PROGRAM GUIDANCE
FIRE COMPANY AND VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SERVICE GRANT PROGRAM
STATE FISCAL YEAR 2012-13

Section 1. Introduction.

(a) The Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program (Program) provides grants to improve and enhance the capabilities of fire companies and volunteer ambulance services throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (Commonwealth) to provide firefighting, ambulance and rescue services. Program funds may be used for projects that are eligible in accordance with Chapter 78 (relating to Grants to Fire Companies and Volunteer Services) of Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, 35 Pa.C.S. §7801 *et seq.*, as amended by Act 78 of 2012. Eligible projects are defined at 35 Pa.C.S. § 7813 (relating to Award of Grants).

(b) Assistance from the Program is in the form of grants from the Commonwealth to eligible fire companies and volunteer ambulance services for projects which, in the judgment of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency in consultation with the State Fire Commissioner, meet the criteria of Chapter 78 of Title 35, as amended , are in accordance with this Program Guidance, the Program guidelines in this chapter, and meet all Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Application criteria as stated in the application.

(c) Grants will be not less than $2,500 and not more than $15,000 per applicant fire company nor more than $10,000 per applicant volunteer ambulance service.

(d) Applicants should be aware that the Program expects to receive a large number of applications for the limited funds appropriated from the State Gaming Fund. As such, it is possible that not every application can be fully funded, in which case grants will be awarded on a prorated basis to projects that are determined to be eligible.

(e) The Program expenditures will be charged to funds appropriated to the Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program by section 1720-C(c) of The Fiscal Code.

Section 2. Definitions.

The following words and terms, when used in this chapter, have the following meanings unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

Advanced Life Support--The advanced prehospital and interhospital emergency medical care of serious illness or injury by appropriately trained health professionals and by certified EMT-paramedics.

Agency--The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency in consultation with the Commissioner.

Application--The Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program Application.

Basic Life Support Services--Prehospital or interhospital emergency medical care and management of illness or injury performed by specially trained and certified or licensed personnel.

Certification--Any class of instruction or test that will provide certification at any level that is currently offered in the Commonwealth through the Voluntary Fire Fighter Certification program administered by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy.

Certified Personnel--Any member of the fire or rescue company who is certified at a minimum level of Fire Fighter 1 on or before July 1, 2012 by the National Professional Qualifications Board or by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress and verified by the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy.

Chapter 78-- Chapter 78 (relating to Grants to Fire Companies and Volunteer Services) of Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, 35 Pa.C.S. §7801 *et seq.*, as amended by Act 78 of 2012.

Commissioner--The State Fire Commissioner.

Equipment--Any apparatus, equipment or tools ordinarily used by a fire, rescue or ambulance service in the performance of their duties.

Facility--A structure or portion thereof intended for the purpose of storage or protection of firefighting apparatus, ambulances and rescue vehicles and related equipment and gear. The term does not include meeting halls, social halls, social rooms, lounges or any other facility not directly related to firefighting or the furnishing of ambulance or rescue services.

Final Report--The report to be filed as provided in Section 6 of these Guidelines by the fire company or volunteer ambulance services detailing the expenditure of the funds granted.

Fire Company--A volunteer fire company or a municipal fire company located in this Commonwealth.

Invalid Coach--A vehicle which is primarily maintained, operated and intended to be used for routine transport of persons who are convalescent or otherwise nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in transit. Such vehicles shall not be considered ambulance or emergency medical service vehicles.

OSFC--Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

Program--The Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.

Regional or Joint Project--A cooperative agreement wherein any combination of three (3) or more separately chartered fire or rescue companies agree to use all or any portion of their respective grant request to jointly complete any project that qualifies under the Act. To be eligible for a joint project, each company's share shall not be less than $5,000 per organization.

