

Project Description

The Crouse Fire District Covers approximately 32 square miles, with a population of approximately 5,850. The district is mostly rural with some industrial. Less than 5% of this area has a fire hydrant within 1000 feet. The districts we assist are in the same situation with hydrants as we are. This makes using tankers for water shuttle necessary. The truck we would like to purchase will be able to respond to all brush, grass, and woods fires.

Plans for Use of Funds

The Crouse Volunteer Fire Department is requesting \$210,000.00 from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. These expenses are to cover the cost of a Tanker and the associated equipment needed to make this Truck NFPA 1901 compliant. The Tanker will be on a commercial chassis. The Crouse Volunteer Fire Department will contribute \$21,000.00 towards this purchase. The features of this tanker include: 2-door, 2-man cab; 1250 Gallon water tank (poly) with 10 inch dump; 1250 GPM pump, generator, scene lights, ground ladders, portable tank, hose bed and generous compartment space.

Benefit to Community

The Crouse Volunteer Fire Department is an all-volunteer fire department serving residents and businesses of the Crouse Fire District. This district is comprised of Lincoln and Gaston Counties in North Carolina. Approximately forty percent is in Lincoln County with the remaining sixty percent in Gaston County. The Crouse Fire District includes Crouse, NC (unincorporated) and the areas between the City of Lincolnton and the City of Cherryville. Crouse Volunteer Fire Department has contracts and mutual aid agreements with both Lincoln and Gaston Counties. We answer as automatic aid on first alarms with the City of Cherryville as well as the following volunteer fire departments in three counties: Howards Creek, North Brook, Hugh's Pond, Waco, Tryonota, Agriculture Center, High Shoals, South Fork and also when requested by the City of Lincolnton. In addition, we respond on multi-alarm calls anywhere requested. The purchase of the equipment described above has great interoperability due to its potential use throughout a three county response area.

The Directors and Officers conducted a needs assessment for the district and determined that we need to protect the health and safety of our personnel by replacing outdated non-compliant (NFPA) apparatus and equipment.

The need for the replacement of our present Tanker we have is great. The existing steel tank is twenty-seven years old and starting to leak because of rust damage. The chassis was replaced sixteen years ago after failing a state inspection because the chassis was over weight. Eight years ago the truck sustained severe damage in a wreck. The truck should have been considered a total loss but the insurance company demanded the truck be repaired. This truck is not very safe to drive. The steering shakes and drifts all over the road. The brakes are not reliable and the electrical system is a nightmare. Repair or replacement parts for this truck are no longer available. We have looked at replacing the tank but the condition of the chassis makes this not worth the investment.

Financial Need

Crouse Volunteer Fire Department operates on an annual budget of \$105,000.00. These funds are from Fire District Tax in Lincoln County and Service District Tax in Gaston County. The tax rate is \$0.05 per hundred valuations in both Counties. We have an existing debt of \$340,000.00

with payments totaling \$50,400.00 annually for the next nine years. This debt is for a two-bay addition to the fire station and a new Pumper, both obtained in FY2002. We can't afford any more debt at this time.

We have received matching funds grants from the state for the last two years but the funds are limited to \$20,000.00 each year. We purchased personal protective equipment, a rescue tool, a thermal camera, and equipped the new Pumper with these funds.

Our operating budget is:

Debt \$50,400.00

Insurance \$13,000.00

Utilities \$4,000.00

Equipment Maintenance \$13,000.00

Grounds Maintenance \$3,000.00

New Equipment \$19,600.00

Dues& Retirement \$2,000.00

The economy in our district area is weak. The average unemployment rate for both counties served is 7.0%. The loss of six textile plants, a mobile home manufacturing plant and several small trucking companies because of bankruptcy, the relocation of one large office furniture manufacturing plant(Haworth/Comforto) and the down sizing of several other furniture manufacturing operations (LA-Z-BOY)has contributed to the continuing decline of our tax base. This does not count four large companies that were also lost in a recent annexation by the City of Cherryville. We also lost 19% of our Gaston County district to Hugh's Pond V.F.D. Without some more revenue that department would have closed due to lack of funds.

Our funds will not increase until there is positive growth in our district. The loss of jobs and businesses has had a dramatic impact on the tax base. Several new businesses are expected in the next several years but we may never see that revenue because of possible annexation. Residential growth is occurring but most of this growth is in rural non-hydrant areas.

* Please describe any grants that you currently have with DHS including the AFG, for example, 2002 AFG grant for vehicle or 2003 ODP grant for exercises. (Enter 'N/A' if Not Applicable)

N/A

Select section to review

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