



# City of Mansfield

## Tim Theaker, Mayor



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**Steven J. Strickling, Chief of Fire**

July 24, 2017

The Mansfield Fire Department recently was awarded \$66,905 in grant funds from the Ohio Development Services Agency for the purchase of HAZMAT equipment. In total, through the grant, the MFD will receive a handheld chemical analyzer, multi-gas meters, radiation detectors, and other testing equipment. The grant requires no local financial match from the fire department.

“The department is very appreciative to have been awarded this grant. The items that this grant funds will greatly enhance our hazardous materials response capabilities,” said Mansfield Fire Department Chief Steve Strickling.

This grant will allow the Mansfield Fire Department to identify chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive substances from one device. This new equipment will also identify unknown narcotics, such as heroin’s deadly fentanyl and carfentanil, which is an increasing hazard to all first responders. Quick response kits will also be added to fire apparatus to ensure line firefighters have adequate equipment to respond to any incident involving a hazardous material.

“We strive to seek out and apply for grants that benefit our firefighters, which in turn ultimately benefits the community we serve,” said Mansfield Fire Department HAZMAT Specialist Shawn Yerian. “We have seen great success in grants that allow us to provide some of the finest equipment possible at low to no cost.”

Fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies in Richland County have been collaborating ever since the increase in clandestine methamphetamine labs, which require an extraordinarily high level of technical expertise. First Responders must understand illicit drug chemistry; how to neutralize the risks of explosions, fires, chemical burns, and toxic fumes; how to handle, store, and dispose of hazardous materials; and how to treat medical conditions caused by chemical exposure. Now we’re faced with another grave danger; carfentanil, 10,000 times more potent than morphine. The awarded grant will allow for earlier detection of potential hazards faced by all first responders and the public.

The Mansfield Fire Department was one of 49 awarded from communities throughout the state. In total, this grant provided \$10 million in equipment to help local communities enhance public safety and cut costs.

“The operational costs associated with updating and maintaining specialized HAZMAT equipment is always a concern as technology is always changing. Securing a grant such as this helps ease the financial burden in conjunction with improving the overall safety of our firefighters,” said Mansfield Fire Department Assistant Chief Chris Speelman.

The Mansfield Fire Department HAZMAT team operates from fire station 4, on South Main Street. The team is made up of 29 specialized technicians with varying levels of expertise. Our members also supplement the County HAZMAT team; made up of both career and volunteer firefighters from multiple departments across the two-county region (Richland County and Ashland County).