Volunteer Ambulance Service--Any nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in the Commonwealth, which is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and is not associated or affiliated with any hospital and which is regularly engaged in the provision of emergency medical services, including basic life support or advanced life support services and advanced life support squads as defined in 28 Pa. Code § 1001.2 (relating to definitions). The term shall not include any corporation, association or organization that is primarily engaged in the operation of invalid coaches which are intended for the routine transport of persons who are convalescent or otherwise nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in transit.

Volunteer Fire Company—A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in the Commonwealth which provides fire protection services and which may offer other voluntary emergency services within the Commonwealth. Voluntary emergency services provided by a volunteer fire company may include voluntary ambulance and voluntary rescue services.

Volunteer Rescue Company--A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in the Commonwealth that provides rescue services as part of the response to fires and/or vehicle accidents within the Commonwealth.

Section 3. Eligibility.

(a) Fire Company Grant

(1) Eligible applicants. A fire company as defined in Section 2. To receive grant funds a fire company shall have actively responded to one or more fire or rescue emergencies during the previous calendar year and is officially recognized by the appropriate municipality. The fire company shall also agree to participate in (by FY 2013) and report (by FY 2014) information (incidents) using the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System (PennFIRS).

(2) Eligible projects. Program funds may be used for projects that are consistent with Chapter 78 and the Program. Eligible projects must improve and enhance the capabilities of the fire company to provide firefighting, ambulance or rescue services. Eligible projects are:

(i) Construction and/or renovation of the fire company's facility and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide fire, ambulance and rescue services. This includes repair, renovation or construction of sleeping quarters (bunk rooms).

(ii) Purchase of firefighting, ambulance or rescue equipment or repair thereof;

(iii) Debt reduction associated with already completed projects eligible under subsection (i) and (ii); or

(iv) Training and certification of members.

Eligible projects initiated on or after July 1st 2012 and completed prior to disbursement of grant program funds may be considered as eligible projects for the current grant year.

(3) When two or more fire companies have merged/consolidated their use of equipment, firefighters and services within five years preceding the date of the current year application submission deadline, the consolidated entity may be deemed eligible to receive a grant not to exceed the amount of the combined

total for which the individual companies would have been eligible had they not consolidated. Proof of merger/consolidation must be provided to the OSFC prior to the approval of grant applications.

(4) To be eligible, a project must cost must be no less than $2500.

(b) Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant

(1) Eligible applicants. A volunteer ambulance service as defined in Section 2.

(2) Eligible projects. Program funds may be used for projects that are consistent with Chapter 78. Eligible projects must improve and enhance the capability of the ambulance service to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support or advanced life support services. Eligible projects are:

(i) Construction and/or renovation of the volunteer ambulance service's facility and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support and advanced life support services. This includes repair, renovation or construction of sleeping quarters (bunk rooms).

(ii) Purchase of ambulance or rescue equipment or repair thereof;

(iii) Debt reduction associated with already completed projects eligible under subsection (i) and (ii); or

(iv) Training and certification of members.

Eligible projects initiated after July 1st 2012, and completed prior to disbursement of grant program funds may be considered as eligible projects for the current grant year.

(3) When two or more ambulance services have consolidated their use of equipment, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and services within five years preceding the date of the current year application submission deadline, the consolidated entity may be deemed eligible to receive a grant not to exceed the amount of the combined total for which the individual services (companies) would have been eligible had they not consolidated. Proof of consolidation must be provided to the OSFC prior to the approval of grant applications.

(4) To be eligible, a project must cost must be no less than $2500.

Section 4. Program Requirements and Instructions.

The following requirements apply to the program:

(1) Project applications for the grants shall be submitted using either the online web based application process or the paper forms provided by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner (OSFC).

(2) The OSFC reserves the right to:

(i) Request additional information regarding eligibility;

(ii) Request additional information regarding proposed use of funds;

(iii) Require explanation or revision of the applicant's project budget; and

(iv) Require clarification of the applicant's project narrative.

(3) Incomplete applications will be rejected. An applicant shall carefully follow the instructions for completing either the online or the paper form of the application. Specific information is required as indicated on both the online application and the paper form. Applications not containing required information will be considered incomplete.

