

Portland Fire & Rescue Receives \$95,239 Grant to Purchase and Install Specialized Smoke Alarms for City's Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residents

Portland Fire & Rescue has been awarded a \$95,239 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) for an outreach campaign to increase home safety for Portland's deaf and hard of hearing community. PF&R will contribute an additional \$4,761, making the total project amount \$100,000. Applications are being accepted starting today.

PF&R's education and outreach campaign using this grant emphasizes the importance of proper installation and use of special smoke alarms for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. Those who wear hearing aids or cochlear implants that they remove when sleeping also require these specialized alarms in their homes. These alarms utilize bed shakers and strobe lights to warn those who can't hear audible alarms that there is either fire or carbon monoxide danger. This type of alarm has proven to be effective because of its close proximity to sleeping residents. Thanks to this grant, PF&R will be able to install these life-saving alarms in qualifying homes in the City of Portland free of charge.

This program is purely voluntary and is offered to people with qualified disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, specifically those who are deaf or hard of hearing. This program is only for persons living in the City of Portland. There are a limited number of these specialized smoke alarms available and they will be provided on a first come, first served basis given in order to those qualified individuals who submit an application with all appropriate paperwork.

"I'm very happy both that technology exists to provide a reliable method of alerting people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and that Portland Fire & Rescue will be able to assist them," said Portland Fire & Rescue Chief Erin Janssens. "This is another great step towards ensuring all residents in Portland can increase their chances of escaping a fire in their home by having working smoke alarms."

PF&R has partnered with local deaf organizations and is being advised by a committee of members from the deaf community on how to best build a successful program. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 29,000 people with hearing loss reside in Multnomah County, the majority of whom live in the City of Portland. "The Oregon Association of the Deaf is pleased to support Portland Fire & Rescue in implementing this grant," says OAD President Chad A.

Ludwig. “This program will support the deaf community in staying safe in their homes and help educate those who can’t hear audible alarms why it’s so important to have one installed in their home. This grant is important and indispensable.”

Interested people who are deaf and hard of hearing can find out more and apply here right now: www.FlashShakeWake.org. Those with questions can contact grant administrators at smokealarms4safety@portlandoregon.gov or call 503-823-3752 with questions.

As part of the bureau’s Community Risk Reduction program, deaf and hard of hearing residents will also be able to request free fire & life safety home inspections when firefighters install their alarms. “Thanks to this grant, we will be able to provide crucial safety equipment to otherwise vulnerable Portlanders,” says Portland Fire & Rescue Commissioner Dan Saltzman. “Equity means ensuring equal access to city services and this program will help us achieve those goals.”