

Atchison Fire Dept receives federal grant

(KAIR)--Atchison firefighters recently learned that they will be receiving more than \$100,000 from a federal grant, which will help the department buy new breathing equipment and a few sets of gear.

Self-contained breathing apparatus allow emergency responders to breathe during smoky or other hazardous conditions. Obviously key for firefighters, the grant, which is actually \$111,585, will allow the department to replace all 18 currently operating air packs.

The Atchison Fire Department will also use the grant to purchase four new sets of turnout gear, the protective equipment they wear while fighting fires. “Obviously it’s a huge need for us,” Atchison Fire Chief Ted Graf said. “That money is not something that is easy for the city to come up with.”

Graf said the SCBA equipment usually costs about \$6,000 each, with the gear about \$2,200 apiece. The grant covers 95 percent of the costs for the equipment and comes from the federally funded Assistance to Firefighters Grant.

“This is a tremendous award for us,” Captain Pat Weishaar said. “Without this funding it would be very difficult to budget for such costly equipment - equipment that is vital to firefighting.”

Graf said that the grant will allow his department to replace 21-year-old equipment. “In 20 years the technology has changed,” Graf said. “This has a better ergonomic fit, providing better comfort. The newer equipment is lighter. We can even track our firefighters while operating in an area. We know their locations and even their air levels.”

There were 670 grants awarded nationwide. Atchison firefighters were notified of the grant award on August 17.

Weishaar wrote the grant application, with help from City Finance Manager Cari Strieby and City Manager Becky Berger.