(4) The Project Narrative shall provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the project and must include:

(i) Description of the project(s);

(ii) Benefits to be realized from the project; and

(iii) Grant funds to be expended on the project.

Section 5. Application Submission and Approval Procedure.

(a) The OSFC will mail and post information on the OSFC's website (www.osfc.state.pa.us) detailing the grant application process to fire companies and volunteer ambulance services throughout the Commonwealth. A paper application form is available upon written request, if your organization does not have internet access. Applications shall be requested in writing to the Office of the State Fire Commissioner, 2605 Interstate Drive, Harrisburg, PA 17110-9364.

(1) The OSFC will provide an online Web based process to gather applicant information and verify project eligibility. The OSFC will provide written information to every fire company and ambulance service regarding the grant program guidelines and the availability of the online applicant information/project eligibility verification process.

(2) Paper submissions will only be accepted if the organization does not have internet access. At the time the availability of the online grant application process is announced, please contact the OSFC at 800-670-3473 about the application and/or project eligibility information. Information will also be available on the OSFC's website.

(b) A fire company or a volunteer ambulance service seeking a grant under this program shall submit a completed online or paper form of the grant application to the OSFC. The application period will remain open for 45 days each year.

(c) Completed applications shall be submitted to the OSFC no later than 4:00 PM Eastern Daylight Saving Time October 19, 2012.

(d) Following receipt of the application, OSFC and PEMA may request additional information. This information may be provided through the online Web-based process, or in writing.

(d) The OSFC shall act to approve or disapprove applications within 60 days of the application submission deadline each year. Applications received by OSFC which have not been approved or disapproved by the December 18, 2012 shall be deemed approved, subject to the provisions of Chapter 78.

(e) Grant award determinations

(1) Fire Company Grants

(i) A fire company as defined in Section 2 that actively responded to one or more fire or rescue emergencies during the previous calendar year; is officially recognized by the appropriate municipality; agrees to actively participate in the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System; submits a complete application, and; proposes a qualifying project will be eligible for a base award.

(ii) If the base award is only a portion of the applicant's grant request, additional grant funds will be awarded to eligible applicants by applying an award factor to that portion of the applicant's grant request which exceeds the base award. The award factor is determined by dividing the applicant's bonus points by fifteen (15), the highest possible number of points.

Award factor points:

Five (5) points will be awarded to an eligible fire or rescue service which uses the grant funding to perform a regional/joint project as found in the definitions.

One (1) point will be awarded for each member of the fire company who meets the definition of certified personnel, up to a maximum of 10 points.

(iii) If necessary, the resultant additional award will be prorated by a factor determined by dividing the total program funds remaining after the base awards have been determined by the total amount of funds requested in excess of the base awards so that all grant awards do not exceed the total grant funds available.

(iv) If funding is not fully distributed after this award factor calculation, the Agency reserves the right to adjust the award factor formula so that all grant funds available are distributed, subject to the provisions of Chapter 78.

(v) Fire company grants to individual fire companies shall not exceed $15,000.00, and shall be no less than $2,500.

(2) Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant

An eligible volunteer ambulance service will be eligible for a grant ranging in amount from $2500 to $10,000. Awards shall be prorated by a factor determined by dividing the total funds available by the total amount of funds requested so that all grant awards do not exceed the total grant funds available.

Section 6. Grant Award and Reporting Procedures.

(a) Grant award notifications will be made as follows:

(1) Applicants that apply for the grant using the online application process will be notified by e-mail.

(2) Applicants that apply for the grant using the paper form will be notified by letter.

(b) At the time grant recipients are notified of their award, and in the same manner, they will be presented with a grant agreement. This grant agreement will contain the details of the grant, including name of recipient, amount of award, project description and terms of the agreement. In the case of fire company grant recipients, they must agree to participate in PennFIRS. The grant agreement must be signed by appropriate representatives of the organization or municipality authorized to bind the recipient organization to the terms of the agreement, and returned to the OSFC for execution by the Commonwealth before grant funds can be released.

