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Fire Department gets new equipment

By Carole LaMond
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The Sudbury Fire Department is the first in the country to receive a federal grant to purchase a state-of-the-art decontamination system, a piece of equipment that adds to its inventory of emergency planning tools.

The micro-particle room and vehicle decontamination system, manufactured by Zimek, produces an ionized mist that finds its way into deep crevices that would normally be cleaned by hand. The unit, which is on wheels, may be used to decontaminate an ambulance, fire vehicle or a room.

“It’s the difference between doing the dishes at home and putting the dishes in an autoclave,” said Chief Kenneth MacLean. “The system is designed to kill off various pathogens including MRSA, TB, Hepatitis C, bird flu as well as toxic mold and mildew.”

MacLean applied for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), a program of FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), in 2008, and was awarded the \$49,780 grant last month.

“All grants are significant because they give us an opportunity to acquire equipment we wouldn’t be able to acquire through the normal budgeting process,” said MacLean. “This grant is pretty exciting, and that’s the whole point of the AFG program. It allows you to look a little outside the box for training and equipment that will make us a better fire department.”

A fire department in Pennsylvania and a number of private ambulance companies have a Zimek system, but Sudbury is the first to receive an AFG grant for its purchase.



COURTESY PHOTO

The Zimek unit attached to a new ambulance during a demonstration last week. Pictured from left to right are Fire Chief Ken MacLean, Firefighter/EMT Dana Foster, Lieutenant/EMT David Ziehler, and Firefighter/EMT Nick Howarth. David Ziehler is also the department’s Emergency Medical Services coordinator.

“It’s important to note this unit isn’t purchased in isolation,” said MacLean. “It builds on a program we’ve been working on for a number of years.”

The unit is part of an emergency preparedness equipment inventory that includes turnout gear and a heavy duty washer to get the decontaminants out of the gear, a washer and dryer for cleaning uniform pants and shirts so that firefighters don’t have to go home to clean them, and an oxygen analyzer

to make sure the oxygen generated is of good quality and at the correct percentage.

The Zimek unit would be crucial in a pandemic where the ambulance would be used to transport a great number of patients who were gravely ill. The vehicle could be decontaminated quickly and thoroughly between runs.

The department received a demo of the unit from the manufacturer last week and expects delivery of a unit in about a month.