

2/15/22

Dear Graceville Fire Department Patrons,

Our aging ARMER radios need to be replaced to stay current with the uptick in technology. We need to upgrade to keep your homes, farms, and families safe. Big Stone County is writing in support of Bill HF 2821/SF 2670. We are writing to urge your support of this important public safety initiative. Our radios that serve the ARMER system are outdated in our jurisdictions. They are costly to maintain and replace. In local government units, where budgets are tight, it is very difficult to plan for the costly process of replacing this critical infrastructure. Local government units urge the state to fund a grant program that allows for these critical upgrades of radios.

Another challenge to replacement radios is that replacing them is a direct impact of our local taxpayers. Radios are critical to deploying resources, protecting property, life, and protecting our workers. However, they often get overlooked for replacement because there is no existing funding source.

In Big Stone County, there are 253 radios on the statewide ARMER system. Most of these radios are used by our small, rural emergency departments. There are five volunteer fire departments, two ambulance services, two hospitals, two volunteer first responder groups, and one police department. We have an excellent Emergency Management department and the Sheriff's Office which includes our countywide dispatch center.

Out of the 253 radios, there are approximately 230 of the radios that were purchased before 2011. These radios are no longer supported by Motorola and it is extremely difficult to find radio parts or used parts to fix or maintain them. Our emergency services departments rely on the ARMER radio system to provide the interoperability between the departments at the local, regional, State, and Federal levels.

The replacement cost for the radios that are at the end of their life expectancy range from \$2,500 to \$4,800 each. This expense does not include the radio programming or additional equipment or supplies required to add the radio onto the Statewide radio system. The additional cost will be approximately \$400 per radio. The cost to the emergency services departments and our tax payers is estimated to be around \$690,000.00 over the next five years.

Thank you for your consideration and time. Please contact the Graceville Fire Department with any concerns.

Graceville Fire Department
C/O Kyle A. Dreke Graceville FD Secretary