

Ohio Fire and Emergency Equipment Industry Showcase

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Statehouse Event Showcases Ohio's Fire and Emergency Services Manufacturing Industry

Ohio-based Manufacturers and Suppliers Employ more than 9,000

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)— Federal, state and local policy makers and economic development officials today had an opportunity to learn about Ohio's fire and emergency equipment industry which not only is critical to public safety but very important to the state's economy.

Nine Ohio companies representing Ohio's fire and emergency services manufacturers and suppliers hosted an event at the Ohio Statehouse to showcase and illustrate the quality products made in the state and used all over the world. There are 17 companies around the state involved in the manufacturing and distribution of fire and emergency equipment. Those firms employ more than 9,000 Ohioans.

"The fire and emergency equipment industry in Ohio makes a significant economic contribution to our state in terms of productivity and the jobs it supports," David Durstine, vice president of marketing for Akron Brass and a representative of the Fire Apparatus Manufacturers Association said. "We believe it is important for our elected officials at all levels have the opportunity to see how important this industry is, not only to the safety of our citizens and first responders, but also to the vitality of our state's economy ."

Among other things, the event gave manufacturers the opportunity to demonstrate their products and impress upon among government leaders how critical it is for our communities to support those locally owned manufacturers or "Buy Ohio" when making equipment purchases. Among the Ohio companies that took part in today's event are: *Akron Brass, Wooster; Horton Ambulance, Grove City; Sutphen Corporation, Amlin; Lion Apparel, Dayton; Will-Burt Company, Orrville ; Arvin Meritor, Newark; Honeywell First Responder Products, Dayton; Fire-Dex, LLC, Medina; and Truck Cab Manufacturers, Inc., Cincinnati.*

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Along with Durstine, speakers included Mark Barbash, assistant director, Ohio Department of Development and Jack Reall, president, Columbus Fire Fighters Union, IAFF #67 and Rescue Team Manager for Federal Emergency Management Agency Ohio Task Force 1. Reall has responded to the World Trade Center, Hurricane Katrina, and other disasters.

One important message from today's event involved the critical situation of funding for fire equipment from the federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. The AFG provides funding to the network of first responders across the country and equips them to save lives in the event of daily tragedies, natural disasters and catastrophic events.

Durstine told the audience, including representatives from a number of Ohio's Congressional offices, that budget decisions made in Washington impact our local fire and EMS departments and their access to the tools and equipment they need.

He said the program historically was funded at nearly 60 percent of its authorized level. In FY 2009 that amount was \$565 million. The President's budget for FY 2010 reduced that number by 70 percent to \$170 million. Congress was able to restore some of the cuts, bringing funding to \$390 million, still 30 percent less than previous years.

The federal funding cuts impact local fire and EMS departments with respect to their ability to purchase the equipment and apparatus necessary to fight fires and respond to emergencies in a safe and effective manner, Durstine told the lawmakers.

He outlined a serious situation for our nation's first responders and fire service providers. More than half of the 76,000 fire trucks in the U.S. are at least 15 years old, and nearly one third of them are 20 years or older. In other words, the equipment that our firemen are using to save and protect lives, does not meet current and widely accepted safety standards.

Durstine added that two-thirds of the fire departments have some personal protective clothing that is at least 10 years old.

"This decision alone will undoubtedly cost Ohioans jobs and reduce the chances of new equipment for our first responders," Durstine said. "I urge our members of Congress to support reauthorization and full funding of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program - not only to support the efforts of our first responders but to support our state's economy."

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