

# Key Messages

for

FAMA/FEMSA Hill Day, April 6-7, 2022

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## 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 approximately 1.1 million first responders *who serve as the backbone of our nation's response capability for natural disasters and terrorist events. For example:*
  - *49% of all fire engines and pumpers are at least 15 years old;*
  - *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);*
  - *64% of all fire departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old.*

- Since 2019, the average cost for turnout gear has increased by 35-40%, while the cost of fire apparatus (pumpers) has increased by around 32%. However, over the last decade, AFG funding has remained largely flat, as costs to the American fire service continue to rise.

### **Historic Funding of AFG**

- In FY 2022 Congress flat-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.
- But 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 to build up our basic response capacity.

### **Justification for the AFG and Fire Grant Programs**

- ***First responder calls continue to be in the millions. In 2020 the fire and rescue service responded to 36.4 million calls. We anticipate calls 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 recent increase in the frequency, severity, and cost of natural disasters—hurricanes, tornadoes, floods and wildfires.
  
- As America’s first responders continue to protect our communities from a growing list of threats and disasters, they face tremendous personal health risk while their departments are threatened by fiscal pressures and recruitment challenges.
  
- This comes at a time when they are needed most as the intensity of storms and natural disasters continues to grow.
  
- In 2021 alone, there were 20 disasters in the U.S. that cost over \$1 billion in damage. Together these disasters cost our country \$145 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 \$19 billion.
  
- Compared to 2021, these numbers reflect a 590% increase in frequency of billion-dollar disasters, and an over 663% 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 disasters, it is critical that AFG funding is increased 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 2023**

- 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 \$55 million in FY 2023 (from \$37.8 million in FY 2022). 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 2023.**

**Your support is much appreciated.**

**If you are not a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus, we encourage you to join.**