

Policy and Procedure 4-9

Fire and Emergency Response Assistance Programs

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Issued By:	Robert W. Farrell, State Forester	1/3/2024
Effective Date:	November 28, 2023	
Codes/Mandates:	Code of Virginia: §10.1-1105 Additional powers and duties of State Forester	
References:	Agency Website - Grants: http://www.dof.virginia.gov/financing/grants.htm	
Forms:	Form 3.26 Forestry Grant Program – Time and Activity Log for Staff and Volunteers Form 4.24 Firefighter Property Program Request for Federal Excess Property Form 4.27 FEPP Cooperative Equipment Limited Possession Agreement Form 4.28 Federal Excess Property Inspection Form 4.29 Firefighter Property Program Cooperative Equipment Possession Agreement Form 4.30 Dry Fire Hydrant Grant Program Application Form 4.32 Firewise Virginia Community Hazard Mitigation Grant Application Form 4.33 Wildland Urban Interface Fire Protection Program Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment Form 42 – Forestry Grant Program – Request for Reimbursement Form SF-424B Federal Assurances for Non-Construction Programs Form AD-1048 Federal Certification Form W-9-Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (Dept. of Accounts)	

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PURPOSE

To establish policy and operational procedures for providing equipment and grant funding assistance to agency cooperators in support of the agency’s wildfire and emergency response programs.

POLICY

The Virginia Department of Forestry will provide available grant funding assistance and federal excess property to agency cooperators throughout the Commonwealth in support of the agency’s wildfire and emergency response mission. Program assistance will be distributed through a fair and equitable process based on stated needs and program guidance.

DEFINITIONS

“Agency” and “DOF” means the Virginia Department of Forestry.

“Commonwealth” means the Commonwealth of Virginia.

“Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP)” means the program in which USDA Forest Service-owned property is on loan to state foresters for the purpose of wildland and rural firefighting.

“Firefighters Equipment Program (FEP)” means the program in which USDA Forest Service-owned property is on loan to state foresters for the purpose of wildland and rural firefighting. After a certain amount of time, the title is transferred to the Fire Department.

“Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)” means a type of agreement between two (bilateral) or more (multilateral) parties. It expresses a convergence of will between the parties, indicating an intended common line of action.

“VFA” means Volunteer Fire Assistance.

“VFD” means Volunteer Fire Department.

PROCEDURES

Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP)

The DOF is authorized to select and procure Federal Excess Personal Property (FEPP) as well as property through the Firefighters Equipment Program (FEP) to then loan this equipment to volunteer fire departments (VFD) whose primary response area is 10,000 people or less. VFDs qualifying for equipment loans are selected by an objective scoring procedure. Requested needs are matched with available equipment. Federal regulations require that excess property is inventoried and its condition determined every two years.

- ◆ In the case of the FEP program, actual title to the loaned property may be passed to the recipient after two years.
- ◆ Fire departments interested in receiving property through the program should contact the FEPP/FEP program manager. The DOF FEPP/FEP program manager provides the [Form 4.24 Firefighter Property Program Request for Federal Excess Property](#) to VFDs to apply for consideration under the program. Active Form 4.24s are maintained by the FEPP/FEP program manager.
- ◆ The DOF FEPP/FEP program manager will coordinate the screening and acquisition of property under the program. Awards of acquired property will be made as the property becomes available, typically by filling the oldest request first.
- ◆ Fire departments receiving equipment must complete either [Form 4.27 FEPP Cooperative Equipment Limited Possession Agreement](#) or [Form 4.29 Firefighter Property Program Cooperative Equipment Possession Agreement](#) for the appropriate program under which the equipment is acquired. A program file will be established and maintained by the FEPP/FEP program manager for each piece of equipment in the program.
- ◆ The DOF is required to complete an inventory of all FEPP and FEP property every two years. The FEP/FEPP program manager will work through the regional forester to complete this inspection ahead of the required deadline. [Form 4.28 Federal Excess Property Inspection](#) will be used for the purposes of this inventory. Copies of the completed inspection form and all related documentation will be maintained by the Fire and Emergency Response Branch.

Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grants

The Volunteer Fire Assistance program grant money is made available to volunteer fire departments (VFDs) annually through a federal grant from the USDA Forest Service. Grants are awarded on a competitive scoring system. When grant funding notice is received, the VFA grants administrator on the Fire and Emergency Response Branch will notify Virginia volunteer fire departments of funding availability as well as the pertinent details of the program for that year. The

program typically provides a reimbursement match of up to 50 percent of the actual cost of the approved equipment, PPE and/or training needs from the grant application, based on the actual award.

