



BENTONVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT

800 S.W. "A" St.
Bentonville, AR 72712
Telephone: (501) 271-3151
Fax: (501) 271-5980

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Chief Dan White
Phone: (479) 271-3151

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Traffic Signal Pre-Emption System Goes Live

Bentonville, AR...On Saturday, September 3, 2011, the Bentonville Fire Department will "go live" with its new traffic signal pre-emption system in an effort to make emergency responses safer and to improve the response times of its fire trucks and ambulances. The system was purchased using the Federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant in the amount of \$239,250 of which 10% or \$23,925 was borne by the City of Bentonville. In cooperation with the City's Transportation and Traffic Signals Department, approximately twenty-four intersections in the city have been equipped to allow pre-emption, and all fire department vehicles have been equipped to activate the system as needed. Main traffic corridors on Walton Blvd, SE J St., and Hwy 102 east of Walton, and one intersection in downtown Bentonville have been equipped for the system. Fire department vehicles will use the system primarily when responding to emergencies with red lights and siren. In the future, additional intersections may be equipped.

When activated from an emergency vehicle, the pre-emption system will give responders the green light at intersections so that intersections can be cleared of standing traffic, and to prevent cross traffic from entering the intersection, preventing potential accidents. The system includes global positioning equipment that uses Department of Defense (DOD) satellites to track the emergency vehicles, and a smart system to calculate the time of arrival of those vehicles at equipped intersections. If two or more emergency vehicles approach an equipped intersection from different directions, the first arriving vehicle will capture the intersection, and the other emergency vehicles will need to approach with due caution which was done before the pre-emption system was installed. Whether pre-empting or not, emergency responders will use due caution when approaching intersections.

Citizens may also see the system activated when ambulances are transporting patients to the hospital whose conditions may not warrant a response with red lights and siren, but who may need to get to the hospital in a timely fashion. In that case, ambulances may pre-empt traffic signals when they are not responding with red lights and sirens.

Fire Chief Dan White expressed his hopes for the system by saying, “Anytime fire department vehicles are responding with lights and sirens, chances of accidents, particularly at intersections, are greatly increased. While we have an extremely low accident rate at the fire department, we believe this system will greatly improve the safety of all vehicles approaching equipped intersections in Bentonville when we are responding to emergencies. Likewise, we expect to reach emergency scenes and deliver patients to the hospital quicker and safer.”