



Press Release

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**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY ANNOUNCES
ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANTS
TO AID AMERICA'S FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

(Washington, DC) September 17, 2004 – Secretary Tom Ridge today announced 135 grants to fire departments throughout the United States in the sixteenth round of the Fiscal Year 2004 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The grants will ultimately total approximately 8,000 awards worth nearly \$750 million in direct assistance to firefighters throughout the country, demonstrating Homeland Security's commitment to ensuring that America's firefighters have the resources they need to protect their communities.

"President Bush and I strongly support the critical mission of our nation's firefighters. Through these funds, we will ensure that our nation's emergency responders have the equipment and training they need to respond to all hazards," said Secretary Ridge.

"We recognize the importance of the Fire Act Grants to our nation's fire departments and we will continue to work closely with the fire service community to meet their needs," added C. Suzanne Mencer, Director of the Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP).

This sixteenth round of grants provides \$10,433,914 to help local fire departments purchase firefighting equipment, fund firefighter health and safety programs, enhance emergency medical services programs, and conduct fire education and prevention programs.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is administered by the Department's Office for Domestic Preparedness in cooperation with the Department's United States Fire Administration.

"The Assistance to Firefighters grants represent a major effort by the federal government to ensure the nation's firefighters continue to have the basic capability

they require to do their jobs, improve safety and save lives,” said David Paulison, Administrator of the Department of Homeland Security’s United States Fire Administration.

On March 1, 2003, the Office for Domestic Preparedness became a part of the Department of Homeland Security. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-296) designated ODP as the principal federal agency responsible for the preparedness of the United States for acts of terrorism, including coordinating preparedness efforts at the federal level, and working with all state, local, tribal, parish, and private sector emergency response providers on all matters pertaining to combating terrorism, including training, exercises and equipment support. To support this mission, ODP administers a number of programs that provide a wide array of support to our nation’s emergency preparedness and response community. For more information on ODP, please visit the Website at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) is a division of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) within the Department of Homeland Security. The mission of the USFA is to reduce life and economic losses due to fire and related emergencies, through leadership, advocacy, coordination, and support. For more information on USFA, please visit the Website at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov>.

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