

Key Messages

for
FAMA/FEMSA 2018 Hill 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 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) salaries and expenses account. Grant awards are made through an effective peer review process (which keeps administrative costs low) and highly effective FEMA staff.

- The AFG program fills critical equipment gaps for the 1.09 million first responders

who serve as the backbone of our nation's response capability for natural disasters and terrorist events. For example:

- *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);*
- *72% of all fire departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old.*

- In FY 2018 Congress funded the AFG program at \$350 million, down 38% from its FY 2009 level of \$565 million and 14% from its FY 2011 level of \$405 million. These are significant cuts.
- We thank Congress for acknowledging this shortfall by modestly increasing the AFG program by \$5 million for FY 2018 (in addition to \$5 million for SAFER). This is much appreciated, but more needs to be done.
- Since 2011, the industry estimates that the cost of PPE has increased 11.4%. Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) has increased an estimated 15%.
- Also, since 2011 there has been a sharp increase in the estimated costs of firefighting apparatus—an estimated increase of 14.6% attributed to material and labor costs, and an additional 12% increase due to EPA regulations (2007 and 2009) and more stringent safety standards.

Yet first responder calls continue to climb to their current level of 35.3 million calls per year. These calls will continue to increase as the population ages and the demands of our emergency services increase.

- In FY 2018, FAMA and FEMSA recommend restoring funding levels to 2011 levels, \$405 million for both AFG and SAFER.
- The U.S. Fire Administration should also be funded in FY 2019 at \$50 million. USFA's budget has been reduced 25% over the last decade.
- The Urban Search and Rescue Response System, which the nation depends upon for disaster response, should be funded at \$50 million. If this level is not possible, we recommend increasing its funding above the FY 2018 level of \$35.18 million.
- We thank Congress for reauthorizing the USFA, the AFG and SAFER programs in the last session of Congress through FY 2023.
- FAMA/FEMSA members are U.S. based, smaller manufacturing companies accounting for 113,632 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. This is particularly important given recent increases in terrorism worldwide and the recent increase in the severity of natural disasters.

- Local rescue departments are also dealing with the spike in drug overdoses as a result of the opioid crisis hitting communities of all sizes.

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 (\$810 million total) for FY 2019.

Local first responders are an integral part of the National Response Framework and therefore funding to support them supports a national purposes. First responders also protect thousands of federal facilities daily.

Your support is much appreciated.

If you are not a member of the Congressional Fire Caucus we encourage you to join.