



## Legislation Text

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*Report Prepared by: Derek Parker, Fire Chief, Fire Department*

**SUBJECT:** Approval and Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Between the City of Merced and the City of Los Banos for Regional Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), Authorization for the Fire Department to Submit a Regional Grant Application to the Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Fiscal Year 2023 AFG Program to Fund Replacement of End-of-Life Thermal Imaging Cameras (TIC), and Authorization for the Fire Department to Submit a Second Grant Application to FEMA Fiscal Year 2023 AFG for Advanced Life Support Equipment for the Merced Fire Department

### REPORT IN BRIEF

Considers approving and executing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City of Merced and the City of Los Banos for Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Regional Grant. Provides authority to the Fire Department to submit a regional grant application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fiscal Year 2023 AFG Program to fund replacement of an end-of-life Thermal Imaging Cameras. Project cost will not exceed \$400,000 per FEMA based upon the populations of Merced and Los Banos combined. FEMA would be providing 90% of the project cost and the Regional Grant participants providing the 10% local match.

In addition, the Fire Department is requesting authority to submit a second grant application to the FEMA Fiscal Year 2023 AFG Program to fund the purchase of Advanced Life Support (ALS) electrocardiogram (ECG) monitors. Project cost not to exceed \$560,000 where FEMA would be providing 90% of the project cost and the City of Merced providing the 10% local match.

### RECOMMENDATION

**City Council** - Adopt a motion:

- A. Authorizing City Manager to execute the MOU between City of Merced and City of Los Banos for submission of Regional AFG Grant Project; and,
- B. Authorizing the submittal of a regional grant application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fiscal Year 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program with an estimated total project cost not to exceed \$400,000 per FEMA based upon the populations of the City of Merced and Los Banos combined. FEMA would be providing 90% of the project cost and the Regional Grant participants providing the 10% local match; and,
- C. Authorizing the submittal of a second grant application to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fiscal Year 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program for ECG monitors with an estimated total project cost not to exceed \$560,000. FEMA would be providing

90% of the project cost and the Regional Grant participants providing the 10% local match.

## ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve as recommended by staff; or,
2. Approve with modifications; or,
3. Refer to staff for reconsideration of specific items as requested by Council; or,
4. Continue to a future Council meeting; or,
5. Deny.

## AUTHORITY

Charter of the City of Merced, Section 200

Charter of the City of Merced, Article IV, Section 405

## CITY COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Public Safety as identified in the FY 23/24 adopted budget.

## DISCUSSION

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program is one of three grant programs that constitute the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) focus on helping firefighters and first responders purchase life-saving equipment; receive training; conduct research and outreach; and protect emergency personnel and the public from fire and related hazards. The program's goal is to enhance response capabilities and more effectively protect the health and safety of the public by providing direct financial assistance to eligible fire departments, nonaffiliated emergency medical services organizations, and state fire training academies.

The FEMA AFG Program competitively awards grant funding directly to fire departments and other agencies to provide support to those that lack the tools and resources necessary to protect the health and safety of the public and their emergency response personnel with respect to fire and all other hazards they may face.

- Eligible Activities
  - Operations and Safety
  - Vehicle Acquisition
  - Regional Projects
- 10% Local Cost Match

### Thermal Imaging Cameras and Equipment

The Fire Department is seeking authorization to submit one regional grant request, in coordination with the City of Los Banos, for thermal imaging cameras (TIC). Additionally, the Fire Department is seeking authorization to submit a separate request for Advanced Life Support (ALS) equipment to support future ALS operations.

The \$400,000 regional grant request for TICs will enhance safe operations for local firefighters within Merced County. The City of Los Banos is the only other stand-alone fire department in Merced

County. In preparing for the potential of an all-hands fire in either community, it is essential that this partnership be memorialized and strengthened. This regional grant request ensures continuity of equipment across departments, making operations safer and congruent. In addition, the City of Los Banos shares similar TIC end-of-life issue as the City of Merced.

### ECG Monitors for Advanced Life Support

MFDs request for a second, individual AFG grant application supports equipment acquisition needs related to the City Council's direction to transition to Advanced Life Support (ALS). The Merced Fire Department's (MFD's) service capacity consists of a minimum daily on-duty force of 19 personnel staffing five fire engines, one ladder truck, and one command unit responding from the City's five fire stations. The award of the 2022 FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant will not only increase our daily staffing to 27 personnel, which will add much needed ALS trained Firefighters to the department. Ground ambulance transportation is provided by a contracted provider under an exclusive operating area, performance-based contract with the Merced County Emergency Medical Services Agency (MCEMSA).

