



# Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG)

2023 edition

## Preserve funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

AFG is key to equipping adequately the nation's first responders and ensuring a high level of protection against fires, natural disasters, terrorism, and other emergencies across the United States.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program was established by Congress in 2001 to assist communities in equipping our nation's first responders, including firefighters and EMS personnel. Through AFG, local fire departments may apply for grants to purchase new and needed equipment, much of which replaces older, outdated equipment that no longer meets standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). AFG provides funding to equip firefighters and other first responders, helping to provide a universal level of protection across the United States, and ensuring public safety. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the grants in cooperation with the United States Fire Administration (USFA).

Through the FEMA program, fire departments of all sizes purchase personal protective equipment clothing (PPE), self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), personal alert safety system (PASS) devices, fire apparatus, and other essential safety and response equipment. AFG is extremely important to every state's first responders.

**FAMA and FEMSA:** Fire Apparatus Manufacturers' Association (FAMA) and Fire and Emergency Manufacturers and Services Association (FEMSA) represent "the industry that helps first responders save lives" by manufacturing and supporting lifesaving equipment utilized by first

responders. Member companies are predominately U.S.-based, employ 95,873 U.S. workers, and tend to be small and medium-sized businesses.

**Authorization:** In 2018, Congress reauthorized the AFG program for six years at \$750 million (plus inflation), beginning in FY 2018, through FY 2023. Twenty-five percent of annual grant funds must be awarded to volunteer, career, and "combination" fire departments each; an additional 10% of funds are available for open competition among all three categories of departments; 10% of funds must be awarded to fire prevention and safety organizations; 3.5% of funds must go to EMS; and 2% may go to non-affiliated EMS organizations. Congress also reauthorized the SAFER (hiring) program and the U.S. Fire Administration. In 2023, the AFG and SAFER programs are up for reauthorization again.

**Efficient and effective:** AFG is one of the most efficiently-run and effective programs in the federal government. Funds are distributed directly to local fire departments. Bureaucracy is minimal and local community benefit is paramount.

**America's fire service:** In 2021, the nation's fire and rescue services responded to 39.6 million calls to protect the public. These firefighters and EMS personnel serve as the backbone of the nation's first response

capabilities for both natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. As the population ages and expands, this number is expected to increase significantly.

In 2020, the nation had approximately 1 million fire and rescue personnel, with 676,900 (65%) of these serving as volunteers. Without such service, the nation's response capability would be seriously compromised and no longer universal, serving all communities.

