



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

RURAL VFD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HB 2604)

Texas Forest Service will implement the following changes to the Rural VFD Assistance Program (**HB 2604**) in FY 2013.

- The Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program still exists. It was retained and continued by the 82nd Texas legislature. However, because of the state budget crisis, the legislature reduced spending authority for the program for the coming fiscal year (September 1 through August 31). Beginning September 1, 2012, the annual grant budget for the program will be \$7.0 million.
- Because of the reduced spending authority, the Texas Forest Service has made the decision to continue to focus the limited funds on grant categories that prominently emphasize **firefighter safety**. For that reason, highest priority will be given to grants for Training Tuition and PPE in fiscal year 2013.
- The Texas Forest Service will continue to accept and approve grant applications in the following categories:
 - **Training Tuition**
 - **Training Libraries**
 - **Electronic Projectors**
 - **Structural PPE**
 - **Wildland PPE**
 - **Fire Equipment**
 - **Rescue Equipment**
- The Texas Forest Service will accept applications for **Emergency Grants** to replace fire trucks that are destroyed by fire or that are destroyed in a vehicle accident. A limited amount of funds will be available in this grant category. Applications for emergency grants will be approved only on a case-by-case basis following an on-site assessment conducted by a TFS agent.
- The Texas Forest Service will continue to accept applications for first fire trucks. Applications for first fire trucks will be reviewed and approved only at the year-end Funding Meeting, usually held in July of each year. Approval of fire truck applications is subject to the availability of funds at year end.
- Round Two of Computer Grants is now open. Grant applications are now accepted for a second computer. Eligible items include desktop or laptop computer systems. I-pads and tablet computers are not eligible for grant assistance.
- Communication Equipment is no longer eligible for grant assistance. Fire departments that have an application on-file for communication equipment will receive a written notice of cancellation.
- The Texas Forest Service is required by law to modify its fire department rating system to include threat of wildfire risk. An additional rating category will be added to the Rural Fire Defense Rating Guide and will be called County Wildfire Exposure. Fire departments should experience an increase in their current rating number as a result of this additional factor.