

No. 2003-17

## AN ACT

HB 8

Establishing a grant program for volunteer fire companies and volunteer ambulance services; and providing for grant funding.

The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hereby enacts as follows:

CHAPTER 1  
PRELIMINARY PROVISIONS

Section 101. Short title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the Volunteer Fire Company and Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Act.

Section 102. Definitions.

The following words and phrases when used in this act shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

“Advanced life support services.” The term shall have the meaning given to it in the act of July 3, 1985 (P.L.164, No.45), known as the Emergency Medical Services Act.

“Agency.” The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

“Basic life support services.” The term shall have the meaning given to it in the act of July 3, 1985 (P.L.164, No.45), known as the Emergency Medical Services Act.

“Commissioner.” The State Fire Commissioner.

“Facility.” A structure or portion thereof intended for the purpose of storage or protection of firefighting apparatus, ambulances and rescue vehicles and related equipment and gear. The term does not include meeting halls, social halls, social rooms, lounges or any other facility not directly related to firefighting or the furnishing of ambulance or rescue services.

“Grant program.” The Volunteer Fire Company Grant Program established in Chapter 3 or the Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program established in Chapter 5.

“Invalid coach.” The term shall have the meaning given to it in the act of July 3, 1985 (P.L.164, No.45), known as the Emergency Medical Services Act.

“Volunteer ambulance service.” Any nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in this Commonwealth, which is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Health and is not associated or affiliated with any hospital and which is regularly engaged in the provision of emergency medical services, including basic life support or advanced life support services and the transportation of patients within this Commonwealth. The term shall not include any corporation, association or

organization that is primarily engaged in the operation of invalid coaches which are intended for the routine transport of persons who are convalescent or otherwise nonambulatory and do not ordinarily require emergency medical treatment while in transit.

**“Volunteer fire company.”** A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in this Commonwealth which provides fire protection or rescue services and which may offer other voluntary emergency services within this Commonwealth. Voluntary emergency services provided by a volunteer fire company may include voluntary ambulance and voluntary rescue services.

**“Volunteer rescue company.”** A nonprofit chartered corporation, association or organization located in this Commonwealth that provides rescue services as part of the response to fires and/or vehicle accidents within this Commonwealth.

### CHAPTER 3

#### VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY GRANT PROGRAM

##### Section 301. Establishment.

The Volunteer Fire Company Grant Program is hereby established and shall be administered by the agency in consultation with the commissioner. Grants provided under this program shall be used to improve and enhance the capabilities of the volunteer fire company to provide firefighting, ambulance and rescue services.

##### Section 302. Guidelines and procedures.

The agency shall develop guidelines, procedures and all applications necessary to implement the grant program. The agency shall submit the guidelines, procedures and applications to the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Code and Bulletin within 30 days of the effective date of this act.

##### Section 303. Award of grants.

(a) **Authorization.**—The agency is hereby authorized to make a one-time grant award to each eligible volunteer fire company for the following:

- (1) Construction and/or renovation of the fire company’s facility and purchase or repair of fixtures and furnishings necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the company to provide fire, ambulance and rescue services.
- (2) Repair of firefighting, ambulance or rescue equipment or purchase thereof.
- (3) Debt reduction associated with paragraph (1) or (2).
- (4) Training and certification of members.

(b) **Limits.**—

- (1) Except as provided in paragraph (3), grants shall be not less than \$2,500 and not more than \$15,000 per volunteer fire company.

(2) Grants may be awarded on a pro rata basis if the total dollar amount of approved applications exceeds the amount of funds allocated in section 702.

(3) In a municipality where there are two or more volunteer fire companies and if two or more fire companies consolidated their use of equipment, firefighters and services between July 1, 1998, and the date of enactment of this act, each entity from which the consolidated entity was created will be eligible for a grant as though it had not consolidated.

(c) Time for filing application and department action.—

(1) The agency shall provide applications for grants under this act to the fire chief and president of every volunteer fire company in this Commonwealth on or before July 31, 2003.

(2) Volunteer fire companies seeking grants under this act shall submit completed applications to the agency on or before December 31, 2003. The agency shall act to approve or disapprove the application by May 1, 2004. Applications which have not been approved or disapproved by the agency by May 1, 2004, shall be deemed approved.

(d) Eligibility.—To receive grant funds under this act, a volunteer fire company shall have actively responded to one or more fire or rescue emergencies since July 1, 2002, and must sign an agreement to actively participate in the Pennsylvania Fire Information Reporting System which is administered by the agency.

Section 304. Consolidation incentive.

