

GRADY COUNTY RECIEVES \$700,000 IN NEW COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT

Grady County as of August 4, 2011 has a new communications center in "SERVICE" to better serve the citizens of Grady County. Sheriff Kell is proud to announce that the Grady County Sheriff's Department, Emergency Management and Grady County Fire recently received over \$550,000.00 in Homeland Security monies to purchase new 800MHz radio equipment and a Dispatch Communications Center. \$150,000 was awarded from Sprint Nextel Communications to replace outdated 800 radios for brand new ones. This new technology will enable communication between Grady County and the numerous local, state and federal public safety agencies, especially during times of emergency. This new communications system will be implemented at no additional costs to the citizens of Grady County. Oklahoma Department of Homeland Security Director Kim Carter said, "It's imperative to the safety of Oklahomans that communications statewide reach an optimal level of interoperability and we're extremely proud that Grady County has joined us in our effort to do so."

The 800MHz system for Oklahoma was developed after an Oklahoma City Police Officer and Highway Patrolman collided on I-40 in the late 1990's killing both officers. The investigation of that collision revealed that the deaths could be attributed to the fact that the officers from different entities could not communicate directly with each other. Other critical incidents in the 1990's to include the Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma City attributed to the need for better communications. At that time police, fire, medical and other public safety agencies could not communicate with each other making emergency Public Safety response efforts very difficult. After action critiques of these and other serious incidents dictated a high priority need for all Public Safety and Emergency Management agencies to better communicate with each other.

The Oklahoma Department of Public Safety maintains the state wide 800MHz system allowing communication with all agencies at no cost to the user. This will alleviate the need for Grady County to erect and maintain the infrastructure (towers, antennas, etc.) commonly associated with communications systems.

Sheriff Kell is committed to making every effort to constantly upgrade equipment to better serve the citizens of Grady County and to better protect Public Safety employees. For the last several months many changes has occurred within Grady County. The Sheriff's Department purchased 26 800MHz radios from Oklahoma Turnpike Authority with grant monies at \$490 each and 28 other radios from Oklahoma government surplus for \$10 each. Sprint Nextel communications replaced 28 radios and homeland security replaced 20 with 48 brand new radios that cost around \$3500 each. Sheriff's Department has distributed radios to District Attorney's District 6 task force, Grady County Game Wardens, County OBN agent, Grady County Fire and BIA County Agent. Three County Police Departments were given three radios but later returned. Sheriff Kell recognizes the need to stay abreast of new technologies and to implement those technologies as they become available.

The 800MHz radios purchased with the grant monies will enable the Grady County Sheriff's Department and Grady County Emergency Management to communicate with all public safety agencies working within Grady County. For example, prior to the 800MHz system we could only communicate via the VHF

bands with 7 police agencies, 17 fire districts and 1 ambulance service. With the VHF and 800MHz systems we can communicate with 24 police agencies including (Chickasha Police and Oklahoma Highway Patrol) 30 fire districts (including Chickasha Fire) 9 ambulance services (including Chickasha EMT, Mediflight and Lifeflight) and the State Emergency Management. Sheriff Kell has requested and was granted an open 800 frequency slot if in the future other county police departments go to the 800 system.

Grady County is planning a study to further improve communications within Grady County. The Grady County Sheriff's Department will have close to 100 percent radio coverage of the county compared to 85 percent without the 800MHz system. Grady County Sheriff's Deputies, fire chiefs, emergency management and dispatch can communicate with our county police agencies, county fire and county ambulance on VHF. Communications with other Public Safety agencies will be on 800MHz making it safer and more reliable for all citizens in Grady County. New technology is a wonderful thing when it works. The VHF system will still be available in case the 800MHz system becomes inoperable. It is imperative to have a reliable back up system should it ever be needed.

Sheriff Kell said, "God keeps blessing us, this is just one more tool to add to our tool box to protect our citizens and Public Safety employees. It is important that the Grady County Sheriff's Department, Emergency Management and Fire Departments continue to work in a cooperative effort with the citizens and other Public Safety agencies within Grady County and outside of Grady County. We are much more effective in our efforts to serve and protect the citizens when we have a good working relationship and the cooperation of citizens and other Public Safety agencies."

On behalf of the citizens of Grady County, Sheriff Kell and Grady County Emergency Manager Dale Thompson would like to express a heartfelt thank you to the Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security, The Oklahoma Department of Public Safety, all the cooperating Public Safety agencies, Sprint Nextel Communications, and Total Radio. The safety of our citizens and our Public Safety employees will be greatly increased as a result of this grant opportunity.

Sheriff Art Kell