## AFG at a glance

**Established:**  
2001

**Authorized at \$750 million (plus inflation):**  
Through FY 2023

**FY2023 appropriation:**  
\$360 million

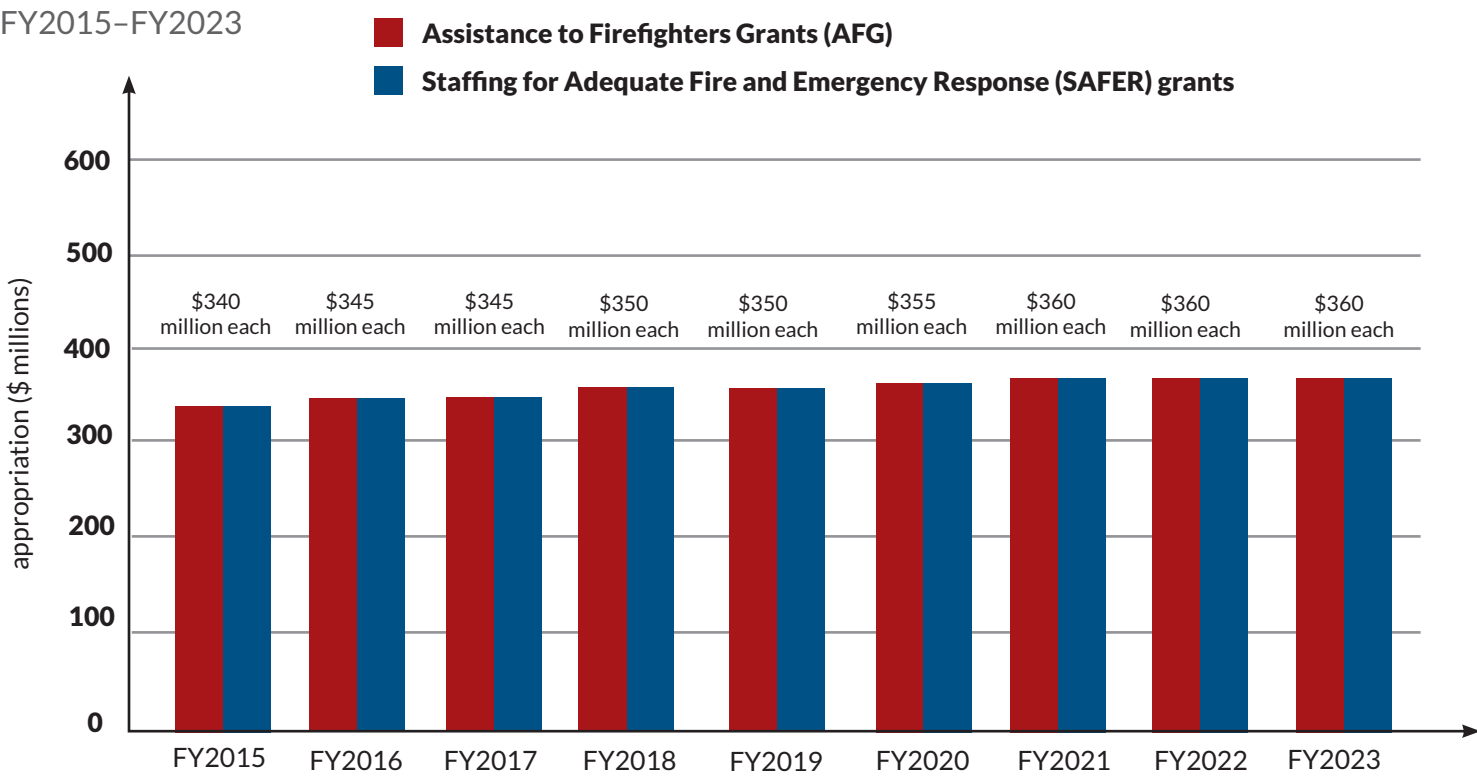
**Administered by:**  
FEMA

**Supports:**  
Purchase of personal protective equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, personal alert safety system, fire apparatus and other vehicles, and more.

1 million first responders

# AFG & SAFER Appropriations Funding

\*2020 Figures do not include the \$100 million in AFG funding provided through the CARES Act to combat COVID-19. The 2021 figures do not include the \$100 million in AFG and \$200 million for SAFER in the American Rescue Plan to combat COVID-19.



**FAMA & FEMSA support FY2024 funding at \$405 million each for AFG & SAFER**

## Cost Increases of Firefighting Equipment

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. Congress must increase AFG funding to commensurately meet the climbing cost of life-saving firefighting equipment.

## Responding to New and More Severe Disasters

America’s first responders are on the front lines when a disaster occurs. As the number and intensity of storms and natural disasters continue to intensify, first responders are being put at even greater risk, and are in even greater need of support.

In 2022 alone, there were 18 disasters in the U.S. that caused over \$1 billion in damage. Together, these disasters cost our country \$175.2 billion. To put this in perspective, from 1980-1989, disasters of this magnitude cost the U.S. \$21 billion per year on average. The frequency and cost of 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 help respond to them.

As our first responders continue to fulfill their role to locally execute the nation’s response to fires, storms, public health emergencies, and other disasters, it is critical that AFG funding is increased to support them in keeping our communities safe.

# Meeting the Needs of First Responders

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG) helps roughly 1 million firefighters throughout the United States meet their baseline equipment needs and plays a critical role in the nation’s emergency response capabilities.

Since the program’s inception in 2001, AFG has remained critical in supporting our nation’s fire service. However, as first responder responsibilities increase, more work must be done to expand the AFG program to meet their needs.

53%

of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

55%

of departments have personnel that engage in structural firefighting, but have not been formally trained.

21%

of department personnel who perform EMS lack certification.

64%

of all departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old.

49%

of all fire department engines and pumpers are at least 15 years old,

[Source: National Fire Protection Association \(NFPA\)](#)

