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Fire Department GRANT money going to specialized training equipment

These manikins are no dummies.

In fact, the new Quality Cardio-pulmonary Resuscitation training manikins heading to the Gallup Fire Department have smart features that give real-time feedback to trainees on how effective their optimally-lifesaving measures are.

The life-size Little Family dolls – just a head and torso for adult and child models, plus a full-body baby – are laced with digital sensors that measure pace, pressure and compression

depth, and send signals to digital phone apps, so trainers and their charges can easily see the results in real time.

“This is going to provide the first responders with information that they are doing compressions [at] the right depth and pressure and the right rate,” Fire Chief Jesus “Chuy”Morales told the *Su n* .
“Many times they weren’t going the right depth and it was hard to evaluate.”

A trainer can monitor as many as six trainees at a time using the instructor app. There’s also a classroom app, which can connect to up to 42 manikins at a time and includes a QCPR Race game to keep trainees engaged. Finally, there’s a SkillGuide app that provides real-time feedback and can be used on its own or with the other apps.

Using the high-tech manikins, “Our learners get more comfortable and confident in their skills doing CPR,” Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Coordinator Jessica Creech said. “It gives you a feel for the depth you must go to perform CPR so it’s effective.

“The more people get comfortable with it, the more they are willing to help,” she said.

The department offers CPR training not only for city employees, but for anyone in the community who needs certification for work — like nursing home workers and lifeguards — or just to feel prepared for emergencies. The city program trains between 200 and 300 people a year, nine people at a time, Morales said. Classes cost $55 per person, to cover the cost of materials.

Part of learning to do CPR properly is getting comfortable with performing a pretty rough maneuver. “It’s pretty brutal, sometimes you will hear ribs crack,” Creech said. “But at the end of the day you are trying to save a life.

“It’s not for the faint of heart,” she said.

The American Heart Association has included QCPR in its guidelines since 2019, Morales said, but the pandemic scuttled plans to get the new dummies sooner.

This year the department received a $4,916 grant from the New Mexico Department of Health to buy 10 sets of the manikins, and the City Council approved the purchase July 13. The funds are coming in August, so barring supply chain issues, Morales hopes to have the manikins by the end of the month.

The Council also approved acceptance of a $2,970 grant from insurer FM Global for fire prevention education materials. Those funds will be used to buy new activity books for use in elementary school education programs.

But that really doesn't tell the whole story. Fire safety coloring books are nothing new, but the department is developing a grade-specific curriculum for the K-6 crowd, Gallup Fire Marshal Jon Pairett said. Instead of a firefighter just giving a talk and passing out coloring books, the new books include games and activities that the educator can use during presentations.

"We are going to go over the activities in the coloring books, interacting with the kids.

It's more about developing skills. It's about retention, so when they go home and talk to their parents it's not just, 'I saw a fire truck today,' " he said. "We are trying to spend quality time with the kids."

Pairett hopes to start the new curriculum in elementary schools this October to coincide with Fire Prevention Week, but the new program is designed so classes can be offered throughout the term.

"It will depend on the schools, because this is the first time that we are trying to spread the classes out and do more grade-specific education. If we could get an hour per class, that would be amazing," he said.

He’s also hoping to expand the program to middle and high schools this year.

“We have already talked about it with some of the schools and counselors,” Pairett said. “In the past it was all focused on elementary schools.

“With the middle schools we want to just recap everything, what their knowledge is on fire prevention,” he added. “A lot of those kids are watching their younger siblings.”

At the high school level, the program will focus more on science and potential firefighting or EMS career paths that don’t require college.

“We’ve even talked to some of the science classes about teaching the science behind it,” he said. “If we understand the science behind it we can do more to prevent fires,”

“We went into one of the science classes and they were teaching fire science,” he continued. “They’re teaching the exact same things that we teach new firefighters.”

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