

The Maine Fire Protection Services Commission

Information Packet for Safety Equipment Grants to Reduce Cancer Among Firefighters

Safety Equipment Grant Program Overview:

In order to combat the number one cause of death among firefighters in Maine and across the country and to ensure a reduction in exposures to carcinogens, the goal of this program is to provide fire departments with grants for the purchase and installation of heavy-duty extractor washing machines and diesel exhaust systems.

Working in collaboration with the Maine Fire Chiefs Association, Maine Federation of Firefighters, Professional Firefighters of Maine and the Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN), the commission plans to distribute the funds among fire departments without such equipment in order to improve the health and safety of their personnel as it relates to cancer reduction.

Purpose:

In July of 2023, the 131st State legislature passed **LD 516 creating Public Law, Chapter 437, Section 1, 5 MRSA sub-sec. 3373**. This law established the Firefighter Safety Equipment Fund to provide grant funds to allow fire departments to purchase safety equipment related to reducing cancer. A one-time, non-lapsing appropriation from the general fund of \$250,000 was provided for FY 2024-2025. In accordance with this law, the Commission shall establish criteria to award grants to fire department. In accordance with the law, the commission will adopt rules to implement and administer the program. Such non-technical rules adopted by the commission shall be pursuant as defined in chapter 375, sub-chapter 2-A.

Eligibility & Submissions:

All municipal fire departments in Maine, as identified by the state Dept. of Labor, are eligible for this grant program, **if** they are (1) in compliance with state fire incident reporting via the State Fire Marshal's Office, (2) train firefighting staff in accordance with Maine Dept of Labor criteria (3) has policies, directives that guide in the use of said equipment, and (4) have or are willing to receive cancer reduction training via the national Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN).

Applications must be received by close of business on January 31, 2025. Applicants may apply for both extractor washing machines and diesel exhaust systems, but must submit separate applications. Applications received after the date or incomplete will be rejected.

Gear Extractor machines must be specifically designed to wash soiled firefighter turnout gear and provide wash settings that allow programmable formulas that meet gear manufacturer's specifications.

For diesel exhaust systems for stations, the application ca includes hose-based direct capture, vehicle mounted direct source or building-space filtration. Consideration should be given to staff safety in moving parts, reliability of staff to follow proper use, system costs & maintenance, and unique building configurations.

Given the high cost of such exhaust systems, and the limited grant funds, awards will be limited and focused on stations with live-in staff.

Awards:

Items cannot be purchased until the grant has been awarded. Approved grant submissions are eligible to be awarded 100% of the cost, up to \$5000 maximum for extractor washing machines, and a maximum of \$10,000 toward the purchase of for diesel exhaust systems, and must be purchased by May 30, 2025 . The grant will be paid upon receipt and review of appropriate evidence of expenditures for the specific grant purpose. The Commission reserves the right to review appropriate documentation of all expenses.

Grant awardees must develop and provide examples of department directives that address the use of extractor washing machines and proper gear cleaning and/or use of the diesel exhaust systems as described by the manufacturers.

Evaluation Criteria:

The grant submission must have a direct impact on the reduction of exposures to carcinogens by firefighters and thus reduce the onslaught of cancer as a work-related injury. The goal is to positively affect the maximum number of firefighters. Grant requests must be accompanied by supporting call and staffing data and are contingent upon available funds in the program.

Applications will be evaluated based upon the documentation of the number of fire calls (non-EMS) in the period of July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024, and the number of active firefighters within the department who are routinely exposed to firefighting activities. Specific to extractor washing machines, for applicants who propose to share access to requested equipment by mutual aid departments, the application shall include such related numbers, identified by each department, along with the signatures of said department heads.

Applications for diesel exhaust systems will be prioritized for those fire stations where there are firefighting staff who routinely eat and sleep in that same facility. Applicants shall identify the average number of staff who occupy the station on a given day/night.

Applicants must ensure that they have complied with the statutory requirement for fire incident reporting to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Compliance will be verified via the SFMO by the evaluation committee.

Additional consideration will be given to applicants who can demonstrate that they have participated in the cancer reduction presentation as offered through the Firefighter Cancer Support Network (FCSN), as offered without cost by representatives of the network. Or applicants may declare their willingness to attend such training following the award.

The Fire Commission reserves the right to approve, modify or reject any or all of the grant applications.