

New Bedford one of 75 Massachusetts fire departments to receive gear cleaning machine grant

Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito today announced \$420,000 in grant awards to 75 Massachusetts fire departments for gear cleaning machines that will reduce firefighters' exposure to cancer-causing chemicals on the job. The New Bedford Fire Department will receive \$6,448.95.

"This grant program will help keep firefighters across the Commonwealth healthy by preventing repeated exposures to the dangerous chemicals they encounter every day," said Governor Charlie Baker. "Firefighters take significant risks each and every time they put their gear on and respond to an emergency. One way that we can protect them and show our appreciation for their dedicated service is to provide these machines to ensure their gear is clean at the start of every emergency."

"Though often overshadowed by more visible risks, occupational cancer has affected far too many Massachusetts firefighters," said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. "Providing financial assistance to departments so that they can improve their cancer prevention efforts with gear washing machines is one way we can begin to change this in the future."

"The best-practices related to the care and handling of turnout gear have changed rapidly in recent years," said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Thomas Turco. "We have a far better understanding of the occupational cancer problem in the fire service now than we did just a short time ago, and have learned that providing firefighters with the ability to wash their turnout gear after every exposure to smoke or fire

is one of the best things we can do for their long-term health and safety,” he added.

The awards come in addition to \$920,000 in grant awards delivered last year to 174 Massachusetts fire departments, funding 75 washer-extractors and about 3,000 pairs of gloves and another 3,000 hoods. The Baker-Polito Administration has also filed a bond bill which would provide \$25 million in authorization to continue funding similar grants to allow departments to purchase equipment including washers-extractors.

“It was not long ago that turnout gear was rarely washed because we didn’t understand the cumulative effects of wearing soot-laden gear every day”, said State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey. “We now know the importance of washing gear regularly, however the financial challenge of equipping fire stations with gear washers has delayed the implementation of these practices in many departments. The 75 machines purchased through this program will greatly accelerate the adoption of these practices for a significant number of firefighters.”

Through the Washer-Extractor Equipment Grant, \$420,000 was awarded to 75 departments that will each receive a new washer-extractor to clean their structural firefighting gear after exposure to smoke and other toxic chemicals. A national standard set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) on the care and cleaning of structural firefighting gear delineates specific types of machines that should be used to effectively remove cancer-causing chemicals after each fire. All washer-extractors purchased with this grant will meet this standard and enable personnel to wear clean gear each time they leave the fire station for an emergency.

“Adding modern washer-extractors to 75 fire stations across the Commonwealth is a truly significant step forward for the fire service in Massachusetts. Over the lifespan of these machines, they will help improve the health and wellbeing of

innumerable firefighters and their families”, said Needham Fire Chief Dennis Condon, President of the Fire Chiefs’ Association of Massachusetts (FCAM). “We are extremely appreciative of the generous assistance the Commonwealth has provided to address what has been an urgent issue for many fire departments in Massachusetts”, he added.

To view a list of grant recipients, click **[here](#)**.