



Fire Assistance Programs in Alaska

Funding any project can be quite a challenge for any organization; yet, there exists successful grant programs that have provided additional monies for many rural or volunteer fire departments in Alaska.

The first opportunity is the Department of the Interior Rural Fire Assistance program that provides funding to enhance the fire protection capabilities of rural and volunteer fire departments through training, equipment purchases, and fire prevention work on a cost-share basis.

A maximum award per project of \$20,000 is available with a required 10 percent match by the recipient. This cost-share match can be money, or from in-kind (non-cash) services such as covering facility costs for fire training, paying for travel and per diem for personnel to attend courses, or funding administrative costs for purchasing equipment for the program.

The second program is the Volunteer Fire Assistance program that is funded through the state with money from the U.S. Forest Service. This program requires a 50 percent cost-share match from the recipient.

In Alaska, a multi-agency panel administers the selection process including the review of applications and making award selections for both programs. The participating agencies are the Bureau of Land Management Alaska Fire Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the State of Alaska Division of Forestry.

The process begins early each year when the state Department of Forestry sends letters to communities statewide that are recognized by the Alaska State Fire Marshals Office as having volunteer or actual fire departments. The letter explains the differences between the two grant programs, the application processes, and how to request funding.

Then in March, the committee meets to review the requests and determines how best to distribute the available funds. This process allows the agencies to work with communities and eliminates any inadvertent double funding between the two programs.

Since the Rural Fire Assistance program began, the BLM Alaska Fire Service has assisted rural or volunteer fire departments in many areas of Alaska through the process. These grants have included funding for a variety of wildland fire needs.

In 2002, a total of \$30,237 was awarded among the Dillingham, Gakona and Tok fire departments for handheld radios, a mobile radio station, personal protective equipment, and firefighting equipment and training. In 2003, a total of \$30,000 was awarded to the Deltana, Galena and Nome fire departments for port-a-tanks, hoses, fittings, and nozzles. During 2004, \$30,000 was awarded to the Anderson, Marshall and Pilot Station fire departments for firefighting training and communications equipment, and last year, the Barbara Heights Fire Department in Seldovia received a \$10,000 grant.

The grants have provided a much needed source of funding for wildland fire training programs and equipment for local rural cooperating departments..

For more information visit the Rural Fire Assistance web site at <http://www.nifc.gov/rfa/>.