



Photo by Terry Pope

Leland Volunteer Rescue Squad chief John Grimes receives a check for \$13,432 from state insurance commissioner and fire marshal Jim Long. Brunswick County matched the funds to purchase extrication lifesaving tools.

## Manpower a problem

# Leland squad accepts grant, awaits merger

By Terry Pope  
County Editor

Volunteers plan to merge the Leland rescue squad and fire department in July, and a state grant delivered to the squad last week will be used to purchase extrication tools shared by the two.

State insurance commissioner and fire marshal Jim Long presented a check for \$13,432 to Leland rescue chief John Grimes on Thursday. Grimes said the money will be matched with capital reserve funds set aside for rescue squads in the county's 1997-98 budget.

The Volunteer Rescue/EMS Grant Fund was created by the N. C. General Assembly in 1988 to help rescue squads and EMS organizations raise money for emergency response equipment and supplies.

"It gives them a chance to spend more time in training and less time in fund-raising," said Long. "These

funds are helping the departments that really need the money the most."

Since the program began, grants totaling \$399,609 have been awarded to fire and rescue departments in Brunswick County. Grimes said he saw the notice and application last fall and figured he would give it a try, too.

The money will be used to purchase extrication tools to help save crash victims. The 10,500-pound system is being bought from TNT Rescue Systems of Ashippun, WI, and will replace a 5,000-pound system that has become outdated.

Across the state, approximately \$1.2 million is made available to fire and rescue squads each year, said Long. The funds are matching grants -- the state matches dollar-for-dollar, up to an approved amount, monies raised locally to purchase necessary equipment. During commissioner Long's tenure

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Jim Long  
State fire marshal

in office, his department has distributed a total of \$23.9 million in grant money.

Grant applications are analyzed and rated on a computer system to determine which ones demonstrate the most need. The new extrication tools will operate quicker and require just a few hours of training for volunteers already familiar with the system.

"This will replace at least a ten-year-old system," said chief Grimes. "It had been reconditioned when we bought it, and we had already worn it out again."

Grimes said the Leland fire and rescue departments are merging this year to share volunteers and to cut down on overhead expenses.

"It allows us to combine resources and personnel," said Grimes. "Within the next three years, we hope to be able to build a new building. That will allow us to combine the resources."

The rescue truck that will transport the extrication tools bears a large airbrush painting of a North Brunswick Scorpion on its side and was purchased with an allocation of \$57,000 in county capital outlay funds and squad donations. Since then, the squad has added another \$30,000 worth of equipment on the truck. The Cape Fear DuPont Co. plant donated \$4,500 for air bags.

"Slowly but surely, with industries and the town helping, we're getting where we need to be," said Grimes. "With the shortage of volunteers, this can help the fire department, and the fire department can help the rescue squad."

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