



## For Immediate Release

January 4th, 2019 9:00 a.m.

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### **The Office of the State Fire Marshal Awards Funds from the 2018 Kansas Firefighter Recruitment and Safety Grant Program to the Ellis County Fire Department**

The Ellis County Fire Department (ECFD) was one of 70 departments in Kansas that were awarded funding through the Kansas Firefighter Recruitment and Safety Grant Program administered by the Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM). The ECFD was awarded **\$1,659.60** to be used for the purchase of firefighter's wildland/rescue protective gear. The ECFD is very appreciative of the OSFM in awarding this grant, and it will go a long way to help outfit our firefighters with the appropriate gear to protect our firefighters during a wildland fire or rescue incident.

This program was made possible with the 2018 State of Kansas budget passed by the state Legislature. Last year, 36 departments were awarded grant funds with the previous grant budget of \$200,000. The OSFM was able to award grant funds to nearly twice as many departments this year, as funding was doubled to \$400,000.

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. There is also a proven increase in cancer diagnoses for firefighters, which can be caused by prolonged exposure to carcinogens, particulates and biohazards. The proper gear, regular cleaning of that gear and equipment, along with preventative healthcare is crucial for a firefighter's health and well-being.

This year, over \$1.3 million in requests from 79 departments were submitted. Fire departments received approximately \$310,000 to be used for safety gear and \$90,000 for 26 washer/extractor machines. Due to the high number of requests, OSFM will be requesting the 2019 Legislature continue funding this important grant.

"We've seen, by the sheer number of requests for this funding, the need is high among our volunteer and part-time fire departments," Doug Jorgensen, State Fire Marshal, said. "It is simply unacceptable to ask Kansans, not only to volunteer their time as first responders in smaller communities, but to also sacrifice their safety by not giving them the tools they need to protect and serve their communities as volunteer firefighters. This grant allows us to assist in providing some of the funds needed to provide safety equipment the departments otherwise could not afford."

*For more information on the Kansas Firefighter Recruitment and Safety Grant Program, please visit <https://firemarshal.ks.gov/agency-resources/kfrsg>.*

