Key Messages

for

FAMA/FEMSA 2014 Home Day

***The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) equipment program is one of the most effective and efficiently run programs in the Federal Government.***  All appropriated funds go to help meet the needs of fire and rescue departments. The program is administered through a separate DHS salaries and expenses account. This is made possible through an effective peer review process and highly effective FEMA staff.

***The AFG program fills critical equipment gaps for the 1.1 million first responders*** who serve as the backbone of our nation’s response capability for natural disasters and terrorist events. For example:

--51% of all fire department lack enough portable radios to equip all responders on a shift;

--51% of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA);

--Three out of five (63%) departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old;

***In FY 2014 Congress funded the AFG program at $340 million, down 40% from its FY 2009 level of $565 million and 16% from its FY 2011 level of $405 million. These are significant cuts.***

***(Plus, the program was subject to an additional $17 million cut from sequestration, bringing its FY 2013 level to approximately $320 million.)***

Yet first responder calls continue to climb dramatically to their current level of 31.9 million calls per year. These calls will continue to increase as the population ages and the demands of our emergency services increase.

**The President proposed an FY 2015 fire grants funding level of $670 million--$335 million to the AFG (equipment) program, and $335 million for SAFER (for hiring).**

 ***FAMA and FEMSA recommend AFG program funding at $340 million in FY 2015, along with $340 million for the SAFER (hiring) program—levels equivalent to current funding.***

***We would also like to see the U.S. Fire Administration funded in FY 2015 at $44 million (the President proposed $41.4 million).***

***The Urban Search and Rescue Response System, which the nation depends upon for disaster response, should be funded at $35.2 million.***

***As of the fall of 2014, both House and Senate Appropriations Committees have passed bills that fund AFG and SAFER at $340 million for each as program, as well as $44 million for USFA. The Senate propsed funding for USAR at $35.2 million; but the House proposed only $27.13 million. It is expected that Congress will pass an omnibus FY 2015 appropriations bill after the election in a lame duck session of Congress.***

***Local governments and their fire and rescue departments continue to feel the brunt of the slow recovery*** with continued strain on local operating and capital budgets. We expect many local government budgets to remain weak throughout the year.

***FAMA/FEMSA members are U.S. based, smaller manufacturing companies accounting for 90,700 direct U.S. jobs.***

***By funding the AFG program, Congress will support our first responders as they meet increasing security and rescue needs, while creating U.S.-based jobs.***

***We want to thank you for funding the AFG and SAFER programs at the combined total of $680 million ($340 million for each program) for FY 2014. Your support is much appreciated for the same level of funding for FY 2015.***