

Local Firefighter Safety Bill

Fact Sheet

SB 14-

Senate Sponsor Senator Jeanne Nicholson 4873

House Sponsor Representative Tony Exum 3069

Drafter: Tom Morris

Purpose: To provide firefighters with the proper bunker gear, equipment, and training to protect them from unnecessary exposure to fire, smoke, and other carcinogens

Problem:

- Some municipalities and rural volunteer fire departments are unable to raise the money to cover the cost for the proper gear, equipment, and training to protect them from unnecessary exposure to fire, smoke, and other carcinogens.
- Some firefighters are unaware of the risks associated with certain exposures especially carcinogens and need to be educated about the need to care for and use proper gear and equipment.

The bill would:

1. Create a grant program administered by the Department of Public Safety
2. Award grants to local volunteer and professional fire Departments to provide the funding for the proper gear, equipment, and training to protect them from unnecessary exposure to fire, smoke, and other carcinogens
3. Continue for five years to use \$3,250,000 Federal Mineral Lease Funds that were set to expire
4. Use an existing Department of Public Safety Advisory Board, The Fire Service Training and Certification Advisory Board, to review grant applications and make recommendations to the Department

Background

- The Wildfire Preparedness Fund receives money from the insurance premium tax. It is used to pay for the air fleet; hand crews, shelters and other cost incurred by the state to fight fires but does not provide funds for local firefighters. (Until July 1, 2013 the wildfire preparedness fund received an annual \$3.25 million transfer from the mineral leasing fund. Last year the general assembly substituted a portion of the insurance premium taxes as the source of revenues for this fund.)
- There are 45 local career fire departments in Colorado
- There are 105 local career and volunteer combined fire department in Colorado

- There are 245 local all-volunteer fire departments in Colorado
- Bunker gear for each firefighter costs approximately \$2,500
- Masks cost approximately \$500; a complete self-contained breathing apparatus unit costs about \$3,800
- Commercial washers and dryers cost approximately \$15,000 and installation of the machine cost estimate is another \$5,000
- Diesel exhaust systems for fire stations cost between \$10,000 - \$40,000, depending on size of the station.
- A needs assessment of local fire departments indicates volunteer firefighters often have only one set of bunker gear when two sets are recommended; gear is often shared and may not fit correctly. Especially masks need to fit the individual to fully protect the firefighter. Machines to wash the gear are usually not available especially in the smaller departments
- There is some federal money available through a competitive grant application process to provide safety gear and equipment but the funds are insufficient to meet the need in Colorado.

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