Fire and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) responders are on the front line of providing life-saving emergency and disaster response and providing the highest level of services to our community 24 hours a day / 7 days a week. Our community has the expectation to receive a timely response upon their initial call to the dispatch center regarding their call for help.

According to the Standards of Cover report prepared for the City of Merced, "A review of ambulance contract compliance, as reported by the MCEMSA, shows that ambulance response performance met the response time requirement of 10:59 minutes or less for 90 percent of Priority 1 (life-threatening) calls within the High-Density from January 1, 2015 to May 31, 2017. Contract compliance *fell below 90 percent to 65 percent*, however, for June, August, and September of 2017, the most recent reporting period available. Both Riggs and County EMS staff advised Citygate that a statewide shortage of licensed paramedics has impacted Riggs and other ALS ambulance service providers' ability to provide the number of paramedics needed daily to meet contractual response performance. In addition, a January 2017 EMS System Review Report cites the delayed transfer of patients to emergency department personnel at Mercy Medical Center, Merced as a continuing problem. Transfer delays require that ambulance personnel maintain patient care until the receiving medical center can accept the patient; the ambulance is thus not available to respond to emergencies until the patient transfer occurs. A 2014 statewide report also cited "very significant" to "extremely significant" patient offload delays in Merced County. This, combined with the reported shortage of paramedics, is increasingly impacting the Department's available service capacity due to prolonged ALS ambulance response times and associated extended on-scene times for Department resources at EMS incidents."

Through no fault of the contracted provider, the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbates the delayed response times. MCEMSA and the contracted provider are, and continue to be, a valuable public safety partner since day one when they were awarded the contract. To continue this successful partnership of providing the highest level of service to our residents and visitors, we intend to expand and build upon our Fire Department's EMS model. There are times of high call volume where there are little to no ambulances not only in the City of Merced but in the entire County of Merced. When a request for service occurs during these times a mutual aid ambulance responds from either Fresno County, Madera County, Mariposa County, or Stanislaus County. Those in need of service are faced

with a minimum 30-minute estimated time of arrival.

MFD EMT's are very capable and will provide a wide array of medical care, including Cardio-Pulmonary Respiration, use of oxygen, and Automatic External Defibrillator, or other life-saving equipment. Additionally, MFD's partnership with Dignity Health will be instrumental in providing mid-level care to the unhoused; provide service to the indigent and economically disadvantaged population; and take a proactive and preventative approach to high utilizers of the 9-1-1 system and local emergency department. Our local partners at Central California Alliance for Health and Dignity Health will be instrumental in providing care to those patients who are unable to make an office visit.

MFD firefighter/EMT's have played a key role in addressing the healthcare needs of our community during the pandemic. For example, on a regular basis, the fire department has walk in patients who come to the fire stations for medical treatment/diagnosis and even transport. Our firefighter/EMT's are trusted and respected for their medical expertise, the emergency care they provide, and are generally welcome in patients' homes. During the pandemic, our firefighters provided for public health while collaborating with other agencies and administered COVID-19 vaccinations for thousands of Merced residents. Our firefighter/EMT's are on a first name basis with many of their patients and the acquisition of an assessment vehicle will result in reducing 9-1-1 requests for non-urgent, non-transport services thereby reducing the burden on the contracted provider needing to respond to non-life-threatening medical calls.

MFD is seeking authorization to apply up to \$560,000 for electrocardiogram (ECG) monitors. The ECG monitors will be equipped with both manual and automatic defibrillators, synchronized cardioversion, noninvasive blood pressure cuffs, temperature probes, pulse oximetry, end tidal carbon dioxide measurements, and connectivity to the cloud to transfer data packets for documentation. In addition to improving the outcomes for the patients which MFD encounter, the improvements will have positive impacts for the members of the MFD by reducing their workload as well.

The MFD has a long history of success in being awarded FEMA AFG grants in prior years.

## **IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES**

No appropriation of funds is required at this time. Should the grant be awarded, MFD will return to the City Council and request that the grant be accepted.

If the grants are awarded, a supplemental appropriation for the 10% match of each grant will be needed of up to \$40,000 for the 1<sup>st</sup> AFG application and \$56,000 for the 2<sup>nd</sup> AFG application. These amounts will be needed from the unencumbered, unreserved General Fund and/or Measure Y balance for use as the City of Merced's local match as required by the grant's terms and conditions. The MOU with Los Banos requires them to reimburse the City of Merced the 10% match of the grant expenditures that will go to their City. Additionally, the use of pooled cash will be required to cover the initial outlays of the grant until the grant funds are reimbursed.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. City of Merced/City of Los Banos MOU
2. FY 2023 AFG NOFO