



## News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 9, 2010

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### **Tri-State Ambulance receives federal grant for radio upgrade**

Tri-State Ambulance will be able to fill a much needed service thanks to a federal Assistance to Firefighter grant. Recently, the offices of Rep. Ron Kind and Sen. Russ Feingold notified Tri-State Ambulance that they will receive about \$105,000 in grant money to upgrade the emergency services provider's radio equipment. The upgrade is necessary sooner rather than later because the state of Minnesota is moving to a new radio system, and Tri-State's current system is not compatible with it.

"During an emergency situation, it is important for all emergency services personnel, which include firefighters, police officers and paramedics, to be able to communicate. Unfortunately, that's not always the case because different agencies might use incompatible equipment, or our repeaters are blocked by the terrain of our region," explains Tom Tornstrom, director of Operations, Tri-State Ambulance.

He went on to say, "The ultimate goal of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is to allow every first responder agency in the country to be able to interact and communicate. Minnesota is on the forefront of this movement, and we anticipate that other states, including Wisconsin, will be following suit soon."

The grant money will be used to upgrade the radios carried by Tri-State paramedics as

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well as those in the ambulances. In addition, Tri-State will add two more radio repeaters, allowing for coverage in more of Tri-State's 2,200-square-mile service area.

"This is great news for people in the Tri-State Ambulance service area. The new radio equipment will ensure that we have communication throughout the region. This will allow us to have the right information for a call and communicate better with other first responder agencies, ultimately allowing us to respond quicker and provide better patient care," Tornstrom shares.

The Assistance to Firefighter grant is a FEMA grant that is mainly reserved for fire departments. However, a small percentage of the grant money is set aside for emergency medical services agencies. "These grant funds are very much appreciated," Tornstrom says. "It is very expensive to upgrade radio equipment, and as a non-profit organization, Tri-State Ambulance is pleased to receive this assistance."

Tri-State Ambulance expects the radio upgrade to be complete by the end of 2010.

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