

Washington, DC -- U.S. Representative Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) today announced \$257,959 for three local fire departments to enhance first responder preparedness through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP).

"Local first responders work tirelessly, many of them as volunteers, to keep our homes safe and protect our families in the event of a fire or emergency situation," **said Arcuri, a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus**

. "Assistance to Firefighters grants are an invaluable resource to local communities because they enable fire departments to upgrade equipment and attend trainings without adding to local taxes. I will continue working in Washington to ensure that local first responders have the resources they need to keep us safe."

Funding awards announced by Arcuri include:

- \$143,093 for the Marathon Joint Fire District in Cortland County;
- \$50,741 for the Ovid Fire Department in Seneca County; and
- \$64,125 for the Edmeston Fire Department in Otsego County.

The Marathon Joint Fire District will utilize funds to purchase 35 sets of turnout gear, 13 new air pacs and 30 new pagers. "This is a huge grant for us," **said Norman Forrest, Marathon Joint Fire District Fire Chief**. "We have a lot of outdated stuff and for structural firefighting we need better equipment. The county has upgraded its pager system and this grant allows us to give 95% of our members a pager off the new system. With this new set of turnout gear, 100% of our firefighters will have NFP 2007 compliant gear."

The Edmeston and Ovid Fire Departments were also successful in securing AFGP funds earlier this year: \$171,950 for the Edmeston Fire Department to purchase a new fire fighting vehicle and \$79,722 for the Ovid Fire District to enhance safety.

Since taking office in January, Arcuri has announced over \$3 million in Assistance to Firefighter Grants for emergency first responders in the 24th Congressional District.

AFGP awards grants to firefighters, emergency response personnel and first responders to enhance response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of first responders and the citizens in their communities. AFGP provides resources for training, first responder health and safety programs, and response equipment and vehicles.

Since 2004, AFGP has provided a total of almost \$2.2 billion nationwide to first-responder organizations to purchase response equipment, personal protective equipment, and vehicles. In fiscal year 2007, AFGP will award approximately \$490 million directly to fire departments and EMS organizations to enhance their response capabilities.

In March, Arcuri joined 100 Members of Congress in writing to the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee requesting additional funding for AFGP as well as Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants that provide assistance to local departments to increase the number of first responders.

In June, the House passed the fiscal year 2008 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which included a substantial increase in funding for AFGP and SAFER. The bill includes \$800 million for AFGP in fiscal year 2008.

###