(c) The applicant will maintain complete and accurate records with respect to the project. The OSFC will have free access to these records, including invoices of material and services, and other relative data and records, as well as the right to inspect all project work. The applicant shall furnish upon request of OSFC all data, reports, contracts, documents and other information relevant to the project.

(d) The applicant shall, upon completion of the project, but no later than September 1, 2013, file a Final Report with OSFC in a manner and form prescribed by the OSFC. The Final Report will include either paid invoices from a vendor with a zero balance or an invoice and cancelled checks for the fundable projects completed and paid for during the grant cycle (July 1, 2012 – September 1, 2013). Expenditures for debt reduction must include evidence from the lender such as a copy of the cancelled check or letter from the lender showing that the funds were applied to such debt reduction consistent with the terms of the grant agreement. If the invoices or purchases are not identified in your grant application, an amendment to the grant application will be required. Any grant funds not expended by the applicant for the project shall be returned to OSFC prior to or with the filing of the Final Report. Payment should be in the form of a check made payable to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Failure to file a Final Report will be grounds for the OSFC to seek the return of all grant funds awarded.

Section 7. Program Limitations.

(a) This section identifies program limitations that may result from the misuse of the grant funds.

(b) An applicant may not make or authorize changes to an approved project without first obtaining consent of the OSFC by submitting an on-line or written project amendment.

(c) The applicant agrees that noncompliance with the conditions of the grant agreement shall be grounds for the recapture of funds provided to the applicant. If the applicant fails to refund the monies, the Commonwealth, in addition to any rights or remedies it may have at law or in equity, reserves the right to offset the amount due against any existing or future sums of money owed the applicant by any Commonwealth agency or department, including PEMA.

(d) The Agency, or its duly authorized representative, shall have access to the records of the applicant for the purpose of auditing financial transactions, determination of compliance with grant terms, and an evaluation of project performance.

(e) The applicant agrees to retain all cost supporting records and documentation for a period of three years from the date that it receives its final grant payment from the Agency.

Section 8. Special Provisions

(a) An applicant for a grant under this act who is delinquent in loan payments to the Pennsylvania Volunteer Loan Assistance Program, established under the act of July 15, 1976 (P.L. 1036. No. 208), known as the Volunteer Fire Volunteer Ambulance Service and Rescue Squad Assistance Act, shall agree to use its grant funds to pay any arrears to the Commonwealth or it will not be qualified to receive a grant. Any organization agreeing to this arrangement who fails to make payment to the Commonwealth shall be disqualified from applying to the Program for a period of three years.

(b) An applicant for a grant under the Program must demonstrate that it complied with all terms of applicable grant agreements regarding the use of the grant money received in previous years or the applicant shall not be eligible to receive a grant in the current year.

c) An applicant for a grant under this act who has failed to return a signed grant agreement for any previous grant year will not be permitted to apply for a grant in the current grant year (2012-13), unless the applicant provides the OSFC with a reasonable written explanation as to why it did not claim its grant.

d) Any equipment purchased through grant monies that has a service life can be transferred, but not sold to another fire company or volunteer ambulance organization via an appropriate agreement which states that the equipment is transferred from one organization to another and identifies the equipment being transferred. Copies of the agreement should be retained for audit purposes. Such a transfer meets the intent of the Program by allowing approved equipment to be used to improve and enhance the capabilities of other fire or volunteer ambulance services throughout the Commonwealth.

e) Should a Fire Company or Volunteer Ambulance Company no longer be officially recognized by the local government, they shall be ineligible to receive a grant under the Program.

Section 9. Contact Information.

All applicant inquiries should be directed to:

Office of the State Fire Commissioner
2605 Interstate Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17110-9364
Toll free - 800-670-3473
E-mail - ra-vfcvasgp@pa.gov