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## MOFD to purchase four power gurneys for its ambulances

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board accepted an Assistance to Firefighters Grant award from the Federal Emergency Management Agency that will allow the district to outfit four of its ambulances with self-loading gurneys.

"The self-loading gurneys are better for the patient, and they are better for the firefighters, too," said Fire Chief Stephen Healy. "Firefighters won't blow out their backs lifting so much weight from the ground."

The gurneys operate using a battery-powered hydraulic system which supports a cot on which the patient lies, and with the push of a button, the patient is loaded into or unloaded from the ambulance.

At more than \$47,000 a piece, power gurneys had been cost-prohibitive for the district, but combined with nearly \$160,000 from the AFG award, the district will apply \$30,000 it had budgeted for two traditional gurneys to cover the total cost of the four state-of-the-art models. Battalion Chief Jerry Lee, who authored the grant proposal, said that two of the gurneys will be placed into the two new district ambulances and two into the ambulances at Station 41 and Station 44.

"Gurneys are probably the most used item in the fire district," Lee said. "Essentially every medical call requires the use of a gurney."

Since he was named battalion chief in 2012, Lee has procured \$2.9 million in grant funding for the district, highlighted by a \$1.1 million FEMA Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant in 2013 which covered the salaries and benefits of four firefighters for two years.

MOFD had not fared well in securing grant money prior to Lee's promotion. "Maybe it was a perception that the district was pretty well funded," Lee said. And maybe it was also because Lee sought out the award money from federal and regional agencies, and put in the work to obtain the funding.

Grant applications typically take Lee 20 hours to fill out. The application to FEMA for the self-loading gurneys ran 26 pages and did not contain simply a succession of yes-no and multiple choice questions. Lee had to provide detailed narratives about the structure of the fire district, its finances, the community it serves and why it was applying for the grant in the first place. He submitted the completed application in November and FEMA notified MOFD of the award on May 19.

The Stryker power gurney pictured is an example of the equipment the district looks to purchase. With the district board - minus an absent John Jex - having unanimously accepted the FEMA award money June 7, Lee will begin the competitive bidding process, with gurney delivery expected in the 2017-18 fiscal year.

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