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Revision Date:	4/1/12
Revision Period:	As Needed
Prepared by:	HFT Spec.
Authorized by:	Chief, BFM
Location:	CDA Staff Office

FIRE MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

Volunteer Fire Assistance

1. PURPOSE

Congress has recognized that fire protection in rural communities is generally lacking or inadequate. To improve this situation, Congress authorized the Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) program. This program provides financial and technical assistance to organize, train, and equip local forces for fire protection and suppression.

2. APPLICABILITY

Applies to IDL and Association Fire Wardens and Assistant Fire Wardens.

3. ASSOCIATED POLICIES

USDA FS VFA Desk Guide

State of Idaho Department of Administration-Purchasing

State of Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education

4. EXCEPTION AUTHORIZATION

Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the Chief, Bureau of Fire Management.

5. DEFINITIONS

6. POLICY

State Foresters are designated as the administrators of the program through a cooperative agreement with the USDA Forest Service, State and Private Forestry. In Idaho, Fire Wardens are designated as the Idaho Department of Lands contact with the local communities and rural fire districts.

7. PROCEDURES

A. Project Applications

VFA applications will be submitted on a **Volunteer Fire Assistance Grant Application, Attachment 1**, to IDL or Timber Protective Association Fire Wardens. Fire Wardens must assure the application meets the requirements of the program. Only those meeting requirements will qualify for financial assistance.

To provide a stable framework for program users, the following timetable will be used:

1. Spring:
 - a. Program opens for applications.



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- b. Applications and instructions mailed to Idaho’s fire departments and districts.
 - c. Applications are submitted by fire departments/districts to IDL Fire Wardens or Timber Protective Associations for review.
 - d. After review, applications are sent to IDL Bureau of Fire Management.
2. Summer:
- a. Applications are prioritized by IDL in collaboration with representatives from Idaho’s fire community.
 - b. Successful and unsuccessful applicants are notified of grant funding status by IDL Bureau of Fire Management.

Important Notice

Idaho Department of Lands Volunteer Fire Assistance will not be available to a fire department/district applicant who is not a participant in the County Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) process for their county. In addition, all requests for VFA assistance listed on the application should be identified in the applicant county’s CWPP or periodic update/addendum.

B. Eligibility Requirements – REVIEW CAREFULLY

1. A single fire department serving a rural area or a rural community with a population of 10,000 or less is eligible (latest Census).
2. Area fire departments (fire districts, townships, etc.) may serve an aggregate population of greater than 10,000 as long as the service area of the fire department includes a rural area or a rural community having a population of 10,000 or less. The VFA funding must be used to benefit the rural population.
3. A single county or town with a population over 10,000 that is served by two or more fire districts operating entirely within the bounds of the county or town may qualify as long as the service area of a given fire department includes a rural area, or a rural community, or the population of the fire department’s jurisdiction is 10,000 or less. The VFA funding must be used for the rural area.
4. A single community with a population greater than 10,000 and having a single fire department with one or more fire stations may qualify. The fire department must have a service area that includes a rural area or community that does not exceed 10,000 population. The VFA funding must be used only for the benefit of the rural population. Similarly a single community with a population greater than 10,000 that also



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provides fire protection to an adjoining rural community or 10,000 or less population by contract may also be eligible provided the VFA funding is used entirely to support the rural community.

5. A single community fire department serving a population greater than 10,000 and not providing protection to a rural area or to a rural community is not eligible for VFA financial assistance.
6. While paid fire departments are not excluded from participation in the VFA program, targeting of grants to qualifying fire departments having a membership comprised at least 80 percent volunteer firefighters is encouraged.
7. The fire department/district share (match) of the financial assistance must be available at the time of application. Match must be “hard” (cash) match; non-reimbursable out-of-pocket expenses where the subrecipient is responsible for payment. Applicants may not derive their share from other sources of federal government assistance. Note: Fire departments/districts must be able to provide a hard (cash) match of at least ten percent of grant funds being requested.
8. Application must be completed in full and signed by the fire department/district’s Fire Chief in order to be considered.
9. When fire departments/districts are developing their VFA Grant Application, they are asked to contact the IDL Forest Protective District Fire Warden or Timber Protective Association Fire Warden for assistance with obtaining GSA pricing quotes for items available through GSA. Some items (for example fold-a-tanks) are not available for purchase through GSA; however, the Coeur d’Alene Interagency Fire Cache may be able to assist with sourcing these items at the most competitive price.
10. When it is possible to order items through the GSA Wildland Fire Equipment Catalog, only GSA or equivalent priced PPE and equipment will be considered for reimbursement. Any expenditure over and above GSA pricing **will not be reimbursed**.
11. Wildland firefighting boots will not be funded.
12. Fire Shelters – These grant funds will not cover a personal shelter for every member of the applicant’s fire department/district. IDL will only consider shelters for the number of seats on wildland apparatus.
13. Communications Equipment – This program will only consider requests with pricing quotes from State Bid Contract vendors. (For information on vendors, contact the State of Idaho Department of Administration-



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Purchasing). All radios purchased must be narrow band and specified as such on the vendor quote. Radios purchased must be compliant with the applicant county's radio plan.

14. Training – There are several state agencies responsible for training of personnel. Applicant should pursue these avenues before applying for funding through this grant by contacting the local Idaho Department of Lands, Timber Protective Association, Bureau of Land Management, or Forest Service representative. Another training resource is the State of Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education.

15. Project Request – Provide a detailed description of how this request will improve the response capability within the designated service area for which the applicant's department/district is first and foremost responsible.

C. Project Payments

Once the project is completed, grant recipient must forward a copy of the paid receipts, paid invoices, and/or checks showing payment, a completed **Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters – Primary Covered Transactions, AD-1047, Attachment 2**, and a completed **Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification, W-9, Attachment 3**, to their local IDL Area Office or Timber Protective Association. The required forms are enclosed with the letter of award and are available under "Forms" on the IDL Intranet. Reimbursement will not be processed without these documents.

When an item is available through GSA, any expenditure over and above GSA pricing will not be reimbursed.

All requests for reimbursement must be submitted by January 31 following the date of award.

Note – When submitting the request for reimbursement, the recipient must submit documents demonstrating the ten percent hard (cash) match expenditure in order to be reimbursed the full amount of the grant award. If match is not demonstrated, ten percent will be deducted from the amount of reimbursement.

The Fire Warden will check the statements for accuracy and completeness and will submit the request for reimbursement to the Bureau of Fire Management for payment.