

Rural Housing Service • Community Facilities Program

USDA Helps Rural Fire Department Replace Essential Equipment

For a small, volunteer fire department, the high cost of equipment can be a significant challenge. That was the case for the Reedsport Fire Department on the central Oregon coast. Their fire pumper truck was past its useful life and posed safety issues. Chief Tom Anderson could best describe it as “antique equipment.” But the department simply did not have enough funds to purchase a replacement vehicle.

When they saw an article about a small-town Oregon police department that received a USDA grant to replace aging vehicles, they submitted an application for that same program. USDA Rural Development, through its Community Facilities Program, awarded them a \$159,000 grant.

The department purchased a new vehicle that had been the floor model for a significantly discounted price. After using the grant, they paid \$162,000 of their own funds, which they had saved over nearly 15 years.

With twice the onboard water capacity, the new vehicle ensures they no longer have to worry about exhausting their supply as quickly. A self-chaining apparatus will help them operate in winter weather. Unlike their previous vehicle, the new truck includes an onboard foam system, an especially valuable addition for this department, which serves some of the largest industrial areas on the coast and must contend with chemical fires more often than neighboring departments. They were also able to purchase 2,200 feet of fire hose, a radio system, and five self-contained breathing apparatus for the vehicle.

While applying for federal funding can be daunting, Rural Development provided a high level of customer service to help this small town succeed. “I want to express my appreciation for the USDA staff,” said City Manager Jonathan Wright. “They have extremely heavy workloads, but they took time to hold our hand throughout the process. Our loan specialist, Deanna Quimby, was so engaged on this project she even showed up for the truck’s delivery.”

Overall, this new pumper truck will enhance the abilities of the Reedsport Fire Department; improve firefighter safety; and ensure the businesses, facilities, and more than 4,150 residents of Reedsport have access to the emergency services they need. Already, the vehicle has responded to two major structural fires and performed flawlessly. “It gives us great peace of mind and is an asset to our community,” said Wright. “We are the envy of every fire department in the area.”



The volunteer firefighters in Reedsport, Oregon, gather around their new fire pumper truck as it is delivered.

Obligation Amount:	\$159,000 grant
Date of Obligation:	August 2017
Congressional District:	Representative DeFazio, District 4; Senators Wyden and Merkley
Demographics:	Reedsport, Oregon; population 4,154
Impact:	A new pumper truck improves firefighter safety and ensures the continued delivery of emergency services in the rural town of Reedsport and surrounding industrial areas.
