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### **VPSOs Get New Fire Suppression Tool**

(ANCHORAGE, Alaska) – Village Public Safety Officers across Alaska are getting new equipment to keep their communities safe. Two hundred innovative Fire Suppression Tools (FSTs), distributed by Flameguard USA, were purchased by the Bristol Bay Native Association and Kodiak Area Native Association VPSO grantees. The FSTs were then distributed by the Department of Public Safety’s VPSO program. The purchase will equip every VPSO working in Alaska with one of the units and provide another tool in fighting fires in the villages.

“VPSOs attend the Rural Fire Protection Specialist Training as part of their VPSO certification. VPSOs assist their communities with fire prevention, fire safety, volunteer fire departments and training. VPSOs are usually one of the first people to arrive at the scene of an emergency like a fire,” said Alaska State Trooper Captain Andrew Merrill, the VPSO program coordinator. “With one of these FSTs, a VPSO has a new tool that will be immediately deployable and will either save a building or provide time while volunteer firefighters set up other firefighting apparatus. When the VPSO deploys the unit inside a home or other enclosed building it decreases the need for or the amount of water needed to extinguish the fire.”

Many communities in rural Alaska do not have fire departments and rely on volunteers and community members to respond and fight fires. Setting up pumps and accessing water sources can be difficult and time consuming and the likelihood of saving structures is very limited. In most incidents the goal is to try to keep the fire from spreading to other buildings. With the new devices the FST is thrown into a building and it suppresses the fire with a nontoxic chemical reaction potentially saving the structure and allowing anyone inside time to escape from the building.

The FSTs are easy devices to use and don’t require extensive training. In essence they are like a grenade; pull the pin and throw it into the building. The Fire Suppression Tools are low maintenance and can withstand Alaska’s various climates. It will operate in temperatures down to 60 below zero and won’t self-ignite unless it reaches temperatures in excess of approximately 734°F. The battery must be changed after five years, but otherwise unlike standard fire extinguishers no inspections or recharging is required. “A VPSO can carry it around on their ATV, snowmachine, or in the trunk of their car during all seasons for up to five years and not worry about it malfunctioning when it is needed,” said Captain Merrill.

For more information on Flameguard USA Fire Suppression Tools and their capabilities go to [www.flameguardusa.com/](http://www.flameguardusa.com/).