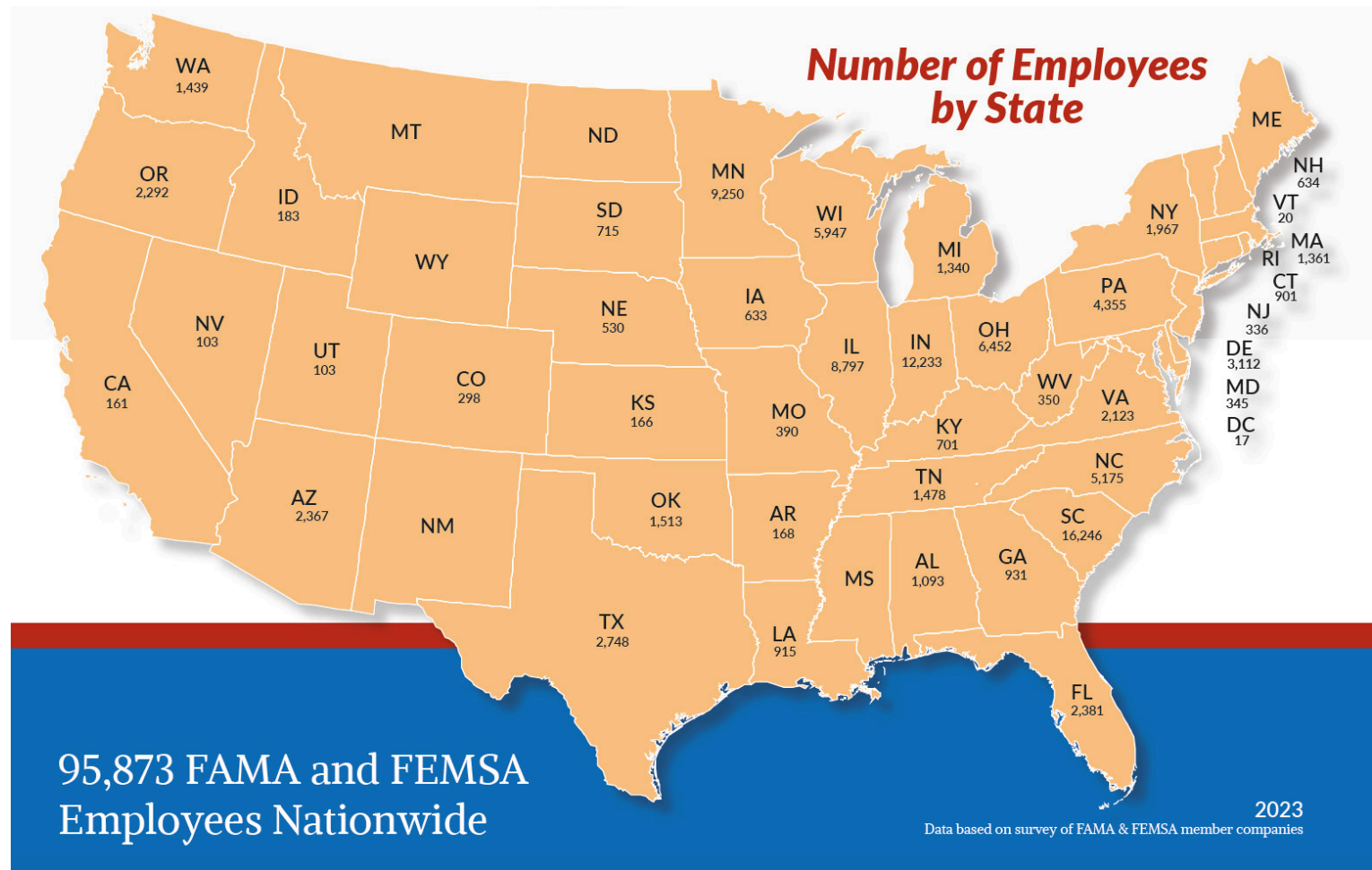
## The Cost and Frequency of Natural Disasters Continues to Rise

Time Period	Billion-Dollar Disasters	Events/Year	Cost	Percent of Total Cost	Cost/Year	Deaths	Deaths/Year
1980s (1980-1989)	33	3.3	\$209.9B	8.3%	\$21.0B	2,994	299
1990s (1990-1999)	57	5.7	\$320.5B	12.6%	\$32.1B	3,075	308
2000s (2000-2009)	67	6.7	\$594.6B	23.4%	\$59.5B	3,102	310
2010s (2010-2019)	131	13.1	\$949.5B	37.4%	\$95.0B	5,227	523
Last 5 Years (2018-2022)	90	18.0	\$611.8B	24.1%	\$122.4B	1,751	350
Last 3 Years (2020-2022)	60	20.0	\$447.6B	17.6%	\$149.2B	1,460	487
Last Year (2022)	18	18.0	\$175.2B	6.9%	\$175.2B	474	474
All Years (1980-2023)*	355	8.1	\$2,541.1B	100.0%	\$57.8B	15,955	363

The chart above shows the number of disasters in the U.S. that have exceeded \$1 billion in the last four decades, last year, last three years, and last five years. It also reflects the total monetary and human cost of these disasters during these time periods, with cost per-year averages. During the 1980s, the total cost of these disasters was \$209.9 billion. During the 2010s, this number rose to \$949.5 billion. **This represents an increase of 352%.**

[Source: NOAA](#)

# FAMA and FEMSA Member Employees



**Fire Apparatus  
Manufacturers' Association**

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