- ◆ Depending on the federal budget appropriation, the fire department notice to begin the grant application process is usually sent by May 1 of each year.
- ◆ The VFA program grant application is an online submission through the DOF's Forestry Grants System Access Portal. All applicants must have their department's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number before they begin the application process. UEI's are a federal requirement and are only available through the SAM.gov website. The online application process will require all of the following:
 - [Federal Form AD-1048 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion – Lower Tier Covered Transactions USDA-AD-1048](#)
 - [Federal Form SF424B Assurances Non-Construction Programs](#)
 - [Commonwealth of Virginia Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number\(s\) and Certification](#)
- ◆ DOF personnel should follow-up with local fire departments to confirm notice of the potential funding administrative deadline dates for the grant will be in the annual letter sent to the fire departments.
- ◆ The VFA grants administrator will notify VFDs of awarded grants and the amounts awarded through the online portal. Notices of the awards will also be given to each regional forester, to share with their county personnel.
 - Typically, a statewide news release will also be made to announce the program awards for that year.
- ◆ The following chart is used in rating applications received for Volunteer Fire Assistance grants:

Question	Points Given
1. Is paperwork complete and on time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes: Processed ● No: Not processed 	
2. Is population 10,000 or less in primary response area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yes: 20 points ● No: 0 points 	
3. How many structures are protected? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less than 500: 5 points ● 500 or more: 10 points 	
4. How many Wildland Urban Interface communities in primary response area? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less than 5: 5 points ● Five or more: 10 points 	
5. What percent of dispatches are wildfire dispatches during the year? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Less than 50%: 5 points ● 50% or more: 10 points 	
6. How long has the fire department been organized? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 years or more: 5 points ● 2 - 4 years: 10 points ● Less than 2 years: 20 points 	
7. Does the fire department receive county or city funds? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● \$0 - \$10,000: 20 points ● \$10,001 - \$20,000: 15 points ● \$20,001 - \$30,000: 10 points ● \$30,001 or more: 0 points 	
8. Is the grant to be used for training or communications?	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: 10 points • No: 0 points 	
9. Is the fire department purchasing wildland PPE, tools or equipment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes: 20 points • No: 0 points 	
TOTAL POINTS	

- ◆ Following grant approval, fire departments must submit an actual paid invoice to claim their reimbursement award. This submittal is made through the online portal. The DOF will allow VFDs to submit paid invoices for any approved items that were purchased on or after October 1st of the previous year.
- ◆ Upon receipt of the receipts and documentation for purchases from the fire department, the VFA grants administrator will be automatically notified through the online portal and will then process a request for payment from the DOF Finance Office.
- ◆ When a VFD must cancel a grant for any reason, prompt written notification must be made through the online portal or otherwise given to the VFA grants administrator so that the allocated money can be reassigned to another fire department.

Virginia Dry Fire Hydrant Program

The DOF receives dry hydrant program funding from the Commonwealth's Fire Programs Fund through the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. The Code of Virginia [§38.2-401](#) Fire Programs Fund establishes that \$100,000 will be set aside each finance year to fund the program.

New Dry Hydrant Installation Requests

- ◆ Fire departments are typically notified of funding availability and program requirements during early February of each year, normally in conjunction with the Volunteer Fire Assistance program grant notification. Program information will also be maintained and updated on the DOF website.
- ◆ Fire departments may submit up to three (3) applications annually using [Form 4.30 Dry Fire Hydrant Grant Program Application](#). If more than one application is being submitted by a fire department, they must be priority ranked by the fire department to aid in the approval process. All pages of the grant application (Form 4.30), documentation of any needed permits and a digital photo of the proposed installation site must be submitted to be considered for funding approval. It is important to note that all applications, except repair requests, must obtain the approval of the local county DOF representative as part of the application process prior to submittal to the Fire and Emergency Response Branch.
- ◆ Program forms may be copied locally for multiple grant requests. Grant application submission dates are on the application and are usually around the end of March.
- ◆ Applications will be reviewed and approved by the Fire and Emergency Response Branch program administrator based on the stated need, total number of applications received and available funding. Approvals are typically completed by late May and applicants will be notified once the approval process is complete. A spreadsheet summary of all applications and their approval status will be maintained by the Fire and Emergency Response Branch.
- ◆ Application copies and a copy of the summary spreadsheet will be provided to the installation contractor by June 15th of each year, assuming the contractor has completed all of the required installations for the previous program fiscal year.
- ◆ Prior to installation, the contractor will conduct a site visit, at which time, access, water dynamics, head loss, fire apparatus and landscaping will all be taken into consideration in developing the site layout and engineering of the hydrant. The contractor has the final say in determining the final placement of the hydrant.

