

Memorandum

To: Fire Chiefs in California

Date: March 6, 2025

Email: Amanda.Jernigan@fire.ca.gov

Website: www.fire.ca.gov

From: Matthew Sully
Deputy Director of Cooperative Fire Protection
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)

Subject: Volunteer Fire Capacity (VFC) – Fiscal Year 2025-26
Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment

CAL FIRE is soliciting applications from fire departments in rural areas and communities with a population of 10,000 or less, for awards under the Volunteer Fire Capacity (VFC) Program of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act of 1978. The application can be found online at the CAL FIRE public website under the *Cooperative Efforts* page: <https://www.fire.ca.gov/what-we-do/fire-protection/cooperative-efforts>.

The 2025 VFC Procedural Guide is also posted on the CAL FIRE public website under the *Cooperative Efforts* webpage and provides instructions to applicants on how to apply, submit, and accept their award if awarded.

The funding level for California in Fiscal Year 2025-26 has not been determined at this time. However, historical funding levels for VFC are approximately \$1,500,000.

To ensure timely consideration, completed applications must be submitted no later than **May 5, 2025**. Applications must be submitted electronically; there will be no hard copy submission.

CAL FIRE anticipates completion of the application review process by August 2025.

Successful applicants must complete their approved project(s) using local funds between the Agreement Approval Date and June 30, 2026; then bill CAL FIRE within the award agreement period in order to receive the award. **The award will not cover expenditures made prior to the date of final signature on the agreement or after June 30, 2026.**

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

As a result of the recommendation from the 2003 Blue Ribbon Report to the Governor of California, we are including a Grant Assurance section in the Volunteer Fire Capacity Grant Application package. By completing and signing the Grant Assurance, applicants are certifying that wildland firefighters are fully equipped with appropriate, approved wildland fire response Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that meets National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1977 *Standard on Protective Clothing and Equipment for Wildland Fire Fighting*, and are trained to a proficient level in the use of the PPE¹.

“Firefighter safety must be of paramount concern. It is critical for the health and safety of Firefighters responding to Wildland/Urban Interface fires that they be properly equipped with the appropriate protective, safety, and communications equipment necessary to perform their duties.”

Multi-Jurisdictional Recommendation 7
2003 Blue Ribbon Report to the Governor of California.

CAL FIRE formally adopted new standards for Wildland Firefighting Protective Ensembles. All purchases of Wildland Firefighting Protective Ensemble for utilization by any personnel under the administrative control of CAL FIRE must meet these newly adopted specifications exceeding NFPA 1977 standards.

As an employer, you are responsible for providing personal protective clothing and equipment to your employees. Supervisors are responsible for enforcing clothing and equipment standards and informing employees concerning safety hazards. Supervisors are also responsible for seeing that their employees are properly trained in the purpose, use and maintenance of protective clothing and equipment. Each employee responding to or engaged in emergency services, such as structural, vehicle and related fire suppression activities, will use the appropriate safety clothing and equipment.

Departments not currently in compliance with the NFPA 1977 standard for wildland firefighter safety clothing and equipment will only be considered for awards which bring their department into compliance with this standard or, if applicable, the CAL FIRE Wildland Firefighting Hazard and Risk Assessment standard. CAL FIRE’s consideration for grant awards will place a higher priority for funding reimbursement of firefighter PPE purchases and associated training for those departments not currently meeting the standard.

If you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please contact Amanda Jernigan at Amanda.Jernigan@fire.ca.gov.

¹ CAL FIRE formally adopted new wildland PPE specifications that exceed NFPA requirements, in accordance with CAL FIRE’s Wildland Firefighting Hazard and Risk Assessment. All purchases of wildland PPE for utilization by any personnel under the administrative control of CAL FIRE must meet these newly adopted specifications. Those specifications may be obtained from your local CAL FIRE Unit Headquarters.