



Hill Day Key Messages

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.***



Hill Day Key Messages

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.

These incredibly important programs have been in a cycle of funding cuts.

In FY 2024 Congress cut the AFG program to \$324 million—a 10% cut over FY 2023 level of \$360 million; and a 43% cut from FY 2009 level of \$565 million. These are significant cuts.

In FY 2025 AFG and SAFER remained at \$324 million each due to the year long Continuing Resolution.

The latest House FY 2026 DHS Appropriations bill would increase AFG and SAFER funding by \$18 million—restoring half the cut of two years ago to a level of \$342 million. But it’s fate is uncertain.



Hill Day Key Messages

Currently, DHS is shut down; we hope when an agreement is reached the full cuts can be restored to a level of \$360 million.

We hope Congress can come to an agreement soon on the DHS FY 2026 appropriations bill.

(Note: The disagreement on funding for DHS centers on instituting reforms to ICE. If asked your position on this, you should say “we are here to talk about the fire service, and our associations really don’t address immigration issues.” “We do encourage an agreement to be reached.”)

Justification for the AFG and Fire Grant Programs

In FY2023 and beyond, AFG 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, followed by a 10% cut in FY 2024 and FY 2025.

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.



Hill Day Key Messages

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.



Hill Day Key Messages

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 2027

In FY 2027 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 2027 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 2027. The



Hill Day Key Messages

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 115,030 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 FY2027.

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.

AFG “Elevator Pitch” to Congressional Members

We are members of FAMA & FEMSA, representing the American fire services industry.



March 18-19, 2026

Hill Day Key Messages

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.