- ◆ Once installation of the hydrant is complete, the contractor will submit payment request and proof of installation.
- ◆ To ensure program accountability, the Fire and Emergency Response Branch will work through the regional foresters to have the local county DOF representative visit the site of each new installation and test the hydrants functionality shortly after a 30-day set-up time. The local DOF representative will report back to the Fire and Emergency Response Branch that the hydrant was successfully installed.
- ◆ All program dry hydrants will be tested and inspected annually by the responsible fire department, as required by the grant.

Dry Hydrant Repair Requests

- ◆ Program dry hydrants that are damaged or fall out of service can be repaired under this program. In the event of outside damage to an existing hydrant, the effort should be made to identify the party responsible for the damage and to hold them responsible for the cost of repair.
- ◆ Requests to have the program hydrant repaired can be made and submitted on the same application through the same process used for new installation requests ([Form 4.30 Dry Fire Hydrant Gant Program Application](#)). Repair requests do not need the approval of a local DOF representative. If the landowner has not changed, then that signature is also not required. A written explanation as to what repairs are needed or what is wrong with the hydrant should also be submitted, as this information will help the contractor determine what materials will be needed for the repair.
- ◆ Contingent on grant funding availability, funding priority will be given to repair requests.
- ◆ The handling of repair applications and funding approvals will follow the same process as outlined for new installation requests.

Virginia Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

The DOF's Hazard Mitigation grant funding provides grant assistance to higher-risk woodland home communities to complete wildfire hazard mitigation type projects aimed at reducing the identified wildfire hazards in that community. Additional program specifics and suggested project examples can be found at <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/financing/mitigation.htm>

- ◆ The following requirement must be completed prior to a community's application for wildfire hazard mitigation grant assistance:
 - Complete a [Form 4.33 Wildland Urban Interface Fire Protection Program Woodland Community Wildfire Hazard Assessment](#). The assessment should be completed by a DOF regional fire specialist, county level employee or a trained cooperator.
 - A community wildfire protection plan, which includes the interested community, should be in place.
 - The project(s) to be completed by the requested grant funding should be recommended as a needed improvement in the community wildfire protection plan covering that community.
 - The community must have a Firewise "committee" identified and approved by the board to be a representative of that community during the completion of the funded hazard mitigation project.
- ◆ To apply for grant assistance, the community should fully complete and sign the [Form 4.32 Firewise Virginia Community Hazard Mitigation Grant Application](#). The completed application should be forwarded to the Fire and Emergency Response Branch prevention program manager. The regional fire specialist should also be involved with all grant projects.
- ◆ Applications will be prioritized and approved contingent on the available funding and the number of requests received. Once approved, a financial assistance memorandum of understanding (MOU) is established between the community and the state forester. Project work may begin once the MOU has been fully executed.
- ◆ Project work can be handled in one of two ways:

- a. The community oversees the project and seeks funding reimbursement upon project completion. The purchasing and/or contracting is handled by the community. Reimbursement is then provided based on successful completion of the project activities, as outlined in the MOU, along with the submittal of paid invoices and documentation of the required match. The main advantage with this option is that all purchasing is handled by the community and is not required to follow the purchasing rules that would be required of the DOF under option b.
 - b. The community oversees the project but relies upon the DOF to handle the necessary purchasing and/or contracting. The DOF coordinates the necessary purchasing process with the contractor and pays the contractor directly upon the successful completion of the project. This option is often required when the community does not have the ability to handle the necessary finance processing for payments.
- ◆ Once the project has been completed, the community should submit a [Form 42 Forestry Grant Program - Request for Reimbursement](#), if appropriate along with the communities' in-kind documentation [Form 3.26 Forestry Grant Program -Time and Activity Log for Staff and Volunteers](#) for volunteer hours to the Fire and Emergency Response Branch prevention program manager. The prevention program manager will work with the regional fire specialist to verify project completion and the submitted documentation will be processed and forwarded to finance for payment.
 - ◆ Program files for all hazard-mitigation grants will be maintained by the Fire and Emergency Response Branch.

AUTHORITY

This policy and procedure is issued by the Virginia state forester.

INTERPRETATION

The state forester, deputy state forester, chief of administration and the chief of fire and emergency response are responsible for the interpretation of this policy and procedure within their respective areas of responsibility.

APPROVAL

I certify that this policy and procedure is approved and ready for publication.

John Miller

Chief of Fire and Emergency Response Name (Print)

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12/12/2023

Chief of Fire and Emergency Response Signature

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