

WASHINGTON - The Brandywine Volunteer Fire Department will receive a federal Fire Grant in the amount of \$57,564 under the program area of Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety. As co-chair of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, Congressman Hoyer was very active in helping establish and fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, which helps local fire departments in Maryland and across the country buy equipment and provide adequate training.

“The Fire Grant Program provides an important service to local fire departments here in Maryland and throughout the country,” said Congressman Hoyer. “Our volunteer and career firefighters sacrifice a great deal to protect our communities and it is our duty to provide them with the equipment and training that they need to keep their departments running safely and efficiently.”

“Prince George’s County has suffered over the past year from a series of suspicious fires making it clear the dangerous environments our firefighters face every day. It is critical that our firefighters and first responders have the resources they need to better protect themselves and the communities they serve. I am thrilled that the Brandywine Volunteer Fire Department was the recipient of a grant that will help them secure an exhaust system for their fire department to ensure their personnel can do their jobs in a safe and healthy environment,” Hoyer concluded.

The Brandywine VFD was awarded a federal Fire Grant in the amount of \$57,564 under the program area of Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety. The grant will be used to purchase an engine exhaust extraction system for the fire station. The exhaust extraction system will help keep fire personnel safe by protecting them from harmful exhaust fumes.

Brandywine VFD Chief Donald Prather said, “the air quality in our station was rated 2nd or 3rd worst in the County for containing highly toxic vapors and nitrous oxide caused by engine exhaust fumes. This federal grant will provide us with the funds to purchase an exhaust extraction system which will improve the safety and health of the firefighters and paramedics assigned to our fire station.

Congressman Hoyer helped start the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program because fire departments often have difficulty purchasing proper equipment. A ladder truck for a local fire department can run upwards of \$750,000 and outfitting one firefighter with turnout gear and breathing apparatus can approach \$4,500. In addition, departments must fund training programs for paid and/or volunteer firefighters.

The program funding can be used for the following: turnout gear; breathing apparatus; communications equipment; wellness and fitness programs; computer and technology improvements for record keeping and training purposes; training in fire-fighting, emergency response and arson prevention; improving the enforcement of fire codes; and modifying fire stations and fire training facilities to protect the health and safety of the firefighter personnel.

President Bush's budget blueprint for fiscal year 2002 eliminated funding for the Firefighter program, contending that the fire grant program "does not represent an appropriate responsibility of the federal government." Congressman Hoyer and other members of Congress successfully restored funding to the program, most recently securing \$750 million in fiscal year 2004, \$250 million more than the President's request for 2004. For fiscal year 2005, the Bush Administration proposes reducing the \$750 million grant program by one-third, for a cut of \$250 million dollars.

The House leadership of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, led by Congressman Hoyer, sent a letter to President Bush which stated, "considering that nearly \$3 billion in applications were submitted for the current program year, and also taking into account the recent Council on Foreign Relations report which highlighted the underfunding of our fire departments, a \$250 million reduction in funding is unacceptable."

Since 2001, Maryland has received over \$12 million in grant funding from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. Fire departments that have received grants in Maryland's Fifth District include La Plata, Hughesville, Mechanicsville, Solomons, Laurel, Prince George's County, Seventh District, Leonardtown, College Park, Cobb Island, and Second District.

A list of all current recipients to date is posted on the USFA web site at www.usfa.fema.gov/grants. Future grant recipients will be listed as awards are made.

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