



# Homeland Security

## FY 2009 Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG)

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### Overview

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is an important component of the larger, coordinated effort to strengthen the Nation's overall level of preparedness and ability to respond to fire and related hazards. Since 2001, the AFG has provided approximately \$4 billion in grants to first-responder organizations to obtain much-needed emergency response equipment, personal protective equipment, firefighting and emergency vehicles, and training. During fiscal year (FY) 2009, the AFG will award another \$565 million to first-responder organizations that need support to improve their capability to respond to fires and emergencies of all types.

*In Fiscal Year 2009, DHS Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program will award approximately \$565 million directly to fire departments and EMS organizations to enhance their response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of the public and emergency response personnel with respect to fire and all other hazards.*

### Purpose

The purpose of the AFG is to award grants directly to fire departments and EMS organizations that are unaffiliated with a hospital to enhance their ability to protect the health and safety of the public, as well as that of first-responder personnel. Using a competitive process that is overseen by fire service subject matter experts, AFG grants are awarded to applicants whose requests best address the priorities of the AFG Program.

### Funding

The AFG will award approximately \$565 million in competitive grants to fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations during FY 2009. The application period opened on April 15, 2009, and closed on Wednesday, May 20, 2009, with 19,786 applications having been submitted. Funding for vehicles is limited to 25 percent of the total 2009 AFG appropriation. No less than 3.5 percent of appropriated funds (\$19.775 million) must be awarded for equipment and training grants for both fire-department-based and nonaffiliated EMS organizations.

### Eligibility

Only fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations were eligible to apply for funding. Organizations had to operate in one of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or Puerto Rico.

A "fire department" is defined as an agency or organization that has a formally recognized arrangement with a State, territory, local or tribal authority (city, county, parish, fire district, township, town, or other governing body) to provide fire suppression to a population within a fixed geographical area on a first-due basis. A "nonaffiliated EMS organization" is defined as a public or private nonprofit EMS organization that provides direct emergency medical services, including medical transport, to a specific geographic area on a first-due basis, but which is not affiliated with a hospital and does not serve a geographic area where such services are provided adequately by a fire department.

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## **Program Highlights**

The AFG has two funding priorities:

- Operations and Safety Program Area: Eligible activities are limited to training, equipment, personal protective equipment, wellness and fitness, and health and safety modifications to stations and facilities.
- Vehicle Acquisition Program Area: Eligible apparatus available include, but are not limited to, pumpers, aerials, quints, brush trucks, tankers/tenders, rescue vehicles, ambulances, foam units, and fireboats.

Interested applicants were allowed to submit two separate applications for consideration, one under each of the two program areas. The FY 2009 AFG also allowed eligible applicants to submit an additional application for a regional project in which multiple organizations serving more than one local jurisdiction would benefit directly from the activities implemented with the grant funds.

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## **Evaluation Criteria**

AFG funding priorities differ for fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations. The funding priorities and evaluation criteria were developed from recommendations provided by a criteria development panel composed of fire service professionals representing nine major fire service organizations and feedback from non-fire-service organizations representing State and city governments. Based on the input received, the FY 2009 AFG priorities remain largely unchanged from FY 2008. Under modifications to facilities, AFG gives priority to extraction systems and to projects complying with the 2007 Edition of NFPA 1500 concerning air quality and exposure to carcinogens. Vehicle grantees must certify that they will adopt and enforce standard operating procedures that comply with NFPA 1500 standards that require all passengers wear seatbelts and that drivers obey all traffic signals, signs, and laws.

All submitted applications will be ranked based on the substance of the application relative to the established funding priorities. Information provided in the application, including answers to the application's activity-specific questions, provide a basis to determine each application's ranking relative to the stated priorities. Applications that score the highest and are determined to be in the "competitive range" will undergo further evaluation by a panel of peers, or members of the fire service. Ultimately, any application that is considered for award will undergo an extensive technical review of the project budget.