

TONKO.HOUSE.GOV
@REPPAULTONKO

2369 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5076

19 DOVE STREET, SUITE 302
ALBANY, NY 12210
(518) 465-0700

433 BROADWAY, SUITE 201
SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY 12866
(518) 374-4547



PAUL D. TONKO

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
20TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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AND TECHNOLOGY

December 20, 2024

Pamela Williams
Assistant Administrator for Grant Programs
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20472

Dear Assistant Administrator Williams,

I write in support of the application from the Schenectady Fire Department (SFD) to the Fiscal Year 2024 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. SFD is seeking federal funding to support essential training courses. SFD's application identifier is EMW-2024-FG-05410.

This fall, the Schenectady Fire Department and the Schenectady Firefighters International Association of Fire Fighters Local 28 conducted an internal risk assessment and identified the need for funding for three critical instructor-led courses: Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator, Fire Officer II, and Fire & Emergency Services Instructor II. These courses are vital to supporting SFD's mission and enhancing the department's overall capabilities.

Over the past five years, the department has faced an increase in unexpected vacancies from early retirements and added 25 new firefighters. During this time, nearly 50 driving accidents were reported, with 85% involving firefighters with over five years of experience. New hires are trained as drivers, but experienced firefighters often drive during emergencies, leading to more driving time and increased chance of accidents.

To improve safety, an instructor-led Emergency Vehicle Driver Training program is proposed. This 21-hour course will train four staff officers to teach emergency vehicle driving to the remaining 107 members. Although the course is free, SFD needs funding for 21 hours of overtime per trainer and fees for each trainer to attend. The Fire Officer II and Instructor II courses will support the department's goals by adding layers to each position and creating additional opportunities for growth.

Your full and fair consideration of this request, consistent with current laws, rules, regulations, and agency policy, is appreciated.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul D. Tonko".

PAUL D. TONKO
Member of Congress

PDT/npl