

Bulletin 97-4

Mississippi Department of Insurance

Guidelines for the Rural Fire Truck Acquisition Assistance Program - Round 3

Overview

The Mississippi Legislature in its 1995 and 1996 session appropriated a total of \$8.2 million to assist in the purchasing of new fire trucks for rural fire protection purposes.

More than 140 grant applications have been processed to date, resulting in the purchase of nearly 200 new fire trucks. To date, more than one (1) in every five (5) Mississippians lives in an area served by one (1) or more of these fire trucks.

In its 1997 session, the Legislature authorized a third round of fire truck grants even though no new funds were appropriated. Legislators have indicated that by spending the remaining monies from the first two (2) rounds and accepting applications for a third round that the Department of Insurance will demonstrate that additional funds are needed to continue this program.

The Rural Fire Truck Acquisition Assistance Program continues to provide an opportunity for each county to purchase three (3) new fire trucks meeting National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1900 Series standards. As in both of the previous two (2) rounds, grants will distribute up to \$50,000 toward a new fire truck purchase, which must be matched dollar for dollar by the County.

The County may designate any fire department responsible for furnishing rural fire protection services, including municipalities, provided that they have written contracts to serve unincorporated areas or have a population of less than 2,500. The Board of Supervisors may designate any of these municipalities to receive a grant directly and to purchase fire trucks for use in providing rural fire protection under this program.

Third Round Procedure

Counties wishing to submit applications for Round 3 may do so by mailing or hand-delivering applications beginning at 8:00 a.m. on September 2, 1997. Applications that are complete, including all required documentation, will be logged in the order they are received.

In order for a Part I application to be deemed complete, the following conditions must be

met:

- It must be submitted on an original Round 3 application form.
- All required signatures must be on the form.
- There must be no omissions of required information.
- Any supporting documents such as contracts and board resolutions or official minutes from counties and any participating municipalities, if applicable, must be attached. It is not necessary for board resolutions or minutes to be notarized, but they must be copies of official documents. A resolution must make specific reference to Round 3 of the Rural Fire Truck Program.
- In order for a fire service contract to be deemed valid, it must be in force at the time of submission and previously approved by the Commissioner of Insurance.

Grant applications should be mailed to:

Mississippi Department of Insurance
Division of Fire Services Development
P.O. Box 22542
Jackson, MS 39225-2542

They may also be hand-delivered beginning at 8:00 a.m. on September 2, 1997.

Approval of Round 3 Applications

At such time as funds are available for distribution, Part I applications in Round 3 will be considered in the order they were received. Part II applications for Round 3 will be sent to eligible counties with approval notification only if funds are available. Part II applications for Round 3 may not be submitted in advance of Part I approval and notification.

Submission of Remaining Round 1 and Round 2 Applications

Any counties with remaining eligibility for Round 1 and/or Round 2 grants must submit Part I applications for each Round not later than December 12, 1997. After that date all funds not assigned to counties with remaining eligibility will be regarded as surplus funds by the Rural Fire Truck Review Committee.

Part I applications for Rounds 1 and 2 will be made on the forms referred to in Bulletin 96-3, unless otherwise deemed necessary by the Fire Services Development Division of the Mississippi Department of Insurance.

Rural Fire Truck Grant Procedure

Part I

The Division of Fire Services Development will acknowledge receipt of each application and coordinate review of submitted materials among the members of the Grant Application Review Committee. Following review of each application, the President of the Board of Supervisors will receive written approval of the grant application stating the amount of state funds assigned to the project, up to \$50,000. A copy of this approval letter will be forwarded to the County Fire Coordinator. If the application does not conform to the program requirements, correspondence will be sent from the review committee to the President of the Board of Supervisors outlining the steps needed to address the problem(s). Applicants must be certain that all fire trucks purchased under this program meet the NFPA 1900 Series Standards (all required equipment) prior to advertising for bids. Technical assistance is available from the State Fire Academy in preparing and evaluating fire truck specifications. (See Technical Assistance.)

Part II

When the grant applicant has advertised for bids and awarded a contract to a successful bidder, the grant applicant will submit a copy of the resolution awarding the bid and a copy of the bid specifications to the Division of Fire Services Development for review by the committee. Bid specifications will be reviewed to verify that they conform to the NFPA 1900 Series Standards. Any fire truck that does not conform to these standards will be ineligible for receipt of grant funds from the Rural Fire Truck Acquisition Assistance Program.

