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08.07.15

## Durbin Visits Villa Park Fire Department, Discusses Importance Of Federal Funding For First Responders

[VILLA PARK] – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) visited Villa Park Fire Department today where he saw the Department's new fire truck funded by a \$432,000 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) awarded last year. Durbin met with Villa Park Mayor Deborah Bullwinkel and Fire Chief Ron Rakosnik to discuss the benefits of the AFG program and the new fire engine, which will begin use in the coming weeks.

**“We must ensure our nation’s firefighters and first-responders are equipped with the best, most up-to-date equipment to do their jobs effectively,” Durbin said. “The AFG program helps ensure that when fires or other emergencies occur in our communities, firefighters have access to the resources necessary to protect them and protect us. This new, up-to-date fire engine will be a great asset to the Villa Park Fire Department and the surrounding community.”**

“The Village of Villa Park is honored to be the recipient of a generous grant from FEMA to help us cover the costs associated with the purchase of a new fire engine,” Villa Park Mayor Deborah Bullwinkel said. “It’s been over 25 years since we replaced our fire engine, and funds for a vehicle purchase of this magnitude doesn’t come easily. We are extremely grateful to U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth for their ongoing support of the Village of Villa Park and the needs of our first responders, as well as helping us ensure the continued safety of our residents.”

“Villa Park Fire Department was honored to be the recipient of the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant. This grant allowed us to purchase a much needed National Fire Protection Association compliant Fire Engine to replace a 26 year old fire engine from our aging fleet,” Villa Park Fire Chief Ron Rakosnik said. “The new fire engine will allow our firefighters to respond to emergencies in a safer manner, work at night with better visibility and respond with a very reliable piece of emergency equipment. We thank Senator Dick Durbin and Congresswoman Tammy Duckworth for their continued support for first responders as well as FEMA for this much appreciated federal grant.”

The Villa Park Fire Department has 24 firefighters who respond to more than 2,600 calls a year. The new fire engine is replacing the Department's 26 year old pumper, which was deficient on many of the safety standards considered necessary today. Not only does the new truck have updated safety features, it is equipped with an interior EMS cabinet, which allows first responders to secure Advanced Life Support EMS equipment and medication in a temperature-controlled environment.

DHS's AFG Program, administered through FEMA, helps fire districts strengthen their level of preparedness and ability to respond to fire and other hazards. Fire departments use the grants for equipment, operations, and safety efforts. In Fiscal Year 2015, the program will award approximately \$340 million directly to fire departments and non-affiliated EMS organizations to enhance their response capabilities. Illinois received \$8.3 million in AFGs last year.