

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

April 23, 2020

Peter T. Gaynor
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Administrator Gaynor,

I am writing in support of the Vancouver Fire Department's (VFD) two applications to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant. Located in Southwest Washington along the Oregon border, the Vancouver Fire Department is immediately responsible for nearly 250,000 residents across a 90 square mile area, and serves over 1,000,000 individuals throughout the greater Portland, Oregon area through mutual aid agreements. If funded, these requests would allow VFD to better serve and protect the residents of this rapidly growing region.

VFD's first application requests funding to replace its thermal imaging camera (TIC) equipment. As you know, the use of TIC equipment increases firefighter ability to rapidly locate the start of a fire and potential victims and it reduces firefighter exposure. According to VFD, during a 2018 department assessment, command staff determined its TIC equipment was obsolete, did not meet current safety standards and had an increasing failure rate. The increased failure rate is at a critical point, potentially compromising firefighter safety. VFD needs to replace this essential equipment immediately. With grant funding, VFD will replace the current noncompliant TIC equipment with safety equipment that meets current standards, which is necessary to protect the health and safety of VFD's firefighters and the communities that rely on VFD.

VFD is also requesting funding for specialized training classes to help its firefighters respond to incidents involving hazardous materials, a significant and growing risk in the area. VFD is the regional responder for hazardous materials in Southwest Washington and it also provides support to the City of Portland. Vancouver, Washington is a hub for the transportation of hazardous materials, including crude oil, and is bisected by railroads transporting crude oil from the Midwest to refineries in the Puget Sound. With grant funding, VFD will ensure its hazmat team members, company officers and incident commanders are equipped with the proper training and expertise to respond to this growing threat.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration to the Vancouver Fire Department's two applications to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant.

Sincerely,

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator