

The Hillsboro Fire Protection District (HPFD) is located in east central Jefferson County, Missouri – approximately 30 miles south of St. Louis and is staffed by 25 volunteer firefighters and a paid staff of 9 (Chief, Asst. Chief, 7 firefighters). We provide fire suppression, prevention, medical first responder, and other services including response to hazardous materials, weapons of mass destruction or terrorist events, specialized rescue, and community education/public relations events. Our district covers a 42-square mile area which serves the City of Hillsboro, unincorporated areas of the County, a population of 14,000, and approximately 3,000 residences and small businesses. However, because of what will be described in the next paragraph our daytime business population is estimated at 25,000. Finally, HPFD has served the community for 54 years – 33 of those as a volunteer fire department.

The HPFD operates on a total budget of \$502,703 which primarily supports salaries, fire station operations, maintenance of apparatus, and insurance. Even though there is some growth in our area, our funding is constrained because Hillsboro serves as the County seat and contains the County Courthouse, the County Administration Building, Jefferson Community College, Hillsboro R-3 School District, Division of Youth Services Correctional Facility, the County Jail, the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, and 14 different churches. We are tremendously impacted by the services we provide all of these governmental institutions and various religious organizations, but we receive no funding since they are tax-exempt entities.

Adding to the strain on our budget is that we are a major transportation corridor with over 19,000 vehicles each day passing through our District in route to their jobs in the metropolitan St. Louis area. Approximately 42% of the citizens we serve are not taxpayers in our district.

In the last several years, we have become more focused on weapons of mass destruction and their possible impact on our fire district. The many county and state governmental buildings and offices in our fire district increase the level of threat vulnerability from a terrorist-sponsored event.

Further complicating our service delivery level and ability to ensure the safety of our firefighters is that our call volume has almost tripled over the last several years to the present level of 760 emergency calls a year. HPFD also participates in the mutual aid system and provides aid to 17 other fire departments throughout the county.

This increase in call volume has resulted in an acceleration of “wear and tear” on our mission critical equipment and our ability to fully provide the necessary services to our community.

Another dramatic impact on our fire district is that Jefferson County has been identified as the leading manufacturing of Methamphetamine in the State of Missouri. Frequently, we encounter illegal “meth labs” in our District which again is a serious threat to the safety of our firefighters.

Because of our limited funding and increased service demands, we are applying for this grant because constraints on our budget have made capital purchases impossible and have jeopardized our ability to adequately provide services to our community.

Our philosophy at the HFPD is that the firefighter is the most precious resource the fire service possesses. And since the firefighter is the most valuable resource, the first priority should be the safety and survival of our firefighters.

Therefore, through this grant, we hope to accomplish two goals:

1. Improve Firefighter Safety Through Replacement of Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA)

We hope to improve firefighter safety and bring the fire district into compliance with OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard 29 CFR 1910.134, NFPA 1500, 1981, and 1982.

Respiratory protection of our firefighters at emergency scenes is mission critical to our department. Toxic inhalation (running out of air) has been identified as one of the six main reasons why firefighters die. We hope to protect our firefighters from toxic inhalation (running out of air), whether it is from smoke, agents used during a weapon of mass destruction incident, or chemicals from a “meth lab.”

Our present SCBAs are over 20 years of age, are in frequent need of maintenance, are in poor condition, do not contain an integrated Personal Alert Safety System (PASS), do not possess a buddy-breath connection or Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) connections, are no longer compliant with NFPA 1852, and communication is extremely poor due to the lack of speech diaphragms and voice amplifiers. The SCBA face pieces we currently have are one size and are not fit tested to each firefighter as per NFPA and OSHA.

We hope to purchase 14 SCBA’s with integrated PASS devices, buddy-breathing connections, and LED tank level indicators. Additionally, we hope to purchase 14 additional 30 minute carbon cylinders and 20 face pieces, fit tested to each individual firefighter per OSHA/NFPA/EPA. The anticipated cost of this entire system to help ensure the safety and survivability of our firefighters is \$61,334.00.

The integrated PASS device would dramatically improve firefighter safety and survival by removing the “human element” and ensuring its use. The face piece fit testing would improve firefighter safety and survival by ensuring the proper fit and seal. An individual face mask will also allow the firefighter to know that his/her *personal* mask is clean, free of containments and ready for service. The LED tank level in the mask will also enhance firefighter safety and survival by providing a constant visual reference of the remaining air supply. Finally, the buddy breathing hose will enhance safety and survival of our firefighters by providing a secondary air source for a firefighter who may have exhausted their air supply.

Our second goal is:

2. Improve Firefighter Safety Through Replacement of Turn-Out Gear (Protective Ensemble)

We hope to improve firefighter safety and bring the fire district into compliance with NFPA 1971 and 1500.

Personal protection of our firefighters on emergency scenes is mission critical to our department and the prevention of a firefighter death or injury. Thermal insult has been identified as one of the six main causes of firefighter deaths. Therefore, we believe that personal protection equipment is one of the single most important pieces of equipment a firefighter uses.

Unfortunately, the present turn-out gear (protective ensemble) that we are using is over 15 years of age, is frayed, and is not compliant with NFPA 1971 or 1500 standards. As an example, the vapor barriers on the existing turn-out gear does not meet NFPA standards. Our helmets, gloves, and boots are also over 15 years of age and are extremely worn. According to our maintenance records, we occasionally have to send our turn-out gear to be repaired that normally should be replaced, just to make sure our firefighters have some level of protection.

We hope to purchase 34 sets of turn-out gear (protective ensemble) to ensure firefighter safety and survival during thermal assault, specialized rescues, to prevent any absorption of a chemical agent into the skin during a weapon of mass destruction incident, or any exposure to chemicals in a “meth lab.” The anticipated cost of personal protection equipment to safeguard our firefighters is \$51,000.

In previous years we have explored possible funding mechanisms such as tax increases, donations, or fund raisers but have reached the conclusion there would not be sufficient revenue to fully develop a complete program approach described in this narrative.

Since our philosophy is that the firefighter is the precious resource the fire service possesses, with this grant we hope to protect our firefighters from two of the six main reasons cited by studies on why firefighters die – toxic inhalation and thermal insult.

Our hope is to design a complete approach and program with SCBAs and turn-out gear (protective ensemble) in order to protect our firefighters from the many challenges they face on a daily basis or in the future.

Thank you for your time and effort in this grant program. Your consideration of our proposal would be sincerely appreciated.