Participating counties and designated municipalities purchasing fire trucks shall also submit a payment schedule including a breakdown of the annual matching fund payments on a form to be provided based on the actual purchase price of the fire apparatus.

Upon verification that: (a) the proposed payments meet matching fund requirements, (b) the specifications meet the NFPA 1900 requirements, and (c) the fire department is an initial responding fire department in a rural area, a letter will be sent by the review committee confirming that all program requirements have been met.

Part III

Once the truck has been received and the local government has determined that the truck meets its design requirements, a copy of the board minutes accepting the truck and authorizing payment and a copy of the vendor's invoice must be forwarded to the Division of Fire Services Development. Upon receipt of these documents, the warrant will be issued within ten (10) working days.

A test will be witnessed by the Mississippi State Rating Bureau on Class A pumpers prior to acceptance with the expense being borne by the manufactures. The grant applicant is

solely responsible for inspecting the fire truck when it is delivered to ensure that all applicable design and equipment requirements are met.

Matching Funds

Grant applicants must pledge to pay an amount at least equal to the amount for which they are requesting distribution up to \$50,000. The pledged monies may be derived from ad valorem tax or from any other monies available to the county or municipality. State rebate funds may not be used as matching funds.

The local matching funds each year must be equal to or not less than a proportional percentage of the amount for which the municipality or county is requesting funds. Repayment of indebtedness for trucks purchased under this program may not exceed ten (10) years.

The Fire Truck Review Committee reserves the right to change or otherwise amend its procedures and guidelines as needed and to issue any additional requirements as may be necessary to fully implement the program.

Allocation of Fire Truck Grants

The Board of Supervisors of each county is responsible for determining which fire departments will receive fire trucks purchased under this program. Although the primary use of trucks purchased under the Rural Fire Truck Acquisition Assistance Program is intended for rural fire fighting purposes, they may also be utilized by municipal or county departments for service within the corporate limits of municipalities as well.

Municipal Participation

County Board of Supervisors may apply on behalf of any municipality that has a written contract to serve as the primary fire service provider for the purpose of furnishing structural fire fighting services in any unincorporated area(s) adjacent to that municipality. Applicants for the Rural Fire Truck Acquisition Assistance Program are strongly advised to consult with the Mississippi State Rating Bureau to be certain the existing fire protection ratings are not adversely impacted by participation in this program.

Technical Assistance

The county or municipality receiving a grant under this program is responsible for determining, in consultation with the respective fire department, the design specifications of the fire truck to be purchased with grant funds. Any fire truck that is purchased under this program must meet the relevant NFPA 1900 Series Standard. Failure to comply will result in forfeiture of state funds. Sample specifications and technical assistance in preparing specifications which meet the required NFPA 1900 Series Standards are available

from the State Fire Academy by writing or calling:

State Fire Academy
#1 Fire Academy U.S.A.
Pearl, MS 39208
(601) 932-2444
FAX (601) 932-2819

Fire Services Development Division

Activity Summary

On July 17 and 18, Fire Services Development conducted a two-day advanced fire coordinator session on data base management and computer technology. The purpose of the session was to show our principal customers what we are doing, as well as what we can do with accurate and complete report information. The session relied heavily on three activity centers conducted by our office staff. One-on-one and small group sessions enabled participants to generate reports using our scanner and data base technologies. Feedback was very positive. A repeat session is slated for September 11 and 12. Our current approach can accommodate up to 20 participants per seminar.

Lessons learned:

- Involving customers in information quality control; and
- Adult learning activity centers.

Design work is nearly complete for the third session of the Mississippi Fire Service Executive Leadership Institute. Now in its eighth year, the Institute provides fire service leaders with a forum for fire service problem solving within a personal growth framework. Our upcoming session is slated for August 13 and features State Auditor Phil Bryant who will lead participants through a series of interactions dealing with creative problem solving and performance based budgeting.

Lessons learned:

- Professional development approaches; and
- Inter-agency cooperation - Audit Department.

On July 22, the Division has re-bulletined its guidelines for the Rural Fire Truck Acquisition Assistance Program. The revised guidelines are the result of HB 584, 1997 Session. The new statute requires us to accept applications for a third round of \$50,000 fire truck grants even though no additional funds were appropriated. Applications will begin being accepted at 8:00 a.m. on September 2. Because future grants will be allocated from remaining funds on a first-come, first-served basis, we anticipate a number of counties will hand-deliver applications that morning.

