

March 20, 2006
Date

**APPROVING THE APPLICATION FOR THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
HOMELAND SECURITY ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT**

WHEREAS, for the 2006 program year, Congress appropriated \$539,550,000.00 to the United States Department of Homeland Security's Office of Grants and Training, and the authority to carry out an initiative to provide assistance to firefighters that is directed to support departments that lack the tools and resources necessary to protect the health and safety of the public and their firefighting personnel; and,

WHEREAS, this money will be distributed directly to local fire departments on a competitive basis; and,

WHEREAS, the Des Moines Fire Department has prepared a grant application for funding for the purchase and utilization of power lift ambulance stretchers for city ambulance units; and,

WHEREAS, the total grant amount is \$111,504.00, with the Federal amount being \$89,203.20.00, and the City's match being \$22,300.80; and,

WHEREAS, it is recommended that the City Council authorize this application for funding from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, IOWA, that the City Council authorizes the Chief of the Fire Department, or his designee, to submit the above referenced grant application to the Office for Domestic Preparedness, United States Department of Homeland Security, for consideration of a grant in the amount of \$89,203.20, for the purposes stated above.

MOVED BY _____ TO ADOPT.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Emily Gould Chafa
Emily Gould Chafa
Assistant City Attorney

(Council Communication No. 06-135)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BROOKS				
COLEMAN				
HENSLEY				
MAHAFFEY				
KIERNAN				
VLASSIS				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

Mayor

CERTIFICATE

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

City Clerk

Project Description and Budget: What you are requesting funding for, including budget descriptions of the major budget items.

The Des Moines Fire Department (DMFD) respectfully submits its request for funding assistance to purchase twelve (12) Stryker Power Ambulance Cots for our ambulance fleet.

As part of an ongoing analysis and assessment of Department policies, procedures, and facilities, lifting of patients on cots has been identified as a significant risk to the health and safety of the firefighters, and the patients. We have stressed training in 'proper' lifting techniques, reviewed our policies, studied a number of processes, and searched for lifting aids, all to no avail. General prophylactic use of back or lifting belts have been shown to, at best, provide little or no benefit and, in fact, may be detrimental, enhancing the potential for increasing the degree of low back injury.

Funds requested from the Equipment Acquisition Activity

Funds are requested in the Operations and Firefighter Safety Program, Equipment Acquisition Activity for the purchase of twelve (12) Stryker Power Ambulance Cots for our ambulance fleet. The acquisition and utilization of this equipment will have a direct and positive impact on the health and safety of firefighters.

The total funding request for the Equipment Acquisition Activity is \$111,504.00. This amount is based on a quote that the Des Moines Fire Department received from a vendor.

Why this program would be beneficial to your community and or to you department

Firefighters work in challenging and increasingly hazardous environments. Firefighters are at significant increased risk of back injury compared to other professions secondary to rigorous physical requirements of the occupation. The International Association of Fire Fighters' (IAFF) annual *Death and Injury Survey* revealed "that sprains and strains routinely account for approximately 50% of all line-of-duty injuries and back injuries account for approximately 50% of all line-of-duty injury retirements each year. These injuries may result in significant lost time and medical expense".

Prehospital Medical Services includes a wide variety of medical situations and little or no control over the situations and facilities that the firefighters are confronted with. Common to all of these incidents is the lifting, moving and transportation of the patients to healthcare facilities. A concern of the department is that this service be performed without causing additional injuries to the patient and without injury to the firefighters. The Des Moines Fire Department during the period January 1, 2004 and March 1, 2006 experienced sixteen (16) firefighter injuries as the result of lifting patients on cots and thirty-four (34) during the process of moving patients. These injuries result in loss time and may lead to disability retirement for the firefighters. The cost of providing medical treatment of musculoskeletal disorders is one of the highest of all injuries.

Additionally, the United States Department of Labor, Occupational Health and Safety Administration has recommend minimizing the manual lifting of patients in all cases and eliminating lifting when possible. The Power Lift Ambulance Cots would significantly reduce the manually lifting of patients on every emergency event.

Awarding of the requested grant funds for Stryker Power Lift Ambulance Cots will significantly improve the health and safety of the firefighters in the workplace and provide the patients with a smoother and risk reduced treatment.

Financial need

The Stryker Power Lift Ambulance Cots cannot be funded locally. The City of Des Moines is enjoying geographic and population growth and the resultant increase in requests for services, however there has been no commensurate increase in funding. Our fiscal resources are finite. A significant portion of City funding is provided via property tax and nearly forty percent (40%) of property in the city is either tax-exempt or nontaxable. Further compounding our plight is the fact that the State of Iowa has significantly reduced revenue sharing to local governments as a strategy to address their own funding challenges and has mandated rollbacks on the assessed value of residential properties (The rollback is a legislative program that equalizes residential land value with agricultural land production value for purposes of local government property taxation. Agricultural land is assessed at production value as opposed to future development value to lessen the burden on farmers.). The effect of the rollback means that residential taxes are levied at 47.9642% of total assessed value. As a result of these rollbacks, abatements, reductions in state revenues, and other factors, the city has the highest property tax rate in the metropolitan area and cannot fund this important employee health initiative.

Cost-Benefit of the Request.

Prospective analysis of cost savings would be speculative at best; however, experiential comparison studies of injury rates and severity pre and post introduction of the power ambulance cots would be expected to show a significant shift to reductions in both categories. The cost benefit of such an endeavor can only be recognized by analysis of employee health experiences over a career span. A reduced incidence of musculoskeletal disorders will not only be reflected in reduced costs for medical care and lost time, but in an improved quality of life for employees after retirement.

Statement of effect: How would this award affect the daily operations of your department and how would this award affect you department's ability to protect lives and save property?

First and foremost, the health and safety of the Des Moines firefighters and patients will be positively affected. A safer and risk reduced work environment will certainly result in a reduction of loss time, a lessening of the costs of employee health care, and a better quality of life not only during the period of employment but also into retirement.