

Dept. of Safety and Professional Services: Secretary Dawn Crim announces opening of new grant program for youth fire fighter training programs

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Sun Prairie, Wis. – Department of Safety and Professional Services Secretary Dawn Crim visited the Sun Prairie Fire and Rescue Company Station Two to announce the opening of a new grant program to provide funding for youth fire fighter training programs. The grants of up to \$25,000 are designed to help fire departments, technical college partners and school districts develop or expand training programs for high school juniors or seniors. The program is open for applications, which are due February 14, 2022.

Sun Prairie Fire and Rescue Chief Christopher Garrison joined her for the announcement. Sun Prairie Fire and Rescue runs a youth fire fighter training program with the Sun Prairie Area School District and Madison College. That program allows students to meet high school graduation requirements while they earn fire fighter certification. Graduates have gone on to paid and volunteer service with Sun Prairie and other area fire departments, including Madison.

“We are excited about this grant program, and we are pleased to be able to support fire service recruitment,” said DSPS Secretary Crim. “We hear from departments throughout the state that it is increasingly difficult to staff their departments with adequate levels of volunteers who are adequately trained and able to respond to calls when they come in. That puts communities—and the fire fighters themselves—at risk.”

The fire service is a key stakeholder group for DSPS. The department currently [regulates fire fighter health and safety](#) and manages the state fire prevention program. It also administers the 2% dues program, which distributes funds collected from insurers back to qualifying fire departments and the Wisconsin Technical College System for basic firefighter training expenses.

Secretary Crim says that departments throughout the state routinely share concerns about adequate staffing, particularly in all-volunteer departments in rural areas.

Chief Garrison agrees that exposing high school juniors and seniors to the fire service is an effective recruitment strategy, but he emphasizes that the program is about more than fire department needs.

“We started this program with the Sun Prairie School District to offer an alternate path to meeting graduation requirements for students who needed more experiential learning opportunities,” Garrison said. “This program is good for students because it exposes them to a rewarding career path or volunteer opportunity while also allowing them to earn high school credit. But it is also great for the fire service. Once we had the program up and running, we discovered that we were reaching potential recruits that we had never reached before. It is bringing much-needed diversity to our ranks of career and volunteer fire fighters.”

The DSPS grant program has funding to award \$50,000 this year and \$50,000 next year to help establish or expand similar programs in other parts of Wisconsin. Applications and grant information about the [grant program](#) are available on the DSPS website.

About DSPS: The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to stem excessive opioid prescribing. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.