

NORTHWEST SIGNAL

Henry County: Satellite trailer arrives

Northwest Signal

December 13, 2017

By BRIAN KOELLER, NWS Editor

Henry County became a leader in disaster response for the area Tuesday after taking delivery of a new mobile satellite trailer from Ohio Emergency Management Agency (EMA).

“We had them in Columbus, but it just made sense to get them out in the regions,” said Jay Carey, external affairs chief for Ohio EMA.

The trailer provides a dedicated, password-protected Wi-Fi signal that can be used by up to 30 users in a 1,000 foot radius. The trailer can run on a single 20-amp or 110 VAC electrical outlet. It also comes equipped with a 1,000-watt portable generator to allow for stand-alone operation, if necessary.

Cited examples of use included a large natural disaster in which radio towers are knocked out, or a large planned event in which public use of open Wi-Fi signals would slow usage.

“We used two of them to supplement the (NFL) Hall of Fame game in Canton this year,” Carey said. He added the Wi-Fi usage was so large it slowed usage down, but the trailers gave first responders at the game a dedicated Wi-Fi signal that did not.

“The goal is to make sure we are strategically planning our resources in case of an emergency,” said Sima Merick, executive director of Ohio EMA.

Henry County was chosen to house one of the trailers in large part due to the persistence of Henry County EMA Director Tracy Busch.

“This is huge,” Busch said. “This has been a project we’ve been working on for a long time.”

Busch has said previously he has been pushing state officials to spread the trailers around the state and, as a result, Henry County was offered to house one.

“Cyber and being able to get data out is important, Wi-Fi is limited and not robust enough for what we need,” **Busch added.**

“I’ve been asked by people, ‘Why do we need a satellite trailer?’” Henry County Commissioner Glenn Miller said. “And the answer is, ‘We don’t know for sure yet,’ but it’s one of those things where if something happens and people find out this could have been available — Why didn’t you have it?”

“This is a resource, and more and more we’re depending on the internet,” Miller added. He also said, by way of example, the new phone system the county is switching to relies on the internet.

While Henry County will house the trailer, it will also be responsible for transporting it in the region if needed due to an emergency. The hope is response times will be greatly reduced.

“Otherwise, when an emergency happens, we’d have to have (someone) hook up the trailer and drive it from Columbus,” Merick said.

Merick added Henry County may also eventually make some modifications to the system.

A company in Akron handles the server for the trailer, and if something should occur there, the signal will be rerouted to New Jersey.

The trailer will be housed in the transportation building being renovated by the commissioners in the Oakwood **Plaza complex**.