UNH And Keene State Share 2 Million In Federal Funds For National Public Safety Management Project

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UNH And Keene State Share $2 Million In Federal Funds For National Public Safety Management Project
System Will Aid Police and Fire Departments Responding to Emergencies

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DURHAM and KEENE, N.H. – The University of New Hampshire and Keene State College have received $2 million in joint federal funds from the U.S. Department of Justice to develop a national public safety management system that will help police and fire personnel know whether the site of an emergency contains dangerous hazardous materials.

The federal funding was secured by U.S. Sen. Judd Gregg (R-N.H.).

“Police officers and security personnel typically are the first to arrive on the scene of an emergency and often conduct the initial site evaluation to support the larger emergency response. This responsibility places law enforcement personnel at significant risk of exposure to hazardous materials,” Gregg said.

“Information about the location of chemical, biological and radiological materials, and the potential for exposure to these materials is critical for the safety of first responders. Yet this information is frequently unavailable or, at best, limited in its scope,” he said. “This public safety management system will provided police officers and other first responders access to up-to-the-minute information that will guide their decisions about evacuation needs, best response options, and the alerting hospital and health personnel.”

The collaborative project between the UNH Research Computing Center and the Keene State College Safety Studies Program will include state-of-the-art facilities and instructional technology, and novel computer software.

“This project builds on UNH’s innovative Chemical Environmental Management System (UNHCEMS) – already recognized as a model for higher education—and brings together the advanced computing expertise of UNH, and the technology and training know how of Keene State College,” Gregg said.

Of the $2 million, UNH will receive $600,000 to modify and expand the UNHCEMS software for the new system. The software will allow first responders to access information about hazards

stored at sites of potential disasters, such as high schools and universities.

“This funding provides us the opportunity to share with other educational institutions software to manage their chemical, biological, and radioactive inventories. In addition to benefiting participating institutions, there is a corresponding gain to public safety officials allowing them to be better informed of potential hazards while responding to emergencies,” Patrick Messer, associate director of the UNH Research Computing Center.

Keene State will receive $1.4 million to develop the curricula and training program, as well as outfit six technology laboratories and five classrooms in its new Science Center. The facility, which will include distance-learning capabilities, will be used to instruct emergency personnel on evaluating and handling contamination sites.

“This funding allows Keene State to expand current and develop new curricula in safety studies,” said Melinda Treadwell, assistant professor of technology, design and safety studies. “It creates innovative opportunities for the School of Science and Social Science and the School of Professional and Graduate Studies to collaborate and utilize state-of-the-art distance learning facilities and analytical equipment to advance training and education for emergency response professionals dealing with chemical, biological, and radiological hazards.”

Four pilot sites in New Hampshire will be used during the development and testing phases, which is expected to last 12 to 18 months. The system is expected to be online and available nationally within two years.

For more information on the UNH portion of the project, please contact Patrick Messer, associate director of the UNH Research Computing Center, at 603-862-2889 or pfm@sr.unh.edu. For more information on the Keene State College portion of the project, please contact Melinda Treadwell, assistant professor of technology design and safety, at 603-358-2945 or mtreadwe@keene.edu.

Editors: Additional information about each portion of the project is available.
UNH Background
Keene State College Background