Lessons learned:

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- Bulletin savvy; and
 - Establishing grant guidelines.

On July 18, Property Division Director Bill Pope of the Audit Department met with a group of fire coordinators to devise a uniform statewide custody receipt form to enhance accountability for fire-department equipment issues to individual firefighters. The session dealt extensively with fixed asset management issues. The agreed-upon format is fairly close to the approach shown in several of the Audit Department handbooks. Fire Services Development agreed to alter several of the items in the fire department annual report document required from all fire departments as a condition for receipt of state funds. Data from the reports will be given in electronic format to the Audit Department as the first stage toward tracking fire department property now owned by the county.

Lessons learned:

- Data sharing with other agencies; and
- Standardizing local forms.

On July 23, Fire Services Development facilitated a meeting between the State Fire Coordinator's Council and the State Forestry Commission to examine possible changes in the guidelines for housing Federal Excess Property. Over the past three years, over 600 vehicles and pieces of major equipment have been placed in fire departments free of charge under this program. Fire Services Development did the initial design work for the prioritizing allocation based on scoring request form items. The meeting was the most extensive discussion between forestry and fire officials about FEPP problems thus far.

Lessons learned:

- Federal regulations; and
- Inter-agency cooperation.

Memorandum

To: ALL COUNTY FIRE COORDINATORS
CC: MISSISSIPPI FIRE COORDINATORS COUNCIL
From: RAY GILDEA, FIRE SERVICES DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR
Date: July 1, 1997
Subject: UPDATE ON RURAL FIRE TRUCK ACQUISITION
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Here are several items of interest regarding the Rural Fire Truck Acquisition Assistance Program:

- Even though no new monies were appropriated for the Rural Fire Truck Program in FY98, HB584 authorizes us to accept applications for a third round. Legislative leaders have urged us to accept as many applications as possible to allocate as much of the remaining grants to the counties which have not yet participated.
- We had anticipated sending out the revised guidelines, but the problems referred to later in this memo have caused a delay. By August 1, we will be sending out the new guidelines and applications. You may go ahead and get board resolutions, contracts, etc. lined up.
- On September 2, 1997 at 8:00 a.m., we will begin processing applications in the order they are received. An application must be complete including any required supporting documents to be recorded. Details will be in the revised guidelines along with an original application around August 1. We will only accept the original applications. No fax or copied applications will be permitted. It is our belief that any remaining unallocated and any new monies will be given on a first-come, first-serve basis.

- Those of you in counties with remaining eligibility should take note that we may not have authorization to spend monies left in fund after July 1, 1997. If this is the case, new applications processed during the coming months, would be approved with funds provided when the legislature gives us renewed appropriations authority to use those funds. Discuss this with us if you have any questions.

- Even though the Legislature gave us the authority to pledge matching funds for 10 years in HB584, counties do not have borrowing authority for more than 5 years. However, you can use a CAP loan to take advantage of the ten year option. Again, feel free to call us if you need additional information.



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
Department of Insurance

GEORGE DALE

Commissioner of Insurance
State Fire Marshal

MILLARD D. MACKAY, CFI
State Chief Deputy Fire Marshal

LEON BOONE
Director L. C. Gas Division

RAY GILDEA
State Fire Coordinator

Post Office Box 22542 (39225)
Jackson, Mississippi
State Fire Marshal's Office
(601) 354-6900
Liquefied Compressed Gas
(601) 354-6887
State Fire Coordinator
(601) 354-6891

MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL COUNTY FIRE COORDINATOR

FROM: RAY GILDEA, FIRE SERVICES DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

DATE: JULY 28, 1997

SUBJECT: SUBMISSION OF ROUND 3 APPLICATIONS

As you are already aware, our office will begin receiving round 3 Rural Fire Truck applications on September 2, 1997 at 8:00 a.m. Those of you who are intending to submit an application should pay close attention to the third round procedure outline in the enclosed attachment. The rest of the guidelines will be in your regional meeting packets.

In order for an application to be accepted it must be complete including any required supporting documents. It must be submitted on the pink third round form which is enclosed. If there are any questions pertaining to participation, call us. Because grants may be awarded on a first come, first serve basis, we want to be sure that everyone has the same opportunity to submit an application.

Response to our request for applications, is likely to be watched closely by the Legislature to show interest and support for continued funding.