If, after the effective date of this act, two or more volunteer fire companies consolidate their use of facilities, equipment, firefighters and services, the consolidated entity may, upon notification of the agency, be eligible for a reduction of the interest rate payable on any outstanding principal balance owed, as of the date of consolidation, by any or all of the consolidating companies to the Volunteer Companies Loan Fund for loans made under the act of July 15, 1976 (P.L.1036, No.208), known as the Volunteer Fire Company, Ambulance Service and Rescue Squad Assistance Act. The reduction in the interest rate payable shall be from 2% to 1%. Upon receipt of such notification, the agency, in conjunction with the State Fire Commissioner, shall determine and verify that the consolidated entity is in fact a bona fide consolidated volunteer fire company. If the agency determines that the consolidated entity is a bona fide consolidated volunteer fire company, it shall reduce the interest rate payable on any outstanding principal balance owed to the Volunteer Companies Loan Fund for loans made under the Volunteer Fire Company, Ambulance Service and Rescue Squad Assistance Act for which the consolidating companies or the consolidated entity may be individually or jointly responsible. The agency may promulgate such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section.

CHAPTER 5  
VOLUNTEER AMBULANCE SERVICE GRANT PROGRAM

Section 501. Establishment.

The Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program is hereby established and shall be administered by the agency. Grants provided under this program shall be used to improve and enhance the capabilities of the volunteer ambulance services to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support and advanced life support services.

Section 502. Guidelines and procedures.

The agency shall develop guidelines, procedures and all applications necessary to implement the grant program. The agency shall submit the guidelines, procedures and applications to the Legislative Reference Bureau for publication in the Pennsylvania Code and Bulletin within 30 days of the effective date of this act.

Section 503. Award of grants.

(a) Authorization.—The agency is hereby authorized to make a one-time grant award to each eligible volunteer ambulance service for the following:

- (1) Construction and/or renovation of the volunteer ambulance service's facility and purchase or repair of fixtures, furnishings, office equipment and support services necessary to maintain or improve the capability of the ambulance service to provide ambulance, emergency medical, basic life support and advanced life support services.
- (2) Repair of ambulance equipment or purchase thereof.
- (3) Debt reduction associated with paragraph (1) or (2).
- (4) Training and certification of members.

(b) Limits.—

- (1) Grants shall be not less than \$2,500 and not more than \$10,000 per volunteer ambulance service.
- (2) Grants may be awarded on a pro rata basis if the total dollar amount of approved applications exceeds the amount of funds allocated in section 703.

(c) Time for filing application and department action.—

- (1) The agency shall provide applications for grants under this act to the president of every volunteer ambulance service in this Commonwealth on or before July 31, 2003.
- (2) Volunteer ambulance services seeking grants under this chapter shall submit completed applications to the agency on or before December 31, 2003. The agency shall act to approve or disapprove the application by May 1, 2004. Applications which have not been approved or disapproved by the agency by May 1, 2004, shall be deemed approved.

CHAPTER 7  
GRANT FUNDING PROVISIONS

**Section 701. Volunteer Fire Company Grant Program.**

The sum of \$22,000,000 of the amount appropriated to the agency for volunteer company grants under section 225 of the act of March 20, 2003 (P.L.463, No.1A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2003, shall be expended for the purpose of making grants to eligible volunteer fire companies pursuant to Chapter 3.

**Section 702. Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.**

The sum of \$3,000,000 of the amount appropriated to the agency for volunteer company grants under section 225 of the act of March 20, 2003 (P.L.463, No.1A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2003, shall be expended for the purpose of making grants to eligible volunteer ambulance companies pursuant to Chapter 5.

**Section 703. Prohibition.**

No moneys from the appropriation for volunteer company grants under section 225 of the act of March 20, 2003 (P.L.463, No.1A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2003, shall be used for expenses or costs incurred by the agency for the administration of the grant programs authorized under Chapters 3 and 5.

## CHAPTER 9 MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

**Section 901. Expiration of authority.**

The authority of the agency to award grants under Chapters 3 and 5 shall expire June 30, 2004.

**Section 902. Declaration.**

The General Assembly declares that this act satisfies the enabling legislation requirement contained in the appropriation to the agency for volunteer company grants under section 225 of the act of March 20, 2003 (P.L.463, No.1A), known as the General Appropriation Act of 2003, that no moneys from said appropriation may be expended until enabling legislation is enacted.

**Section 903. Effective date.**

This act shall take effect July 1, 2003, or immediately, whichever is later.

APPROVED—The 31st day of July, A.D. 2003.

EDWARD G. RENDELL