



March 18-19, 2026

Background Talking Points for Hill Day Meetings

FUND THE ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTER GRANTS (AFG) EQUIPMENT PROGRAM AT \$405 Million FOR FY 2025

The Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) equipment program is one of the most efficiently run and effective programs in the federal government.

Funds are administered out of FEMA's staff account, so that nearly all AFG funds appropriated are distributed directly to local fire departments. Bureaucracy is minimal; local community benefit is maximum.

Through the FEMA program, fire departments of all sizes purchase personal protective clothing (PPE), self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), personal alert safety system (PASS) devices, fire apparatus, and other essential safety and response equipment.

FAMA and FEMSA thank congressional members for supporting the reauthorization of AFG & 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 FY2023 and beyond, the AFG program received about ten times more in requests than could be funded. \$3.7 billion in requests for AFG; and \$3.1 billion in requests for SAFER in 2023. Both programs were funded at just \$360 million in FY 2023.

Fiscal Year 2024 Appropriations funded the AFG program at a level of \$324 million, far less than the demonstrated need. This represents a 10% cut from the FY2023 level of \$360 million. **Compared to FY 2009 funding (\$565 million), this year's funding level of \$324 million represents a 43% cut in this important program.**

Without further expansion of the AFG program, communities and their first responders are being left short-changed as local governments continue to struggle to meet capital infrastructure needs.

Fire and Rescue Service

Fire and rescue service personnel responded to 42.4 million calls in 2023, up from 42.1 million calls in 2022. As the aging population expands, and the demands of our emergency services increase from future disasters, this number is expected to grow significantly.



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Local fire and rescue personnel represent the backbone of the nation's first response capabilities, serving as an integral part of our national comprehensive response strategy for both natural disasters and potential terrorism events. Recent severe weather events underscore the importance local first responders play in serving the public.

The nation had approximately 1 million fire and rescue personnel in 2023, with 635,100 of these serving as volunteers (62%). Without such service, the nation's response capability would be seriously compromised and no longer universal, serving all communities.

FAMA and FEMSA represent the industry that "helps first responders save lives." Our U.S. members (over 250 companies) directly employ 105,030 U.S. workers, and tend to be small and medium-sized businesses.

By funding AFG, Congress supports our first responders as they meet increasing security and rescue needs. This is particularly important given the increase in frequency, severity, and cost of natural disasters – hurricanes, tornados, floods, and wildfires.

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 the nation's fire service to respond.

As the nation's first responders continue to fulfill their role to locally execute the nation's response to natural and manmade disasters, it is critical that AFG funding is expanded to support them in meeting the nation's emergencies.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grants equipment program is extremely important to your state's first responders and member companies and jobs. (Provide summary of Number and Size of AFG Awards to the State as well as the number of jobs represented by FAMA Companies in that State).



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The “ASK” to Your Senators and Representatives

For FY 2027, please restore funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants equipment program by expressing to the Appropriation Committee Members your support for funding of **\$405 million each for AFG and SAFER.**

Fund the U.S. Fire Administration in FY 2027 at **\$60.33 million.** USFA provides vital training to 100,000 first responder personnel annually, but over the last decade it has been cut significantly.

Fund the Urban Search and Rescue Response System (USAR) at **\$75 million.** The Urban Search and Rescue program is essential to our capacity to respond to dramatic natural and man-made events across the nation. We, unfortunately, see increased risk for both types of events in the foreseeable future.

If the Senator or Congressman is a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus, thank them for their membership. If they are NOT members, ask them to join. A current list of the Congressional Fire Caucus members can be found at: 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 FY2027 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.



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Handouts for the Congressional Meetings

- 10 Key Facts of the Fire Service (to be provided by FAMA/FEMSA GAC)
- Four-page packet, which includes a summary of AFG program, AFG and SAFER historic funding levels, data on fire equipment cost increases and the frequency and severity of disasters, and the FAMA/FEMSA employment map.
- Data report on Fire Departments Funded through the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program in the State (will be provided by FAMA/FEMSA GAC).
- Separate FAMA/FEMSA Map of 105,030 fire service industry jobs, including the list of FAMA and FEMSA U.S. member companies.