

Kansas Firefighter Recruitment and Safety Grant Application Period Now Open

The application period for the 2018 Kansas Firefighter Recruitment and Safety Grant (KFRSG) is now open until the grant deadline of October 1, 2018. The grant is made possible with the State of Kansas budget passed by the State Legislature and signed by Governor Jeff Colyer. This year, the previous grant budget of \$200,000 has been doubled to \$400,000, to assist volunteer and part-time fire departments across the state with firefighter safety and recruitment.

Grants issued through the KFRSG program will cover the costs of safety gear for firefighters and physical examinations for firefighters whose physicals are not covered by their departments. It will also provide funds for the purchase of new washer-extractor machines used to clean bunker gear following a fire, with further funds available for the creation of Explorer programs to attract youth volunteers into the fire service.

Volunteer and part-time fire departments face recruitment and retention challenges because they do not have the funding to provide safety equipment. Without new equipment provided by the recruiting fire department, potential volunteers are faced with not only donating their time but also providing their own safety gear, sharing gear with others, or doing without.

Safety gear which can be purchased through this grant program based on a proven and demonstrated need, includes bunker or wildland gear, to include: coat, pants, helmet, gloves, hood and boots; and new masks for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) units for new department members.

This grant program not only addresses safety of firefighters, but their health as well. The OSFM provides grants to local firefighters to assist in paying for physical examinations not otherwise covered by their departments. A physical examination by a doctor could identify underlying health issues and, hopefully, decrease the number of health-related deaths.

The OSFM also uses grant funds to purchase and strategically place washer-extractor machines throughout the state. It is vital to the health of firefighters to properly clean bunker gear following a fire to prevent the transfer of carcinogens, particulates and biohazards to firefighters, and those they serve. Further, as more and more particles attach to protective gear and chemicals remain on clothing, the gear gradually loses its effectiveness – putting firefighters at increased risk.

A key goal for the KFRSG program is firefighter recruitment, which provides

funding for the start of Explorer programs. These programs offer a great way for local fire departments to give the youth of their area an opportunity to explore both career and voluntary opportunities in the fire service. All fire departments will be able to apply for funding to cover the Explorer program or the National Volunteer Fire Council National Junior Firefighter Program initiation fees up to \$500, plus a \$100 start-up fund.

Grant applicants must be established and recognized volunteer or part-time Kansas fire departments in good standing with OSFM (must be current with NFIRS reporting) or a firefighter in good standing with their local fire department. All safety gear purchased through the program would become the property of the requesting department and not of the individual for whom it was requested.

Applications are available at www.firemarshal.ks.gov/KFRSG. The deadline for submission to receive funds through the KFRSG is Oct. 1, 2018. Grant funding will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis.