



# Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG)

Preserve funding for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program  
AFG is key to equipping adequately the nation’s first responders and ensuring a high level of protection against fires, natural disasters, terrorism, and other emergencies across the United States.

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program was established by Congress in 2001 to assist communities in equipping our nation’s first responders, including firefighters and EMS personnel. Through AFG, local fire departments may apply for grants to purchase new and needed equipment, much of which replaces older, outdated equipment that no longer meets standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). AFG provides funding to equip firefighters and other first responders, helping to provide a universal level of protection across the United States, and ensuring public safety. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) administers the grants in cooperation with the United States Fire Administration (USFA).

Through the FEMA program, fire departments of all sizes purchase personal protective equipment clothing (PPE), self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), personal alert safety system (PASS) devices, fire apparatus, and other essential safety and response equipment. AFG is extremely important to every state’s first responders.

FAMA and FEMSA: Fire Apparatus Manufacturers’ Association (FAMA) and Fire and Emergency Manufacturers and Services Association (FEMSA) represent “the industry that helps first responders save lives” by manufacturing and supporting

lifesaving equipment utilized by first responders. Member companies are predominately U.S.-based, employ 109,713 U.S. workers, and tend to be small and medium-sized businesses.

Authorization: In 2018, Congress reauthorized the AFG program for six years at a level just over \$800 million, beginning in FY 2018, indexed to inflation through FY 2023. Twenty-five percent of annual grant funds must be awarded to volunteer, career, and “combination” fire departments each; an additional 10% of funds are available for open competition among all three categories of departments; 10% of funds must be awarded to fire prevention and safety organizations; 3.5% of funds must go to EMS; and 2% may go to non-affiliated EMS organizations. Congress also reauthorized the SAFER (hiring) program and the U.S. Fire Administration. In 2023, the AFG and SAFER programs are up for reauthorization again.

Efficient and effective: AFG is one of the most efficiently-run and effective programs in the federal government. Funds are distributed directly to local fire departments. Bureaucracy is minimal and local community benefit is maximized.

America’s fire service: In 2018, the nation’s fire and rescue services responded to 36.7 million calls to protect the public. These firefighters

and EMS personnel serve as the backbone of the nation’s first response capabilities for both natural disasters and potential terrorist attacks. As the population ages and expands, this number is expected to increase significantly.

In 2018, the nation had approximately 1.1 million fire and rescue personnel, with over 745,000 (67%) of these serving as volunteers. Without such service, the nation’s response capability would be seriously compromised and no longer universal, serving all communities.

