

By Tim Linscott

Managing Editor

Keeping the community safe is the job of Grant's fire and rescue department and their job was recently made easier with the approval of a grant for new warning sirens.

The grant is a cooperative effort between the the City of Grant, the Perkins County Commissioners and the fire district.



The three entities are pooling their funds to match Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funds.

Total cost for the two sirens will be \$50,000. The grant is 80 percent funded by FEMA and 20 percent by the city and fire department.

The two new emergency sirens will have battery back-up and will have car batteries for each unit, replaced every five to seven years.

Don Softley, Grant fire chief, noted that this new siren system will provide extra protection for the community.

"If the electricity goes out in a storm, the ambulance and fire departments may have trouble being reached, but we can blow the new sirens to reach everyone," Softley said, explaining that the sirens will not be used for regular calls, only in emergency situations.

The current siren was installed in 1980 and most sirens have a life of around 20-25 years.

"The current siren is well past its expected livlihood," Softley said, explaining that replacement parts for the current siren are becoming scarce. "We 'skeletonized' the blower on the horn of the current siren."

Softley said parts have been scoured from West Point, Neligh and various other locations to keep the system running.

Jim Brueggemann, Perkins County Emergency Management director, found the grant for the siren and fire department member Harlan Rahn worked on finishing the grant.

One siren will be placed at the park using the same pole the current siren sits on and the second siren, which currently is on top of the fire hall downtown, will likely remain in the same spot.

FEMA had suggested to local officials that the second siren be placed in the northeast corner of the fairgrounds at approximately Third and Garfield.

Fire department officials will discuss the placement of the siren with FEMA officials on keeping it on top of the fire hall.

Local officials felt the decibel range would still be adequate at the sirens current location, it would be easier to maintain and local residents in the Third and Garfield areas would not have to deal with a siren in their neighborhood.

The sirens will be louder than before, up to 20 decibels louder.

"They (the residents in the area of the proposed siren) will feel it. Not heart but feel it," Softley said. "My opinion is the proposed location is a little close to the residents and courthouse."

He also mentioned that on top of the fire hall will put the siren in a higher elevation, helping get the sound over a wider area and downtown businesses are better equipped to deal with a siren.

