

Oak Lawn Fire Department Receives Federal Grant - July 13, 2014



Firefighter/paramedics in Oak Lawn, along with patients getting CPR, should be safer thanks to a federal grant received Friday.

A \$206,428 grant from the Department of Homeland Security will be used to buy four hydraulic lifts to move gurneys in and out of ambulances, and one automated CPR machine, Fire Chief George Sheets said.

U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski, who helped the village obtain the grant, presented officials with oversized checks for the amount during a brief ceremony at the firehouse beside the village hall.

Sheets said the lifts should help prevent firefighter/paramedics getting leg and back injuries while moving patients on gurneys in and out of ambulances. The lifts will be installed on the village's three front-line ambulances and one of two backup ambulances, Sheets said.

"It's a huge safety issue for us. All we'll have to do is press a button (to move the gurney in or out of the ambulance). The mayor (Sandra Bury) and village manager (Larry Deetjen) have been looking at ways to help reduce injury to our personnel," Sheets said.

The automated CPR machine will compress a patient's chest, much like a firefighter/paramedic does with his or her hands, in efforts to get the heart beating again, Sheets said. Using the machine will free up firefighter/paramedics to conduct other tests and monitor patients en route to a hospital, Sheets said.

Oak Lawn Fire Department Bureau Chief Gary Bettenhausen said the automated CPR machine "is more efficient and safer for the guys."

"It's got a little backboard and it has a plunger. They've been using these in Europe for a long time," Bettenhausen said.

The grant required a specific request for which equipment was needed, Lipinski said, adding "this is good for the community."