

Durbin Urges Illinois Rural Ems Agencies To Apply For New Siren Grant Program Funds

January 5 2021 11:01 AM



WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today announced the start of the [grant application process](#) for a federal grant program that supports rural fire and emergency medical services (EMS). The funding, created through Durbin’s [Supporting and Improving Rural EMS Needs \(SIREN\) Act](#), supports EMS agencies in training and recruiting staff, conducting certification courses, and purchasing equipment—for everything from naloxone and first aid kits, to power stretchers or new ambulances. Durbin’s bipartisan *SIREN Act* was signed into law in 2018 as part of the Farm Bill and this is the second year of annual funding for the grant program.

Durbin helped secure a \$500,000 increase in the Fiscal Year 2021 Omnibus Appropriations Bill, for a total of \$5.5 million, for SIREN Act grants to rural fire and EMS agencies. Last year, the Ambulance & Fire Protection District in Amboy, Illinois, received an award under this program to train new EMTs and paramedics, and expand telehealth services for opioid care.

“In many small and rural towns in Illinois and across the country, rural fire and EMS agencies are a lifeline in their communities, yet many lack steady funding to support

their operations. Our EMS professionals are on the frontlines caring for Illinoisans as we fight this pandemic, and this grant program can support their work across our state as they help save lives and keep their communities protected,” Durbin said.

A decline in primary care and hospital service availability, great distances between health care facilities, and low insurance reimbursement for transport and emergency treatment have all strained rural EMS agencies. At the same time, EMS agencies today are tasked with ever-greater responsibilities—addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, preparing for natural and manmade disasters and bioterror threats, supporting the chronic and emergency care needs of an aging population, and responding on the front lines of the opioid epidemic. These first responders are often the only health care providers in their area and face difficulty in personnel recruitment and retention, and securing expensive equipment.

Rural fire and EMS agencies in Illinois interested in applying for grant funding through Durbin’s SIREN Act can apply [here](#).