



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FAYETTE COUNTY HAZMAT TEAM 'READY FOR ANYTHING'

Uniontown, PA – Despite years of experience responding to their fair share of disasters, Fayette County HazMat Team 900 is always learning.

The state-certified team was founded in the early 1990s and operates as a specialty program through the Fayette County Emergency Management Agency (EMA). HazMat is short for “hazardous materials.”

Fayette County EMA Operations and Training Officer Jim Bittner said the team’s mission is to “respond to any hazardous materials releases or incidents within the boundaries of Fayette and Green counties.”

“Our job is to mitigate and protect the public when potentially dangerous incidents happen,” Bittner said. “We’re basically ready for anything.”

In order to respond to a vast array of emergencies, the 30-member, all-volunteer squad must take monthly training courses to maintain their knowledge and expand their skills.

The team recently had the rare opportunity to host a Propane IQ class, in partnership with Noble Resources and the New Salem Volunteer Fire Department. Gnagey Propane donated propane and several tanks that were used as props for the training, which took place at the Menallen Township Municipal Building.

The class, taught by three Noble Resources instructors who traveled from Jacksonville, Fla., was funded by a federal Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant.

Bittner said EMA pursues annual grant funding to be able to offer large, specialty classes on different subjects each year.

“This one was a very valuable educational experience for us, because we’ve had incidents involving propane in the past where we’ve responded with very little guidance on what to do and how to handle it,” he said. “Propane IQ taught us new techniques on how to mitigate issues with a tank that’s leaking. We also learned the chemical and physical properties of propane.”

In addition to Team 900, members from across Fayette County, Smithfield and North Union volunteer firefighters participated in the two-day course.

“It was great to have such a good turnout of volunteers who spent 16 hours of their weekend learning about different hazards and how to beat them,” Bittner said. “We’ve got a dedicated group of people who really care about protecting the public.”

To learn more about Fayette County HazMat Team 900 or the Fayette County Emergency Management Agency, visit www.fcema.org or email jbittner@fcema.org.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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