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NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

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Gov. Blagojevich announces \$15 million for firefighting efforts and equipment statewide

Senate Bill 775 provides resources for life saving emergency equipment and response vehicles throughout the state

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today signed legislation that provides millions of dollars to assist fire departments across Illinois with the purchase of necessary emergency equipment and further fund revolving loans for fire departments to purchase fire trucks and ambulances. The programs, which are administered by the Office of the State Fire Marshal, will provide \$15 million for grants and revolving loans to help Illinois fire departments acquire life saving equipment, such as air packs, thermal imaging cameras, firefighting gear; in addition to the ability to purchase ambulances and fire trucks.

“Local fire departments must have the right equipment to protect the communities they serve when responding to emergencies,” Gov. Blagojevich said. “Because fire departments are feeling the pinch of tight budgets, we continue to look for ways to help these first responders.”

Senate Bill 775, sponsored by Sen. William R. Haine (D-Alton) and Rep. Donald L. Moffitt (R-Galesburg), transfers surplus money from the Fire Prevention Fund into the Fire Truck Revolving Loan Fund, the Ambulance Revolving Loan Fund, and the newly-created Small Equipment Fund. The bill further dedicates money from a recently established fee on serious traffic violation convictions to provide continued support for these vital programs.

“It’s important to stress that this transfer of funds will in no way affect the Fire Prevention Fund and its designated purpose. The surplus money has been sitting unused for more than 5 years,” Sen. Haine explained. “We are definitely putting this money to good use.”

“This infusion of money will ensure first responders have the necessary equipment to save lives,” Rep. Moffitt added.

The Ambulance Revolving Loan Fund, created by the Governor in 2006, provides zero-interest loans to fire departments, fire protection districts or non-profit ambulance services for the purchase of ambulances. The loans are available for amounts up to \$100,000 and can be repaid over a 10-year period.

Gov. Blagojevich created a similar program for fire trucks in 2003. The Fire Truck Revolving Loan Program provides no-interest, 20-year loans to local fire departments and fire protection districts for the purchase of fire trucks. The maximum loan award is \$250,000.

Under the Small Equipment Grant Program, fire departments, fire protection districts and township fire departments can apply for grants of up to \$26,000 for purchasing items such as turnout coats for firefighters, firefighting tools and extrication equipment.

SB 775 is effective immediately.