

FACT SHEET
COOPERATIVE FORESTRY ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1978
VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (VFA)

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) is given the responsibility by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to administer the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978, and has been authorized to make awards on a matching basis to public entities such as cities, counties, special districts and volunteer fire departments.

AWARDS ARE PROVIDED ON A REIMBURSABLE BASIS. RECIPIENTS MUST COMPLETE THE APPROVED AWARD PROJECT(S) USING LOCAL FUNDS AND THEN BILL CAL FIRE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE AWARD AGREEMENT IN ORDER TO RECEIVE THE AWARD FUNDS.

PROVISIONS OF ACT

The ACT provides for financial assistance to organize, train and equip local forces in rural areas and communities to prevent, control and suppress fires threatening life, resources and other improvements. This assistance is available only to communities under 10,000, but groups of smaller communities may join together in a combined effort to service more than 10,000 people.

The level of funding expected for California is currently unknown due to the lack of a Federal budget and the inability to obligate grant funding until there is a budget.

Financial assistance for any project cannot exceed 50% of actual expenditures.

Priority will be given to multi-community projects such as countywide planning, regional coordination groups, and several communities planning protection for an entire rural area.

HOW FUNDS CAN BE USED

Cost-share funds will be awarded to local governments to provide assistance to rural areas in upgrading their capability to organize, train and equip local forces for fire protection. Awards will be limited to a minimum of \$500 and a projected maximum of \$20,000.

Further assistance may be provided through loans from other sources of Federal funds for purchase of major items of equipment and facilities.

Proposed projects should be compatible with existing protection of state, county and local areas. Communities imposing strict boundary limits, i.e., excluding rural residents will not be considered in this program.

The use of funds for new fire engines and other apparatus is not encouraged. Federal excess vehicles can be obtained through loan from the Director and converted to fire engines. The cost of the conversion may be funded under this program.

Training of local fire forces in both wildfire and structural fire techniques is a primary goal of this program. The program should include a basic training program of at least 40 hours. In addition, an advanced training course of at least 40 hours should be developed.

Communications, for alarm systems and dispatch capabilities, should be considered an integral part of the rural fire department. Funds are available for the development and purchase of radio equipment for dispatching centers, vehicles and alert monitors and pagers.

Requests for construction projects of any type are NOT fundable.

Requests for HAZMAT, extrication, rescue, medical aid and other non-fire training costs or materials are NOT fundable.