



## International Fire & Safety in running for \$50M deal

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— Days after obtaining their first Department of Defense contract, International Fire & Safety Inc. is working on another that could mean much more for the Pine Belt region.

Sue Bridges, president of the Laurel-based company, called for local elected officials to support the effort, which would bring up to \$50 million and 25 jobs to the area.

“We need the help of elected officials to point this towards Mississippi,” she said. “There’s a lot of competition out there for this, and we want to create additional jobs here in Jones County and the surrounding areas.”

Last week, it was announced that International Fire & Safety Inc., which was founded in Laurel in the 1980s, had won a \$5.5-million contract with the U.S. Department of Defense, which involves direct support for troops across the world.

Bridges said the company has worked for many years on establishing a relationship with the federal government. That relationship proved successful in obtaining the contract.

“When we started this business, we had no earthly idea that we would be doing business with the government,” she said. “We started locally and just expanded from there.”

Bridges said International Fire was awarded its first government contract in 1999.

“It was very small comparatively, but we started from there trying to develop that relationship,” she said. “We’ve sent equipment to most all of the bases in Mississippi and many around the world. It’s not just domestic, but anywhere in the U.S. has a presence.”

Just Thursday, Bridges said the company had several pieces of equipment headed to troops in a far-off region of the world.

“We’re hoping this contract will lead to some much larger contracts,” she said. “We want it to be a stepping stone. It opened the door for us, and now we’re looking to take the next step.”

Bridges announced Thursday that International Fire would be the sole source for a number of products if they are awarded further contracts.

“We are working with the WIN Job Center because if we get these additional contracts, we’ll be needing people pretty quick,” she said. “We have to work even harder to get these additional contracts because nothing comes easy.”

Ricki Boone, national sales manager, said all of the employees are excited about the contract.

“I’m excited about the growth to say the least,” he said. “Our whole goal has been to grow. We don’t want to just become visible in our hometown, but state and worldwide. These are exciting times. When most people are down on their luck, to see part of the economy coming back is an excellent thing.”

Bridges said the contract came during a great time for those in the fire industry.

“This month is fire prevention month,” she said. “It’s a good coincidence.”

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Photos



Sue Bridges