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Janklow Offers Free Generators And Lights To Fire Departments April 17, 2000

(Pierre) – In another example of helping prison inmates make productive use of their time and skills, Gov. Bill Janklow is giving away portable emergency lights built by them to help South Dakota fire departments at disaster scenes.

Janklow has invited 87 fire departments from western South Dakota to pick up their lighting units on Wednesday at Camp Rapid in Rapid City. There will be a free lunch for the fire departments at 11:30 a.m. (Mountain Time), followed by a short demonstration of the lights.

Janklow plans similar give-aways for other fire departments statewide later this spring. The lighting unit weighs about 250 pounds and fits in the back of a standard pickup truck. The 2,500-watt generator powers a pair of 1,000-watt metal halide lamps, which illuminate an area of approximately 36,000 square feet, or about two-thirds of a football field.

"So many times, we need to respond to emergencies after dark," Janklow said. "The Spencer tornado really demonstrated what an asset lighting would be during a disaster, so we went to work."

Helping fund the project was a \$113,720 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. According to project coordinator Steve Wegman, the Springfield inmates are building a total of 370 units, which together could light a square mile.