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CLEVELAND COUNTY
RECOVERY PROGRAM

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COUNTY SUPPORTS FIRST RESPONDERS WITH NEW INFRASTRUCTURE

Cleveland County Commissioners Commit ARPA Funds to New Radio Tower

NORMAN, Okla. — Cleveland County Commissioners move to improve local emergency response services by allocating more than \$300,000 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to build a new communications tower.

The new infrastructure, located on Cemetery Road, will integrate into the Oklahoma Multi-Agency Communications System (OMACS) public safety radio system, which will significantly enhance emergency communications capabilities for Cleveland County and surrounding areas.

“Currently, the Cleveland County Sheriff's Office dispatches all calls to the Cedar Country and Slaughterville fire departments via the public safety radio system,” said [George Mauldin, Cleveland County Safety and Emergency Management Director](#). “In most instances, members of these departments are unable to understand the radio communication due to poor transmission quality and must telephone the communication center for clarification, which causes unnecessary delays in emergency responses and potentially endangers the firefighters.”

The addition of the Cemetery Road site will significantly improve radio communication throughout the county.

“Our first responders need to be able to talk to each other during critical events,” said [District 1 Cleveland County Commissioner Rod Cleveland](#). “The Cemetery Road radio tower will help our first responders communicate clearly in rural areas where radio transmissions have been troublesome.”

Poor radio service in low-lying areas has made it particularly difficult for fire departments to communicate with other agencies through their hand-held radios.

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“For us, it’s really important because we have several roads in that low-lying area. With that tower going in on Cemetery Road, we should have coverage,” said [Slaughterville Fire Chief Chris Tolson](#). “The truck radios are more powerful, but if you’re out on a grassfire, and you’re away from a truck, the only way to communicate is with the hand-held radios.”

[Cedar County Fire Chief Darren Alexander](#) said his department is also updating their hand-held radios.

“We’ll be able to communicate with all surrounding departments now,” Alexander said. “It will make a huge difference in our communication. Hand-held radios are our lifeline outside of the trucks.”

First responders in Noble and Lexington also use the OMACS radio system and the addition of the Cemetery Road site will enhance their radio communication capabilities as well.

“Public safety is a top priority for us, and this project is a great example of how we can improve safety with critical investments in our infrastructure,” said [District 2 Cleveland County Commissioner Jacob McHughes](#). “This is a potentially life-saving project for Cleveland County.”

The current project builds on other investments in surrounding counties that have continued to improve emergency communications across the state.

“By integrating into current systems, this project will significantly improve our emergency response communications capabilities,” said [District 3 Cleveland County Commissioner Rusty Grissom](#). “Creating safer, more accessible systems for our rural communities is key to building a more prepared and resilient community for years to come.”

According to Mauldin, the new radio tower will provide portable radio coverage in 98 percent of Cleveland County — a level of coverage never seen in this area before. This improved coverage will be especially crucial during large events when multiple agencies need to work cooperatively.

“We really appreciate the Cleveland County Commissioners for approving this ARPA funding and making this happen,” said [Lexington Fire Department Chief Trent Mitchell](#). “It’s really going to help our communications on the southeast side of the county. Now, we all will be on the same system where we can talk to each other.”

About Cleveland County: *Cleveland County covers more than 500 square miles and a steadily growing population of close to 300,000 people (2020 census), making it the third most populous county in Oklahoma.*