

Dept. of Safety and Professional Services: Secretary Dawn Crim announces three recipients of new youth fire fighter training grants

Posted on Tuesday, Apr 19, 2022

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Madison, Wis. – Department of Safety and Professional Services Secretary Dawn Crim announced the recipients of a new grant program designed to expose high school students to career and volunteer opportunities in the fire service. The following are the 2022 grant awards:

- Oconto Fire Rescue Department will receive \$17,982 towards their program, a partnership with Oconto High School and Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, to offer a Fire 1 Certification during school hours.
- Western Technical College will receive \$22,593 towards its programs available to high schools in the La Crosse area. The programs create dual-credit opportunities for high school students interested in Basic Fire Safety Certification or the WTC Fire Science Degree.
- Winneconne High School will receive \$9,425 to partially fund expenses related to its Fire Principles courses offered in partnership with the Winneconne Poygan Fire District, the Omro Rushford Fire District, the Clayton Fire District, and Fox Valley Technical College.

“We are proud to support these examples of innovative collaboration among high schools, technical colleges, and fire departments,” said DSPS Secretary Dawn Crim. “By working together, they create new learning opportunities for students, they leverage the expertise and resources in our wonderful technical college system, and they address significant recruitment challenges for the fire service.”

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 and matched by the state back to qualifying fire departments.

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

“The Oconto Fire Rescue Department has been working on a way to educate Oconto High School students and to show them that work in the fire service is incredibly challenging and rewarding,” said Oconto Fire Chief Josh Bostetd. “There are many teenagers who are eager to do meaningful work to support their communities, and this project is a great way to offer a hands-on learning experience and expose students to opportunities they may not have considered before.”

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 for 2023 grants will open later this year.