***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 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.***
* **From 2023 to 2025 alone, the average cost for turnout gear and PPE increased by an estimated 22%, while the cost of fire apparatus (pumpers) increased by an estimated 11%. However, over the last decade, AFG funding has continued to be cut as costs to the American fire service continue to rise.**

***Historic Funding of AFG***

* **Thank congressional members for supporting the reauthorization of AFG and SAFER in 2024.**
* **“The Fire Grants and Safety Act,” which reauthorized AFG and SAFER in 2024, passed with an overwhelming majority in the House and Senate, demonstrating the tremendous bipartisan support for the programs.**
* **In FY 2024 Congress cut the AFG program to $324 million – a 43% cut from FY 2009 level of $565 million. These are significant cuts.**

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

* **In FY2023, AFG received ten times more in requests than could be funded. AFG got $3.7 billion in requests while SAFER got $3.1 billion in requests. Both programs were funded at just $360 million.**
* ***First responder calls continue to be in the millions. In 2023 the fire and rescue service responded to 42.4 million calls, up from 42.1 million calls in 2022. 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 2024 alone, there were 27 disasters in the U.S. that cost over $1 billion in damage. Together these disasters cost our country $182.7 billion total.**
* **To put this in perspective, between 1980 and 1989, there were an average of 3.3 disasters in the U.S. that cost over $1 billion per year. The average cost of these disasters per year was $22 billion.**
* **Compared to 2024, these numbers reflect a 718% increase in frequency of billion-dollar disasters, and an over 730% 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 2025***

* **In FY 2025 FAMA and FEMSA recommend funding the AFG and SAFER programs at $405 million each -- $405 million for AFG and $405 million for SAFER.**
* **The U.S. Fire Administration should be funded in FY 2025 at $60.33 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 $75 million in FY 2025). 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 95,873 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 $405 million each for FY2025.***

***Your support is much appreciated.***

***If you are not a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus, we encourage you to join. A current list of the Congressional Fire Caucus members can be found at:*** [***www.CFSI.org/Legislation-Advocacy***](http://www.cfsi.org/legislation-advocacy)***.***

***AFG “Elevator Pitch” to Congressional Members***

* ***We are members of FAMA & FEMSA, representing the American fire services industry.***
* ***We ask that you fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program (AFG) at $405 million for FY2025 to support U.S. fire departments.***
* ***AFG is critical for ensuring that American firefighters have the equipment needed to protect local communities across the country.***
* ***Please let us know if there is a member of your staff who we can speak with about supporting the AFG program.***