



## Zion National Park Fire Management

### National Park Service Provides Funding for Rural Fire Assistance

The National Park Service (NPS), in conjunction with Zion National Park, recently provided \$9,000 in rural fire assistance funding to the Springdale/Rockville Rural Fire District (RFD) to increase firefighter safety and enhance their fire protection capability when responding to wildland fires. This is the second consecutive year that they have received rural fire assistance funding.



Zion National Park Superintendent Marty Ott congratulates Springdale/Rockville RFD Fire Chief Jeff Ballard on the receipt of equipment from the rural fire assistance fund.

The \$10 million rural fire assistance appropriation is a key component of the Community Assistance Program within the National Fire Plan, introduced as a result of the devastating fire season of 2000. The program assists RFD's in meeting or exceeding accepted standards of wildland fire qualifications, training, and performance and targets those departments that help fight fire on or near Department of Interior lands. Historically, the NPS has had no capability to fund these small rural fire departments.

"To qualify for assistance, a RFD has to meet certain requirements," explained Zion's Superintendent Marty Ott. "These RFD's must have a cooperative agreement with the NPS and they must serve a community with a population of less than ten thousand. The RFD must share a minimum of 10% of the cost (which may include in-kind services) and must serve a community in the wildland/urban interface. The Springdale/Rockville RFD was able to meet these requirements," Ott added. Funding can only be used for training, equipment, and prevention activities and currently; assistance is limited to a maximum of \$20,000 per fire department.

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Park officials were given a list of needed equipment and/or training needs from the Springdale/Rockville RFD. The park then used the allocated funds to purchase the requested equipment or to provide the needed training.

Of the 385 units of the NPS, at least 245 experience wildland fires either originating within the unit, or igniting outside and threatening the park. Particularly in the smaller units, significant assistance from adjacent small communities' rural or volunteer fire departments is required to respond to wildland fires. In many cases, those fire departments are the only firefighting resources available to assist the parks.

Ott emphasized the importance of the Rural Fire Assistance Program to the park and the surrounding communities. "This program offers Zion National Park a wonderful opportunity to continue our cooperative working relationship with the Springdale/Rockville RFD by providing them with much needed equipment and training. It is a good example of how the National Park Service recognizes the important role that these rural fire districts play in the protection of our public lands."

Information on the Rural Fire Assistance Program and how to apply for assistance funds can be obtained through the following website: [www.fireplan.gov/](http://www.fireplan.gov/)