Written by Debbie Gregory
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Macon County has recently received a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in the amount of $3,058,970, in a disaster application following the 2008 tornado and 2010 flood. Several projects are underway and I talked with 911 Director Steve Jones early Monday morning about what's in store for Lafayette emergency agencies in light of the two disaster situations we've faced in the last few years.

"Macon County has recently received a disaster recovery grant and Fay Leonard of Vantage Consulting is the grant writer for this project," said 911 Director Steve Jones. "The 2008 tornado and the 2010 flood made us eligible for a grant and we basically laid out a lot of things the Macon County emergency agencies could use and it was accepted."

According to Director Jones, West Macon County Rescue Squad is getting a rescue truck, which has already been bid out and ordered. "It was approximately $96,000," said Jones. "And we've already bid out a 3,000 gallon tanker truck for the Lafayette Fire Department to increase their capacity to have water available when they have a fire in the rural parts of Macon County."

In another part of the grant Jones said they had already bid out and would be receiving water rescue equipment and training. "We are going to be training guys in water rescue and Red Boiling Springs Fire & Rescue and Willette Fire Department have agreed to man the team on the east side," continued the Director. "Macon County Rescue, West Macon Rescue, and the

Lafayette Fire Department have agreed to man the team on the west side of the county and in the middle. So, we will have two water rescue teams in the county."

The county will receive utility vehicles or ATV's, and each rescue squad along with the 911-EMA will be getting one. "During the tornado, a lot of times the only way you could get into help people was an ATV or utility vehicle," explained Jones. "The ambulance service will also be getting one with a special bed that can transport a patient they can't get an ambulance to." Jones says they will be putting up 14 emergency warning sirens across the county and they will install them in populated areas. "An example is one that is being installed in the Spring Creek Road area," the Director said. " Besides Spring Creek, it will cover Maple Terrace, Maple Grove, Wind Curve, and the trailer park."

"We will be putting up three communication towers, one in the east, west and middle of the county and they are doing environmental studies on that right now," he said. "This is a big part of the grant and over 1.5 million dollars will be spent to improve emergency services communications, which is law enforcement, EMS, fire and rescue."

Jones said, "Currently all of our communication antennas are scattered around on the water tanks and with the FCC's mandate for us to narrow band our radio frequencies. The departments have lost coverage and are having a lot of interference with the radio systems. So, the towers will hopefully help this problem, and get our radio systems redesigned, which have been a nightmare lately."

The director went on to say that the county doesn't have a morgue and recently the EMS had to transport a body to Sumner County to hold. "We will be building a staging area, which is actually a warehouse type building that will include a morgue area, where bodies can be transported until families can be notified or a destination can be determined."

"We're also working to purchase a new computer aided dispatch, software package (CAD) for each of the dispatching agencies to be working from. Right now, the EMS has one type, Sheriff has one type, and the police have one type. We want one that is the same for all of them."

"We have been working on this grant since 2011 and it will serve Macon County well. You never know when the next disaster might develop. We want to be able to protect the folks in our

county to the best of our ability," said Director Jones.

Added County Mayor Linville, "I am certainly pleased that this disaster grant was approved and I want to thank grant writer, Fay Leonard, and 911 Director Steve Jones for all the hard work they did to secure this grant."