

Key Messages

for
FAMA/FEMSA 2021

The AFG Program

➤ **The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) equipment program is one of the most effective and efficiently run programs in the Federal Government. Essentially all funding goes to local fire departments, both career and volunteer. The selection process includes peer review.**

➤ **The AFG program fills critical equipment gaps for the over 1.1 million first responders who serve as the backbone of our nation's response capability for natural disasters and terrorist events. For example:**

- ***50% of all fire departments lack enough portable radios to equip all responders on a shift;***
- ***53% of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA);***
- ***72% of all fire departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old.***

Historic Funding of AFG

- In FY 2021 Congress funded the AFG program at \$360 million, down 36% from its FY 2009 level of \$565 million and 11% from its FY 2011 level of \$405 million. These are significant cuts.
- We thank Congress for acknowledging this shortfall by modestly increasing the AFG program by \$5 million for FY 2021 (in addition to \$5 million for SAFER).
- We also thank Congress for providing \$100 million in AFG funding provided through the CARES Act, and \$100 million in the American Rescue Plan (in addition to \$200 million for SAFER) to combat COVID-19.
- These acts of Congress are much appreciated, but more needs to be done.

Justification for the AFG and Fire Grant Programs

- *First responder calls continue to be in the millions. In 2019 the fire and rescue service responded to 37.3 million calls, up from 36.7 million in 2018. Calls are likely to increase as the population ages, and the demands of our emergency services increase from future disasters.*

- By funding the AFG program, Congress supports our first responders as they meet increasing security and rescue needs. This is particularly important given the outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic, combined with the recent increase in the frequency, severity, and cost of natural disasters—hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and wildfires.

- As America’s first responders combat the COVID-19 Pandemic, they face tremendous personal health risk while their departments are threatened by fiscal pressures, furloughs, and layoffs.

- This comes at a time when they are needed most for COVID-19 response, and as the intensity of storms and natural disasters continues to grow.

- In 2020 alone, there were 22 disasters in the U.S. that cost over \$1 billion in damage. Together these disasters cost \$95 billion total.

- To put this in perspective, between 1980 and 1989, there were an average of 2.9 disasters in the U.S. that cost over \$1 billion per year. The average cost of these disasters per year was \$17.9 billion.

- Compared to 2020, these numbers reflect an over 658% increase in frequency of billion-dollar disasters, and an over 430% increase in annual cost.

- The frequency and cost of these large-scale disasters is expected to rise dramatically in the coming years, and it will be the responsibility of our nation's fire service to respond.
- As our first responders continue to fulfil their role to locally execute the nation's response to COVID-19 and other disasters, it is critical that AFG funding is expanded to support them in meeting the nation's emergencies.
- *Local first responders are an integral part of the National Response Framework, and therefore, funding to support them supports a national security purpose. First responders also protect thousands of federal facilities daily.*

The ASK: Suggested Funding Levels for FY 2022

- In FY 2022, FAMA and FEMSA recommend funding the AFG and SAFER programs at full authorization levels of \$750 million each -- \$750 million for AFG and \$750 million for SAFER.
- The U.S. Fire Administration should be funded in FY 2022 at the full authorization level of \$76.5 million. USFA supports critical training for first responders—key to maintaining a cutting edge force nationally.
- We also are calling for The Urban Search and Rescue Response System (USAR) to be funded at **no less than \$50**

million in FY 2022 (from \$37.8 million in FY 2021). The nation depends on USAR for its disaster response by sending specialized response units, based locally, to disasters across the country.

The Fire Service Industry: FAMA and FEMSA

➤ FAMA/FEMSA members are U.S. based, smaller manufacturing companies accounting for 107,919 direct U.S. jobs. Therefore, when Congress funds AFG, it also supports U.S. manufacturing.

Conclusion: Repeat the ASK—Invitation to Join Fire Caucus
We thank you for funding the AFG and SAFER programs in the past. We ask that you restore the funding of these programs at \$750 million each for FY 2022.

Your support is much appreciated.

If you are not a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus, we encourage you to join. [\(Click here to view a list of Caucus members from last Congress\)](#)