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FEATURED

## Itasca Blue Lodge Freemasons donate fire suppression tools to GRPD and ICSO

Pam Dowell Secretary, Grand Rapids Police Community Advisory Board  
Jun 26, 2024

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Captain Jeremy Nelson, Captain Kevin Ott, Freemason Head Jeff Fortune, Freemason Secretary Durin Smith and Pam Dowell presenting a fire suppression device for first responder fire suppression.



Tuesday June 18, 2024, Itasca Mason Blue Lodge #208 members, Jeff Fortune and Durin Smith, presented fire suppression tools (FST) to the Grand Rapids Police Department and the Itasca County Sheriff's Office. The three Masonic Lodges in Itasca County are planning a raffle to secure twenty-nine more units for the sheriff department's first responder squads.

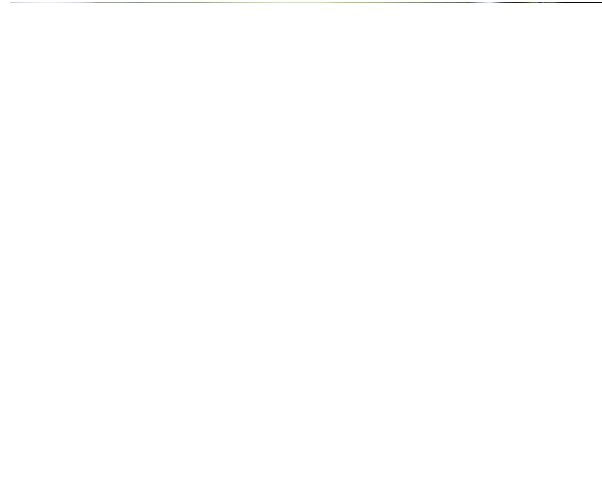
A portion of the grant monies have been provided by the Minnesota Masonic Charities (MMC), an umbrella organization that promotes greater levels of philanthropy for critical issues and community service. The Freemasons of Minnesota have been working on drives to donate FST devices to communities across Northeast Minnesota.

The FST is an aerosolized portable unit that is [one person] managed by throwing the device into any room with a fire. Once deployed, the device produces a thick cloud that interrupts the heat and oxygen bind in the fire – reducing the heat. A blaze at 1,000 degrees could be cooled to two hundred degrees, allowing emergency fire responders to potentially save lives and reduce the greater impact of the fire.

Law enforcement officials are often first at the scene of a critical fire while awaiting the arrival of volunteer firefighters. A FST device was credited with saving two pets and aiding in keeping a house fire from being a total loss in a St. Paul Park home in Washington County in February 2024. KARE 11 News reported that St. Paul Park Fire Chief Mike Kramer said the FST provided enough time to get the fire department engines set and start an offensive attack on the fire. Linn and Mark Gisselquist owned the home. The couple have an emotional support dog, a golden lab and were dog sitting a friend's Goldendoodle – the couple said they believe the animals survived because of the quick response from the deputy arriving on scene with the FST unit.



Last October during National Fire Prevention month, Nashwauk Masonic Lodge #331 donated FST units to the Nashwauk and Keewatin Police departments. A training video is provided to each agency gifted with the valuable first responder tool. Fortune and Durin both expressed the greater desire of getting FST's for every first responding unit in Itasca County. "Time is critical in a fire, and this unit provides an element of protection for those first responders who are always willing to rush into any scene, ready to lend aid," Fortune said.



The retail value of the units is one thousand dollars. "The value of saving lives, pets, property is priceless," Fortune emphasized. Durin said the goal of the Freemasons throughout history dating back to 1893, is continuing the world's largest benevolent charity by providing funding and purposeful gifts for citizens and community. Freemasonry is the world's largest fraternal organization based on the belief that everyone has a responsibility to make the world a better place. Freemasons provide a culture of philanthropy.

Itasca County has three Freemason Lodges: Itasca Blue Lodge #208, Nashwauk Lodge #331 and Chippewa Lodge #275 located in Bigfork. To learn more about Minnesota Freemasons: <http://mnfreemasons.org>

