Benefit to Texans
In Texas, wildfire activity has been on the rise over the past two decades with significant fire seasons occurring in 10 of the past 15 years. Fire weather forecasters and fire behavior analysts predict this trend will continue in the years to come.

Funding the TIFMAS Grants Program benefits both the state and local, participating departments. Texas benefits by being able to call upon and pre-position local resources, which better protects the state and its residents by improving response times. The program also helps the state cut its dependence on costly, out-of-state resources. Local departments benefit from the engines, equipment and protective gear made available.

Better trained, better equipped firefighters save more lives. Leveraging local firefighters saves money.

Description and Justification
In 2011, Texas experienced one of the worst wildfire seasons in state history and one of the worst droughts in state history — at the same time.

Fueled by triple-digit temperatures and critically dry vegetation that served as little more than kindling, the 2011 season marked more than 31,000 wildfires that burned more than 4 million acres of land, destroyed 2,947 homes and killed 10 people. More acres were burned and more homes were destroyed during the 351-day wildfire season than in any other season in recorded state history.

With just a couple hundred wildland firefighters scattered across the state, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) leaned heavily on its state, federal and local partners during an extreme, unprecedented wildfire season.

The Texas Intrastate Fire Mutual Aid System — more commonly referred to as TIFMAS — is one of those partners.
TIFMAS serves as a statewide mutual aid network that allows communities to lean upon each other during times of need. Through the program, local, participating departments can be called to respond to disasters statewide, boosting the state’s capacity during times of crisis.

Established by the 80th Legislature and developed by Texas A&M Forest Service, Texas Division of Emergency Management and the Texas Fire Chief’s Association, TIFMAS first was used during the Hurricane Ike recovery effort in 2008 and since has been activated for South Texas flooding, Hurricane Alex and multiple wildfires.

It most recently was used during the 2011 wildfire season, during which 329 engines and 1,274 firefighters were called upon to help the state respond to the devastating wildfires that were burning — at times — from border to border.

Because these resources are located in Texas, they can respond faster than wildland firefighters brought in from other states. TIFMAS troops can be activated quickly when dangerous fire weather is predicted, allowing resources to be pre-positioned in high-risk areas.

Three years after the development of TIFMAS in 2007, the TIFMAS Grants Program was launched in 2010. Administered by TFS, the TIFMAS Grant Program distributes each year $1 million in grants for engines, training and protective equipment.

Developed with support from Texas Commission on Fire Protection, Texas Fire Chiefs Association, State Firemen’s and Fire Marshals’ Association and Texas Association of State Firefighters, the program is funded by the Insurance Companies Maintenance Tax and Insurance Department Fees (Fund 8042).

At the current funding level, the program can provide engines for five to seven departments each year. Additional funding would allow the agency to provide engines and other equipment to more Texas fire departments.

For more information, contact:

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About Texas A&M AgriLife

What is AgriLife? It's a simple word for a diverse organization. With teaching, research, extension education, laboratory, and forestry facilities throughout Texas, we serve people of all ages and backgrounds. Led by Vice Chancellor Dr. Mark A. Hussey, Texas A&M AgriLife includes the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Texas A&M Forest Service, and the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory.