

Section 1: Title 35 Title 35 (Health & Safety), Chapter 78 (Grants to Fire Companies and Emergency Medical Service Companies) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes is amended by adding a subchapter to read:

Subchapter F (Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Program)

§ 7851. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this subchapter shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Airport fire company." A fire company that does all of the following:

- (1) Is associated with an airport;
- (2) Has a mutual aid agreement with a neighboring municipality;
- (3) Has responded to at least 15 fire or rescue emergency calls annually to neighboring fire companies as provided in documentation requested by the commissioner.

"Commissioner." The State Fire Commissioner.

"Eligible fire company." A fire company that is eligible under section 7854(b) (relating to fire company eligibility) to receive reimbursement from the fund.

"Fire company." A volunteer fire company, a municipal fire company or a combined volunteer and municipal fire company located in this Commonwealth. The term includes an airport fire company.

"Firefighter." A career firefighter or volunteer firefighter in good standing with their fire company who actively responded to at least 15 fire or rescue emergencies as determined by the firefighter's fire company during the previous calendar year.

"Fund." The Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Fund.

"Municipality." A county, city, borough, incorporated town, township, or home rule municipality.

"Office." The Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

"Personal Protective Gear." Firefighting equipment to include boots, pants, jacket, hood, and helmet meeting Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards under 1910.156 (e) for fire response.

"Program." The Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Program

"Volunteer fire company." A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in this Commonwealth that provides fire protection or rescue services within this Commonwealth.

§ 7852. Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Fund.

- (a) Establishment.-- The Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant Fund is established as a special fund within the State Treasury. The fund shall consist of money appropriated or transferred to the fund by act of the General Assembly, in addition to any grants, gifts, donations or other payments from other sources.

(b) Use.-- Money in the fund shall be used for the purposes of:

(1) reimbursing eligible fire companies for costs incurred for personal protective gear protective equipment for firefighters; and

(2) administering the provisions of this chapter.

§ 7853. Applications.

(a) Notice.--

(1) By September 8 of each year, the commissioner shall provide application forms and written instructions for reimbursements from the fund to:

(i) The fire chief and president of each volunteer fire company.

(ii) The chief executive of each municipality in which a municipal fire company is located.

(iii) The head of each combined volunteer and municipal fire company and each airport fire company.

(2) The application forms and written instructions for reimbursements from the fund shall also be posted on the publicly accessible Internet website of the office.

(b) Contents.-- An application for reimbursement from the fund must contain the following:

(1) The name, address, telephone number and other contact information of the fire company requesting reimbursement;

(2) The name of all firefighters to receive a reimbursement for personal protective gear or other protective equipment;

(3) Documentation reflecting the out-of-pocket costs borne by the fire companies or the firefighter for personal protective gear or other protective equipment to be reimbursed, as well as any certification requirements otherwise prescribed; and

(4) Any other information required by the office to assist in processing reimbursement from the fund.

(c) Completion.--

(1) The period to submit applications for reimbursement from the fund shall remain open for 45 days each year.

(2) Completed applications for reimbursement from the fund must be submitted to the office within the designated time frames and in the form and manner prescribed by the office.

(d) Determination.-- Within 60 days of the application submission deadline each year, the commissioner shall act to approve or disapprove submitted applications for reimbursement

from the fund. Applications that have not been approved or disapproved within 60 days after the close of the application period each year shall be deemed approved.

§ 7854. Fire company eligibility.

- (a) Mandate.--Reimbursement from the fund may only be made to an eligible fire company.
- (b) Criteria.--To be considered an eligible fire company, a fire company must:
 - (1) Actively participate in the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System (PennFIRS) under a signed agreement. The following apply:
 - (i) The commissioner shall develop guidelines specifying the criteria necessary to determine the level of participation in PennFIRS for fire companies to remain eligible for reimbursement from the fund.
 - (ii) The commissioner shall transmit notice of the guidelines under subparagraph (i) to the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Bulletin.
 - (2) Certify that a firefighter to receive reimbursement from the fund be in good standing with the fire company for at least the last 24 months;
 - (3) Certify that a firefighter who obtained personal protective gear and for whom reimbursement is sought from the fund has received the minimum level of Firefighter 2 under the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy standards before the reimbursement application is made; and
 - (4) Certify that a firefighter to receive reimbursement or for whom a fire company is receiving reimbursement:
 - (i) has not received reimbursement for gear under this program for the preceding five years; or
 - (ii) is replacing personal protective gear permanently taken out of service due to incident response or training exercise.

§ 7855. Reimbursements.

- (a) Retention of reimbursement.-- If a fire company receives reimbursement for costs that were paid directly by the fire company on behalf of a firefighter, the fire company may retain the reimbursement.
- (b) Distribution of reimbursement.-- If a fire company receives reimbursement for costs that were paid directly by the firefighter, the fire company shall distribute the reimbursement to the firefighter as soon as practicable.
- (c) Amount.-- The amount of a reimbursement under subsection (a) shall be commensurate with the actual expenses incurred for the physical examination and shall not exceed \$4500 per firefighter.

- (d) Pro rata reimbursements.-- Reimbursements shall be made on a pro rata basis if the total dollar amount of the approved applications exceeds the amount of money available in the fund to provide the reimbursements.

§ 7856. Annual reports.

- (a) Requirement.-- No later than September 1 of each year, the office shall issue an annual report, which shall include all of the following information:
- (1) The money in the fund at the beginning of the previous fiscal year and the balance in the fund at the end of the previous fiscal year.
 - (2) The number of reimbursement applications received by the office during the previous fiscal year.
 - (3) The number of reimbursements made during the previous fiscal year.
 - (4) The fire companies to which reimbursements were made during the previous fiscal year.
 - (5) The total dollar amount of reimbursements made during the previous fiscal year.
- (b) Submittal.-- Each report under this section shall be posted on the publicly accessible Internet website of the office and submitted to the following:
- (1) The chairperson and minority chairperson of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee of the Senate.
 - (2) The chairperson and minority chairperson of the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee of the House of Representatives.

§ 7857. Distribution of information.-- The office shall annually distribute information on the fund to all fire companies in this Commonwealth, including reimbursement procedures and eligibility criteria.

§ 7858. Appropriations.-- Money necessary to administer this chapter shall be provided by an annual appropriation by the General Assembly.

Section 2. This act shall take effect in 90 days.