

# Memorandum

## City of Lawrence

### Fire Medical

**TO: David L. Corliss, City Manager**

**FROM: Mark Bradford, Fire Chief**

**Date: August 22, 2013**

**RE: Purchase of Station Video Conferencing System**

On May 17, 2013, the department received notification that our Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) provided through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant request has been approved and on May 28, 2013 requested and received the City Commission acceptance approval.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The primary goal of the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical service organizations. Since 2001, AFG has helped firefighters and other first responders to obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards. The Grant Programs Directorate of the Federal Emergency Management Agency administers the grants in cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration.

Nationally, the AFG awards, which will be distributed in phases (rounds), will ultimately provide approximately \$285 million to fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical service organizations throughout the country. AFG awards aim to enhance response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of the public with respect to fire and other hazards. The grants enable local fire departments and emergency medical service organizations to purchase or receive training, conduct first responder health and safety programs, and buy equipment and response vehicles.

Each department may submit one application for each type of grant through the AFG. Our proposal for this grant is listed below.

#### **Station Video Conferencing (Firefighter Training)**

This is the second time in two years that Fire Medical has had the opportunity to apply for the Assistance to Firefighters grant for station video conferencing and both times the application was not approved.

As you are aware, in March of 2013 the Department was awarded re-accreditation by the Center for Public Safety Excellence. As part of the re-accreditation process, the following strategic goal regarding Station Video Conferencing was made:

*Goal 1 - In order to effectively achieve our mission, we will identify and enhance training and education opportunities and the manner in which they are delivered. Objective 1B, Develop and implement a video conferencing system available at all facilities.*

Constant and consistent training is necessary for emergency responders to make quick and appropriate decisions to safely resolve any size incident. Modern technology will allow us to bring a higher quality and greater quantity of education and training to a larger audience. The evolving role of emergency services requires daily interaction with other departments and agencies. Rising costs and decreasing budgets make this interaction a challenge. Some benefits of this project include:

- 1) Educational opportunities for firefighters: In our ever-changing world, better-trained firefighters are safer and more efficient. Daily drills will be expanded to provide up-to-date information. Consistency will be ensured by providing direction to familiar and often practiced topics. Firefighters can spend years trying to obtain a degree. Distance learning programs will allow firefighters to fulfill the requirements for an Associates Degree in Fire Science in a timelier manner.

Our daily schedule for the year allows for 108 hours of training per member per year. This includes optional, as well as, required classes to maintain national and state certifications. Currently, this requires each mandatory class to be delivered live and held nine times (twice per shift plus one make-up session per shift) and each optional class to be held six times (twice per shift). This creates issues with increases in fuel, taking companies out of their response district, and is very time consuming for instructors.

Beginning in 2011, the Kansas Board of EMS began its transition of medical certifications for all EMS basic and intermediate responders. This transition is a mandate by the Kansas Legislature in order for the State of Kansas to be in compliance with the Department of Transportation Standard Curriculum for EMS for Advanced EMT. This will require each department member who is not a paramedic to undergo an additional 120 hours of specialized training to maintain their EMS license. As the transition will require our medical protocols to be re-written, we need to complete our transition beginning in the fall of 2012. It will be extremely time consuming and require companies to be at the training center more often. Video conferencing would dramatically enhance our ability to train members while they remain in station.

- 2) Multi-Agency Training: The Lawrence-Douglas County Fire Medical department has established itself as a community leader for training in Hazardous Materials Response, EMS, Technical Rescue, Incident Management and traditional fire service operations. Due to manning, geography and funding, educational

opportunities for other Emergency Response agencies in NE Kansas are scarce. Our daily training and educational opportunities can be made available to the surrounding areas. Video-conferencing will allow cross training to prevent scene confusion and protect responders.

- 3) Communication: Video-conferencing allows seamless communication for multi-agency response as well as training. A key element to resolution of any emergency is communication. We will network field personnel with Emergency Management administrators. This virtual Emergency Operations Center will allow participants to stay within their respective areas. The proposed system will allow us to coordinate a regional team that has shared training and put that training into action as a team to resolve large-scale incidents.
- 4) Community Education: This resource will allow participation in broadband technology-based networking. This technology connects many K-12 schools, higher education institutions, public libraries, and hospitals to each other and to the outside world. This system will allow our educators to share basic fire safety training and emergency preparedness with schools and businesses all across the State of Kansas.
- 5) Improved response times: Training evolutions take companies out of their primary response territories. Participation by all city fire units in an average drill session results in many hours of decreased coverage. By utilizing distance learning, we can provide high quality classroom presentations every day and decrease our response times.
- 6) Utilize instructors and drill time better: It is necessary to present material repeatedly in order to reach all members. Several speakers may be required to present a specific class. This can result in inconsistent delivery of important topics. The proposed system will allow us to archive a presentation and broadcast it multiple times over multiple days. We can better utilize our resource of experts to bring a constant flow of current information. During re-broadcast, a Training Officer will be available to field questions. By doing academic presentations to a much larger audience, we will be able to dedicate more time to skill development, cultivating teamwork between individual department members. By receiving the same information, we can all communicate more efficiently and improve working relationships. Imagine every responder in the county getting the message simultaneously.
- 7) Cost efficiency: Video-conferencing will allow us to do this type of training daily with no transportation costs. Fees for instructors will go further by reaching larger audiences.

Information Systems Director Jim Wisdom has been in contact with a vendor to provide technical information to the needs of our department for a station video conferencing system.

**Funding**

Under the AFG guidelines, the city must commit to funding 20% of the cost of the project. Initial quotes indicate the system would cost approximately \$268,357, which would require a City commitment of \$53,671. Funding for the City's portion would come from the city equipment reserve account and the departments' FY 2013 Operational funds.

**Action Request**

Fire Medial Department Staff requests the approval of the following:

1. Utilize funds available through the accepted FEMA Assistance to Firefighter Grant (EMW-2012-FO-07057) in the amount of \$214,686.
2. Utilize State of Kansas Contract No. 36842 for pricing quotes;
3. Purchase various components of the Station Video Conferencing System as provided in the list recommended by the IT Department not to exceed \$53,671.