

SDML Workers' Compensation Fund Approves Grant Programs for 2026



For over a decade the SDML Workers' Compensation Fund has offered three grant programs to its members. The Stryker EMS grant, the Stan Houston ICS® Saw grant and the Trenching and Confined Space Entry Safety Equipment grant, which was created to assist members with the purchase of approved safety equipment such as trench boxes, hydraulic shoring, gas detectors (with and without calibration kits), full body harness, tripods and blowers.

Because these grant programs promote safety for our members, the SDML Workers' Compensation Fund Board of Trustees approved all three grant programs with enough funds to award 5 more grants for the 2025 year. The grant will pay 50% of the cost of the equipment with a maximum grant award of **\$5,000**. The 2026 grant period will open and applications will be accepted beginning January 1, 2026. Keep reading for more details about each grant program opportunity.

Stryker EMS Equipment Grant

The Stryker EMS grant program is a grant to assist our members in purchasing the following equipment:

- **Stryker Power-LOAD™ Model 6390**
- **Stryker Power-PRO™ 2 Cot Model 6507**
- **Stryker Stair-PRO® Chair Model 6252**
- **Xpedition™ Power Chair Model 6257**
- **Lucas®3, v3.1 Chest Compression System**

Please contact Will Frantz at Stryker EMS to for pricing questions or to obtain a quote.

The intent of this grant program is to provide a safer workplace for the ambulance personnel, firefighters, law enforcement, and all local government employees that assist their ambulance services to provide emergency transfer of patients. These products have been proven to significantly reduce back injuries due to lifting patients. We have 1 member that prior to purchasing a **Stryker Power-PRO™** ambulance cot, had 10 lifting injuries over a 7-year period resulting in over \$150,000 in medical and lost-time expense. Since being awarded a grant in 2011, this member has not had a single lifting injury with over 18,000 patient transfers.

A 100 percent reduction in cot related injuries saved one organization \$545,500 over four and a half years,¹⁰ and 99 percent of those surveyed agree that Stryker's Powered System makes their jobs easier. Other relevant stats are:

- 42% of the US adult population is obese and 9% are severely obese
- EMS workers experience musculoskeletal injuries from overexertion 5 times more often than the average U.S. worker
- Studies show manual patient handling is the single greatest risk factor for overexertion injuries for healthcare workers
- At any given time, 10 percent of the EMS workforce is out of work due to EMT injury
- 60% of ambulance officers experience back pain after performing CPR

- One in four caregivers suffer a career-ending back injury within the first four years of employment³ and low back strain causes 78 percent of compensation days in the U.S. alone
- The cost of a typical strain injury is \$67,248 (\$32,023 direct and \$35,225 indirect costs)
- Lifting causes more than 70% of back injuries of EMTs

Stryker EMS has used the SDML Workers' Compensation Fund grant program as a model of success and has rolled out similar programs in several other states.

Over the past 15 years the SDML WC Fund has awarded 173 grants to our members that total over \$450,000. Congratulations to the 2025 grant recipients listed below:

- City of Elkton
- Battle Creek Fire District (Penn Co Fire)
- Marshall County Ambulance
- Piedmont Ambulance District
- Watertown Fire & Rescue
- City of Freeman Ambulance
- City of Gary Fire Department
- McPherson County/West McPherson EMS
- Plankinton Ambulance



Stan Houston ICS® Saw Grant

This grant program assists members with the purchase of the **ICS® Saw Packages** below:

- 695XL-16 GAS SAW PACKAGE
- 890PG-15 HYDRAULIC SAW PACKAGE
- 890PG-20 HYDRAULIC SAW PACKAGE

The ICS® saw is beneficial in reducing the risk of injury during activities that require the use of a chop saw, particularly to cut and repair broken water pipes in a confined space. Forty-two grants and \$48,000 have been awarded to our members.



Trenching and Confined Space Entry Safety Equipment Grant

This grant program has continued to grow in popularity. There is no set approved equipment list. The equipment applied for must be approved by Safety Benefits as equipment that meets the purpose and specs to mitigate the risks of trenching and confined space entry. Common types of qualifying equipment are gas detectors, trench boxes, tri-pods, shoring, harnesses and blowers. A member may apply once per calendar year and the grant only applies to one piece of equipment or equipment package. The member may purchase the equipment from a vendor of their choice, but again, prior to a grant being awarded, Safety Benefits will review the requested equipment to verify that it meets all current standards for its intended purpose. If you would like to inquire about the eligibility and pre-approval of the equipment prior to completing an application, please contact the SDML WC Fund Administrator, Insurance Benefits, Inc.

Over the past 7 years the SDML WC Fund has awarded 55 grants to our members that total \$95,000. Congratulations to the 2024 grant recipients listed below:

- City of Aberdeen Fire Rescue
- Brookings Municipal Utilities
- City of Harrisburg
- City of Menno
- City of Onida
- City of Volga
- City of Wagner
- Alexandria Fire District
- City of Fort Pierre
- Lincoln County
- City of Miller
- City of Summerset
- City of Vermillion



Eligibility for all of these grants is very simple. The applicant must be a member of the SDML WC Fund as of the date of the grant application and in the year the grant is awarded. Also, the member must be in compliance with Loss Control Safety Improvement Recommendations for every department.

The SDML Workers' Compensation Fund has always stressed the importance of using safety equipment and following safety procedures. There are many components to a successful safety program. Creating a culture of safety begins with leadership direction and support which then flows to the supervisors and employees. It only takes one motivated person to change the culture of your entity. We look forward to more participation in these programs and the reduction of injuries to your employees.

These grant programs continue to be very popular and the grants are awarded on a first come first serve basis. The grant funds were all awarded by March 2025. If you are considering applying for a grant in 2026, we encourage you to send your application ASAP after January 1st, 2026.

If you have any questions or would like an application, please contact Brad Wilson, Kim Curry, Gary Drewes or Doug Kirkus at Insurance Benefits, Inc. Email: info@sdmlwcfund.com or Phone: 800-233-9073. The 2025 applications will be available on our website at www.sdmlwcfund.com.



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