

**DEPARTMENT:** Fire Protection

**BY:** Jim Wilson, Fire Chief  
**PHONE:** 209-966-4330

**RECOMMENDED ACTION AND JUSTIFICATION:**

Authorize the Fire Chief to apply for the 2007 SAFER Act Recruitment and Retention grant program funded through the Department of Homeland Security and FEMA. The goal of recruitment and retention programs are to create a net increase in the number of trained, certified, and competent volunteer members capable of safely responding to emergencies likely to occur within the fire department's geographic response area. The SAFER grant funds will improve recruitment advertising and will enhance staffing and response deployment capabilities. The ability to offer stipends and college scholarships to members are positive benefits for both recruitment and retention.

The grant program will take four years to implement with 100% federal participation with no local funds required.

**BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF BOARD ACTIONS:**

Board has approved grant applications in the past.

**ALTERNATIVES AND CONSEQUENCES OF NEGATIVE ACTION:**

Forgo an opportunity to enhance much needed recruitment and retention benefits for firefighters.

Financial Impact? ( ) Yes (X) No	Current FY Cost: \$	Annual Recurring Cost: \$
Budgeted In Current FY? ( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Partially Funded		
Amount in Budget: \$		List Attachments, number pages consecutively
Additional Funding Needed: \$		{1-2} - Information Sheet
Source:		
Internal Transfer		
Unanticipated Revenue	_____ 4/5's vote	
Transfer Between Funds	_____ 4/5's vote	
Contingency	_____ 4/5's vote	
( ) General ( ) Other		

**CLERK'S USE ONLY:**

Res. No.: 02-401 Ord. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Vote - Ayes: 4 Noes: \_\_\_\_\_  
Absent: Argpin  
( ) Approved  
( ) Minute Order Attached ( ) No Action Necessary

The foregoing instrument is a correct copy of the original on file in this office.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Attest: MARGIE WILLIAMS, Clerk of the Board  
County of Mariposa, State of California  
By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER:**

Requested Action Recommended  
 No Opinion  
Comments:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CAO: [Signature]

**Preliminary Request--Permission to Apply  
2007 Federal Assistance to Firefighters SAFER Grant Program**

**Grant Program:** The SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Grant was created to provide funding directly to fire departments in order to help them increase the number of trained, "front-line" firefighters available in their communities. MCFD's single highest priority is to recruit and retain emergency responders. This grant program provides multiple year funding with which to fully implement successful volunteer incentives.

The goal of SAFER is to enhance the local fire departments ability to comply with staffing, response and operational standards established by NFPA and OSHA (NFPA 1710 and/or NFPA 1720 and OSHA 1910.134. Specifically, SAFER funds should assist local fire departments to increase their staffing and deployment capabilities in order to respond to emergencies whenever they may occur. As a result of the enhanced staffing, response times should be sufficiently reduced with an appropriate number of personnel assembled at the incident scene. Ultimately, a faster, safer and more efficient incident scene will be established and communities will have more adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards.

The goal of recruitment and retention programs are to create a net increase in the number of trained, certified, and competent emergency responders capable of safely responding to emergencies likely to occur within the fire department geographic response area.. The primary focus is the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters who are involved with or trained in the operations of firefighting and emergency response. Volunteer, paid-on-call, and combination fire departments as well as local and statewide volunteer firefighter interest organizations are eligible to receive grants in this activity. There is no local match requirement for this activity and there are no maximum Federal share limits.

**Background:** The 2007 SAFER Act grant is funded with \$115 million dollars, thirty percent of which is dedicated to volunteer and combination fire departments for use in recruitment and retention programs. The submission period opened August 1 with a submission deadline of 2:00 PM August 31. If successful, the grant program will take four years to implement with 100% federal participation. There is no local match required.

**Proposal:** Mariposa County Fire is proposing programs in both recruitment and retention. The proposal is as follows:

<u>Description</u>	<u>Year 1</u>	<u>Year 2</u>	<u>Year 3</u>	<u>Year 4</u>
<b>Recruitment</b>				
Direct Mail Recruit Flyer	3,205	2,905	2,905	2,905
Vinyl Station Banners	1,950	-----	1,950	-----
<b>Retention</b>				
Volunteer Coordinator	21,165	21,165	21,165	21,165
Training Stipend	24,780	29,730	34,190	38,300
Response Stipend	34,980	38,480	42,320	46,560
College Scholarships	8,000	8,000	8,000	8,000
<b>Total Request</b>	<b>94,080</b>	<b>100,280</b>	<b>110,530</b>	<b>116,930</b>

**Grant Description:** While MCFD does a relatively good job of gaining publicity, local newspapers reach a small percentage of the County's households. Even fewer read the entire publication or are exposed to the fire department's staffing needs. In small, rural communities, the most effective method for placing a fire department recruitment message into every household and business is through direct mail. The itemized amount will cover design, printing and mailing a brochure to all US Mail patrons in Mariposa County. The vinyl recruitment banners will be placed on all fire stations and normally are good for two years.

In the four-year grant program, the primary goal is to increase membership from the current 88 to 300. To do so will overwhelm our current staff. This item will fund a half-time Volunteer Coordinator at \$14 per hour plus benefits and payroll taxes. The role of a volunteer coordinator will be to track and encourage every new volunteer from application through necessary training and certification. This person will also act as ombudsman with all volunteers to ensure every member is afforded equal opportunity for training, certification, and response.

The training and response stipends are patterned after many other successful programs. The stipend is set at \$10 per training session and incident response. Per Federal Department of Labor guidelines, the stipend is to offset volunteer out-of-pocket expenses such as fuel, laundry, and childcare. It is not per hour but per session or per incident. While no member will "make a living" collecting a stipend, with today's high cost of fuel, energy, and childcare, a stipend program will make the personal cost of volunteering more affordable. Since it is to compensate out-of-pocket expenses, a stipend will not and does not create an employee/employer relationship.

Each year the Mariposa Grizzly fire program graduates many very fine and talented students who desire to make a career of the fire service. In addition, our volunteer roster features some individuals who desire to further their education while building a career. With the annual scholarship allotment, MCFD could offer eight, \$1,000, or sixteen, \$500 community college scholarships (or any combination totaling \$8,000 per year) as an incentive for remaining active members.

**After the Grant:** It is a proven concept that if a fire department can increase the retention time a volunteer remains an active member, aggressive recruitment becomes less important. No recruitment or retention technique works universally. If successful, this grant request will afford a no-risk, four year trial program utilizing several highly successful techniques. At the end of the grant cycle, it will be incumbent on Department leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of each element. Should one or all be unsuccessful, they can be eliminated when funding disappears. If one or all prove beneficial, it will then be up to the Board of Supervisors in conjunction with Department leaders to make decisions to retain or discontinue each based on merits.

If authorized by the Board, this grant request will compete with all other Recruitment and Retention requests submitted through FEMA and Department of Homeland Security. If successful, the Board will retain final grant acceptance authority at the time of notification. Final notice will probably be in six-to-eight months.