Responding to incidents that require this type of gear and equipment comes with a unique set of challenges," said Fire Chief John Butler. "By having the proper protective equipment, it puts our personnel at ease and allows them to appropriately respond without further endangering themselves."

The grant also allows the department to purchase a trailer that can be used to safely transport our medical ambulance bus equipment, which is frequently requested throughout the region. The medical ambulance bus has most recently been used during the civil unrest in Baltimore and the Anne Arundel County Bay Bridge Walk/Run.