

REMINDER

Newspapers ♦ Yellow Pages

Publication: VERNON; Date: 2006 Feb 07; Section: Front Page; Page Number: 1

Vernon Fire Department purchases All Terrain Vehicles with federal Homeland Security grant

By JESSICA CIPARELLI Staff Writer

VERNON — The Vernon Fire Department has added two new rescue vehicles to their emergency fleet, which will enable more timely rescues in the town's wooded areas that normally require rescuers to hike in on foot and hand carry out injured victims. The two Polaris Ranger 6x6 All Terrain Vehicles were purchased with a \$200,000 Homeland Security grant, written by Michael Purcaro, Director of Vernon's Office of Emergency Management. The grant was submitted in July, 2005, and awarded in September, 2005. A portion of the \$200,000 grant was allotted for the purchase of the ATVs; the rest of the money will be used to purchase a 13-



The VFD purchased two Polaris Ranger 6x6 All Terrain Vehicles, which will help in rescues that involve many of the town's – or mutual aid towns – wooded areas. Above, Captains Dan Greenwood, left, and Brian Johnston show the new vehicles during a training session held on Jan. 29.

Photo by Jessica Ciparelli

foot Zodiac inflatable rescue boat for ice and water rescues, and will be primarily used by the Tolland County Dive Rescue team. The ATVs will serve a dual purpose – to help assist during minor brush fires and to assist — in emergency medical services. “This is an exciting addition to our fire arsenal,” Purcaro said. The ATVs will be located at the firehouse on Birch Street and the Nye Street firehouse, said Purcaro. “The reason why is to strategically locate them along the trails,” said Purcaro. “Accidents happen, and we’re routinely called, especially when the weather warms up.” Purcaro said hiking to a heavily wooded site is often laborious and require the help of the town’s Public Works Department (the use of their equipment). Rescuers have had to use rescue baskets to carry people out of the woods. When fire/rescue personnel retrieved the injured person and carried them out of the wooded area, they were often fatigued from the mission. “There was obviously a big need for it,” Purcaro said of the ATVs, noting that they will not only be used by Vernon for rapid response to accidents, but can also be used by mutual aid towns, such as Manchester. The fire department is already planning enhancements to the two ATVs – including equipment to transport patients – and for fire fighting, they plan to modify the ATVs with a specially equipped trailer that would hold water, a motorized pump and other fire suppression gear. Fire department personnel was trained in the operation and maintenance of the vehicles during a training session held at the Birch Street Station 241 and on the neighboring section of the town’s “Rails to Trails.” The training session, led by Assistant Fire Chief William Call, was open to all fire department staff who will be utilizing the equipment, Purcaro said. “We’re ready to put them in operation,” he said. He noted that while going through the training session, two residents who were walking the trail commented on the equipment. “We’re already getting a positive response,” he said. In order to further enhance the new ATVs, Purcaro said the fire department is open to accepting public and private donations to help defray the cost. If you are interested in making a donation, contact the Vernon Office of Emergency Management at 871-7468.

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