

DATE ISSUED: July 9, 2004 REPORT NO. 04-151  
ATTENTION: Public Safety and Neighborhood Services Committee  
Agenda of July 14, 2004  
SUBJECT: San Diego Fire-Rescue Department Grants Update

#### SUMMARY

THIS IS AN INFORMATION ITEM ONLY. NO ACTION IS REQUIRED ON THE PART OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

#### BACKGROUND

Grant opportunities in the area of public safety have increased considerably since the 9/11 tragedy. In July, 2002, President Bush approved the National Strategy for Homeland Security, a road map in the national response to acts of terrorism in the United States. The National Strategy recognizes the vital role of state and local public safety agencies in strengthening the security of our country. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security will have allocated or awarded approximately \$6 billion dollars in grant funding from its FY03 budget to enhance the capabilities of first responders nation-wide. This financial assistance will be applied to the unique equipment, training, planning and exercises required for long-term efforts in the prevention of, response to and recovery from threats or acts of terrorism.

San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) was reorganized in FY03 in order to increase efficiencies, improve communications, and develop leadership and strategic direction. Additionally, a new Special Operations division was created and responsible, in part, for pursuing and managing grants. By centralizing responsibility for this function, the department has begun to make strides in obtaining grant funding. To date, SDFD has been awarded \$7,696,161 (see attachment for details). There are also a number of FY04 grants pending, in the amount of \$6,328,460. Moreover, it was apparent that a need existed on a local level for an Office of Homeland Security, resulting in the transfer of two positions to the City Manager's Office. It was envisioned that the local Homeland Security Office would be responsible for the pursuit of grants, the establishment of a city-wide strategy to prevent and respond to homeland security issues, and the coordination of city-wide activities relative to this subject.

## DISCUSSION

With these grant subsidies, it has been possible for the department to outfit first responders with some of the equipment required to respond to incidents involving conventional and unconventional weapons such as chemical, biological, nuclear or explosive devices which require specialized search and rescue capabilities. Some of the equipment purchased includes:

- Personal protective equipment
- Total replacement of existing breathing apparatus compliant with NFPA
- Portable radios for all on-duty firefighters in compliance with NFPA
- Personnel accountability system
- Decontamination equipment
- Electronic radiation and chemical detectors
- Biological test strip kits
- Chemical resistant clothing
- Bomb search protective ensemble
- Data synthesis software for early detection of bio-terrorism
- Triage patient tracking system using bar-coded tags
- Automatic external defibrillators

In addition, grant funding maintains the San Diego Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Task Force. This is a 210 member team and only one of 28 in the country. This is a local, state and national resource providing specialized “all-risk” search and rescue capability. Additional grant funding was received last year to upgrade the task force to “Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)” capability, via training, equipment, comprehensive physicals and vaccinations. Furthermore, grant funds have also provided programs such as the Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) and a wellness program.

Future funds through the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative will be used to procure interoperability communications equipment, specifically mobile data computers. It is estimated that \$6.21 million will be available for this purpose. Additionally, the Firefighter Assistance Grant, which is pending in FY04, will be applied to the purchase of much needed multi-casualty trailers.

It should be noted that the increase in grant funding has produced a corresponding increase in administrative workload. The requirements for application, equipment specification and acquisition, shipping, receiving and distribution, expense monitoring and preparation of financial and performance status reports must be completed within specific timeframes and within specific formats. Despite the spike in workload, the department has not increased the staffing necessary to meet the grant-related specifications and reporting requirements. Although funds are available in some of these grant programs for these types of expenses, the department has been unable to access funding for these purposes.

In short, the availability and award of grant funding in the area of Homeland Security has provided a regional framework and strategic direction and through the purchase of equipment begun to improve response capability. With continued funding applied to equipment, training, and exercises, the City and region should see an increase in its capacity to enhance service levels.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Jeff Bowman  
Fire Chief

---

P. Lamont Ewell  
City Manager

Attachment: [San Diego Fire Department Grant Tracker](#)