

## USDA Rural Development Success Story

### **Moulton, Iowa, Modernizes Fire Department**

*By Cecilia Lynch*

In the southernmost tier of Iowa counties lies the quiet town of Moulton in Appanoose County. Far from an urban area, the town, population 607, is small, but offers several convenient services along Main Street. The local telecommunications company, Moulton city hall, and a market with a deli all stand ready for business.

“Moulton is a safe, friendly place with a great public school available right in town,” said Marla Morlan, a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) loan specialist who moved to town at age 20 and raised her family here. “I’ve moved away, but the town will always hold a place in my heart.”

The volunteer fire department in town stood ready for business for years, as well, but needed an update. For a long time, the volunteer fire department did not have a modern high-pressure portable water pump with a corresponding firefighting vehicle to deal with structure fire situations, controlled burns, or the grass-fire callouts that sometimes came in the autumn when residents burned yard waste and farmers burned pastures to promote vegetation regeneration.

City leaders knew it was time to modernize and minimize vulnerability from fire. They also knew where to turn for funding assistance. In the past, [USDA Rural Development](#) had invested \$27,000 for self-contained breathing apparatus for the volunteers in the fire department.

The communications business in town, Farmers Mutual Cooperative Telephone Company, known as FMC, had received a \$9.8 million loan and grant combination from USDA Rural Development through the [ReConnect](#) program to improve broadband access for customers.

Moulton’s mayor, Jason Ogden, worked with the fire chief and the city clerk to put in the application for a truck and high pressure pump through the USDA Rural Development [Communities Facilities Direct Loans and Grants](#) program. When the federal funding came through for a loan of \$51,000 and a grant of \$49,000, the Moulton fire department team located, ordered, and took delivery of the fire utility vehicle and high-pressure firefighting water pump they needed to improve emergency response.

“I am proud of our fire department and its vision to provide our community with the latest equipment that will help our citizens in a time of need,” said Mayor Ogden. “Grants like this one allow our crew to pursue opportunities that normally wouldn’t be possible for a volunteer service.”



Recently, USDA Rural Development staff toured the fire facility to inspect the new vehicle and equipment.

“It’s wonderful to see the results of our work with the city of Moulton,” said Melinda Wright, the USDA loan specialist who worked on the project. “To know that Moulton is now better protected against fire emergencies is a great feeling. We want to increase public safety and protect economic assets in rural communities throughout Iowa.”

The new truck and pump are housed in the fire facility adjacent to city hall, ready for the volunteers to use at a moment’s notice.

Date Project Obligated: 07/20/2021

Loan: \$51,000

Grant: \$49,000

Total investment: \$100,000

Congressional District: # 3.