

**Request:** Grants or low-interest loans to repair/reconstruct rural fire stations in Merced County unincorporated areas.

**Description:** In recent years, Merced County has been in the process of evaluating how to enhance fire services and departmental performance. Following a “Fire Department Effectiveness and Efficiency Study” by Matrix Consulting Group, it became clear that there are several needs, perhaps the most immediate and

necessary of which is for the Fire Department to update and upgrade its outdated facilities.



Merced County currently has 20 fire stations. The newest one was built in 2006, while others were built in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of the older stations have become antiquated and are not energy efficient, ADA compliant, or are unable to support more than 1.0 staffing and proper services. Additionally, when the older stations were constructed, apparatus bays were much smaller since the apparatuses of that time were shorter and narrower. These small bays have proven to be a challenge when the County goes out to bid to purchase a new piece of equipment that meets current needs and standards.

Although still in the evaluation stages, the County is exploring options to renovate, update or reconstruct various outdated stations. Additionally, staff is looking into the effectiveness of consolidating stations that are close in proximity to improve functionality and better respond to areas that experience frequent calls for service.

**Necessity:** While there are several steps associated with improving fire services in Merced County, the foundation of this effort lies in the physical structure of our stations and their ability to appropriately house personnel and equipment.

Merced County supports funding through the USDA’s Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant program. Additionally, the County supports making funding more available to jurisdictions that may qualify for conventional financing options.

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