



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 18-538, **Version:** 1

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*Report Prepared by: Janet German, Secretary III, Fire*

**SUBJECT:** Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Application

### REPORT IN BRIEF

Authorize the submittal of a Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Application.

### RECOMMENDATION

**City Council** - Adopt a motion authorizing the submittal of a grant application for funding from the FEMA FY 2018 AFG program; and authorizing the City Manager or Assistant City Manager to sign the necessary documents;

### ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve as recommended by staff; or,
2. Deny; or,
3. Refer back to staff; or
4. Continue to a future meeting.

### 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 provided for in the 2018-19 Adopted Budget.

### DISCUSSION

The Fire Department is seeking authorization to submit a grant application in the approximate amount of \$416,485.86 with a local match of \$46,276.21, a 10% of \$462,762.07; the total project cost.

### Project Description

The purpose of this project is to replace existing portable radios within the City of Merced Fire Department (MFD). By funding this project, the AFG award will directly enhance responder safety, increase interoperability, enable new missions, and ensure Project 25 compatibility with the MFD.

The MFD is seeking funds from the AFG within the Fire Department Operations and Safety-

Equipment Section to replace 60 portable radios that will comply with NFPA 1221, 1561 and have Project 25 (P 25) compatibility. The MFD is also requesting funds for 60 temperature capable-remote speaker microphones (RSM) and charging equipment for fire apparatus and fire stations, to accompany the portable radios.

These portable radios are to replace existing units for all 56-seated positions, on each of seven front-line pieces of apparatus, four call-back-staffed apparatus, one California Emergency Master Mutual Aid Assignment apparatus, and four Chief Officer Vehicles. All Seated positions may be utilized during emergency call-back of personnel to large incidents. In addition to these portable radios, we will also use the funds to purchase 4 radios to be utilized as part of Swift Water Rescue response. Funding this project will enable us to create new missions for the organization that include ALS Fire/Rescue Medic response and Swift Water Rescue response as part of a joint response with a county law enforcement agency.

In 2017, the MFD conducted an internal risk assessment survey to identify priority needs for the organization. Upon completion of the survey, the MFD set goals and objectives for our communications program. These goals and objectives align as a high priority in the 2018 AFG funding priorities. The risk assessment identified the following deficiencies with current portable radio equipment:

1. Existing portable radios and RSMs pose safety risks to MFD firefighters, as current equipment is not designed with NFPA 1221 compliance of being, “manufactured for the environment in which they are to be used and shall be of a size and construction that allow their operation with the use of one hand.”
2. Existing missions require interoperability in communicating with cooperating agencies. The MFD is unable to fulfill minimum operations with cooperating agencies due to the current radio equipment having exclusively VHF capabilities.
3. New missions within the department and new missions coordinated with neighboring agencies, require the use of UHF and 800 MHZ capabilities.
4. The manufacturer deemed current portable radios obsolete in July of 2015 and discontinued the product. Existing portable radios are not P 25 capable.
5. The current portable radios are not Intrinsically Safe (IS). In other words, IS radios are designed to operate in potentially explosive atmospheres without the risk of becoming an ignition source or creating a spark that might cause a fire or explosion.

The estimated cost to update the portable radio equipment:

60 High Tier All Band Portable Radios with Batteries:	\$385,667.40
Charging Equipment:	\$19,584.40

60 RSM:	\$21,600.00
Mandatory Sales Tax (8.25%):	\$35,215.27
Shipping Charges:	\$695.00
Total:	\$462,762.07

The MFD agrees to maintain, during the term of the grant, expenditures relating to activities required in the 2018 AFG NOFO Section C. Eligibility Information.

**Operations Cost/Benefit**

Communication safety and operability was identified as a priority need within our department. The objective of the MFD is to provide safe, reliable and effective communications during emergency response.

The benefits of new portable radio equipment include, but are not limited to increased responder safety, increased civilian safety, increased level of service, increased reliability of our communications equipment, increased communications with our adjoining agencies, and increased statutory compliance.

Daily communications between the county contracted ambulance provider and the MFD take place via dispatch-to-dispatch phone calls. This ineffective medium of communication can create delays in messages, which can also delay providing care during emergency medical calls. Information can also be misconstrued as it is relayed between multiple answering points. With the implementation of All-Band portable radios, a clear and direct line of communication will be utilized, positively affecting the safety of first responders and benefiting the citizens of Merced. This will affect day-to-day operations as well as mass casualty incidents.

A new mission of the MFD is the implementation of rescue paramedics on engine companies. With this new program, our agency must now meet the requirement for communications between hospital facilities and field paramedics. The hospital utilizes UHF radios that are inoperable with our current radio equipment. The implementation of all-band portable radios will create a successful communication link between hospital physicians and paramedics operating at emergency scenes. With these capabilities, the MFD will provide Advanced Life-Saving skills within minutes of being dispatched and ultimately increase our life saving capabilities.

The winter of 2017 brought record breaking rains and flooding to the County of Merced. This local disaster resulted in swollen waterways that displaced citizens, caused numerous rescues, and in many cases resulted in disastrous outcomes for the citizens that we serve. In order to combat these risks and increase safety, the implementation of a joint agency Swift Water Rescue team has been created as a new mission between the MFD and the Merced County Sheriff's office. A cadre of certified rescuers, supplied by the MFD and the Sheriff's office, will staff this collaborative, regional approach. The immediate goal of this program is to provide effective swift water and flood response throughout Merced County, with future goals including a rescue typing for this team, and participation in Statewide and Federal emergency response. With the implementation of new portable radios with all band capabilities, the MFD will be able to safely and effectively carry out this mission with

coordinated communications. This joint mission will increase our operational area capabilities and increase the level of service provided to the citizens of our county.

Also in 2017, Golden Valley High School in Merced was the site of a possible catastrophic event, as local agencies received reports of an active shooter. Ten local agencies responded to the High School. While the event proved to be a hoax, major problems in coordinated communications were identified. Agency's responding were unable to communicate due to varying bands radio frequencies. With the implementation of All Band portable radios, the MFD will be able to communicate with all local agencies without exception.

If awarded the funds through the AFG, new portable radios will ensure Project 25 capabilities in recognition of The Office for Interoperability and Compatibility (OIC). The use of 700 MHZ band is not utilized by the MFD and therefore does not require testing for permitted exceptions and approvals by the OIC.

### **IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES**

If awarded, a \$46,276.21 supplemental appropriation from the unappropriated General Fund balance to 001-0901-523.43-00 for use as the City of Merced's local match of 10% will be required. Additionally, the use of pooled cash to cover the \$416,485.86 grant would be required until grant funds are reimbursed.