## AFG at a glance

**Established**  
2001

**Authorized**  
Through FY 2023

**FY2020 appropriation**  
\$355 million

**Administered by**  
FEMA

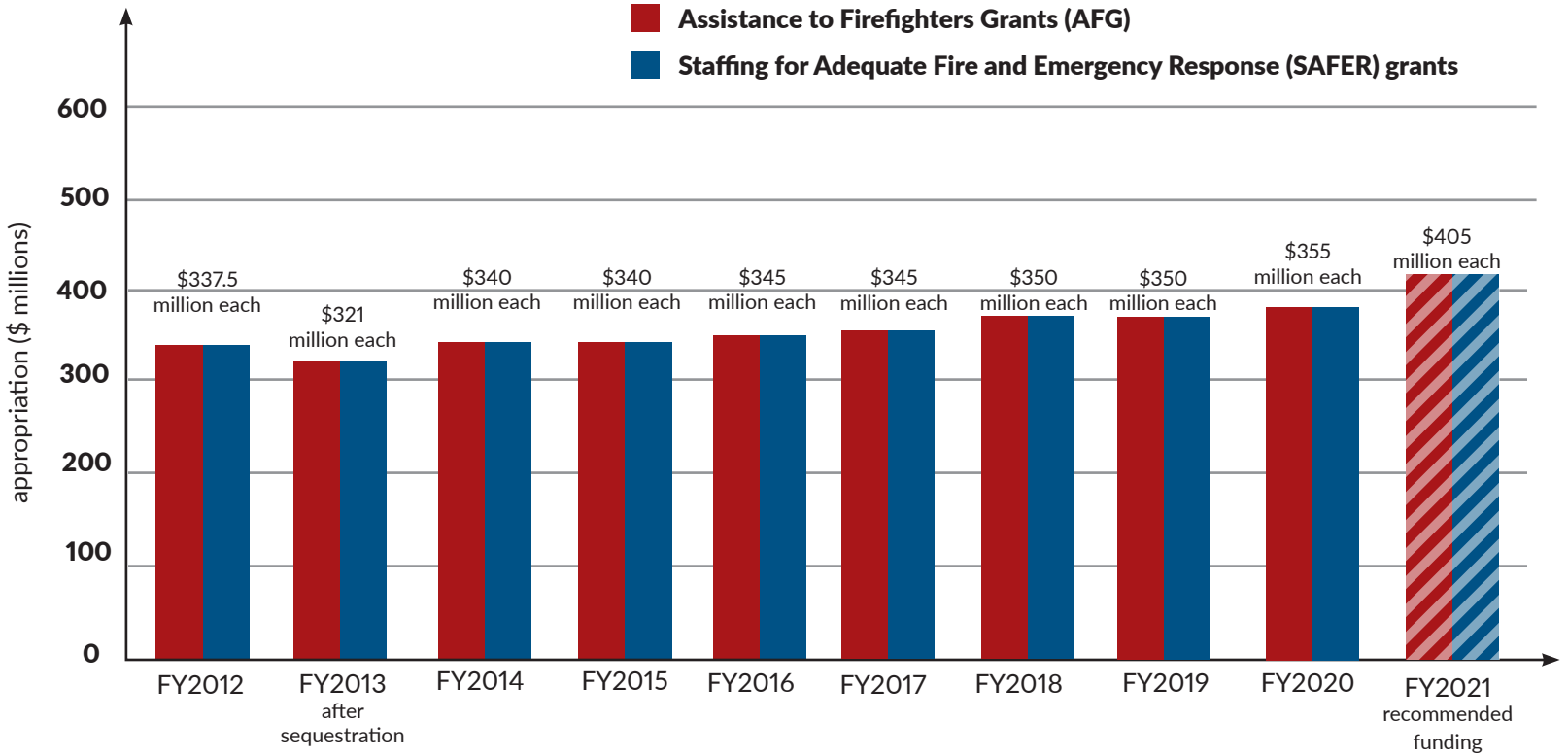
**Supports**  
Purchase of personal protective equipment, self-contained breathing apparatus, personal alert safety system, fire apparatus and other vehicles, and more

1.1 million first responders

109,713 industry jobs

# AFG & SAFER Appropriations Funding

FY2012–FY2021



\*2020 Figures do not include the \$100 million in AFG funding provided through the CARES Act to combat COVID-19.

## COVID-19: A Perfect Storm

As America’s first responders combat the COVID-19 Pandemic, they not only face tremendous personal health risk, but their departments are threatened by fiscal pressures, furloughs, and layoffs. This comes at a time when they are needed most in response to the covid pandemic, the growing intensity of storms and natural disasters. Nearly 90% of all cities and towns, which typically employ first responders and legally cannot run budget deficits, expect severe budget shortfalls in 2020.<sup>1</sup> Through 2022, local government shortfalls are projected to be over \$500 billion.<sup>2</sup> In April 2020 alone, local government employment was down by 801,000 employees, compared to pre-COVID levels.<sup>3</sup> It is further estimated that COVID-19 could lead to state revenue shortfalls of nearly \$650 billion over the next three years.<sup>4</sup>

As our first responders continue to fulfil their role to locally execute the nation’s response to COVID-19, operating budgets are decreasing and capital budgets risk being frozen or zeroed-out. As state and local budgets are constrained, it is critical that AFG funding is expanded to support first responders in our nation’s hour of need.

Sources:  
 1 U.S. Conference of Mayors/National League of Cities  
 2 ICMA  
 3 Bureau of Labor Statistics  
 4 Center for Budget and Policy Priorities

# Meeting the Needs of First Responders

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG) helps over 1.1 million firefighters throughout the United States meet their baseline equipment needs and plays a critical role in the nation's emergency response capabilities.

Since the program's inception in 2001, AFG has remained critical in supporting our nation's fire service. However, as first responder responsibilities increase, more work must be done to expand the AFG program to meet their needs.

[Source: NFPA: Fourth Needs Assessment of the U.S. Fire Service](#)

**53%** of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), up from 52% in 2010.

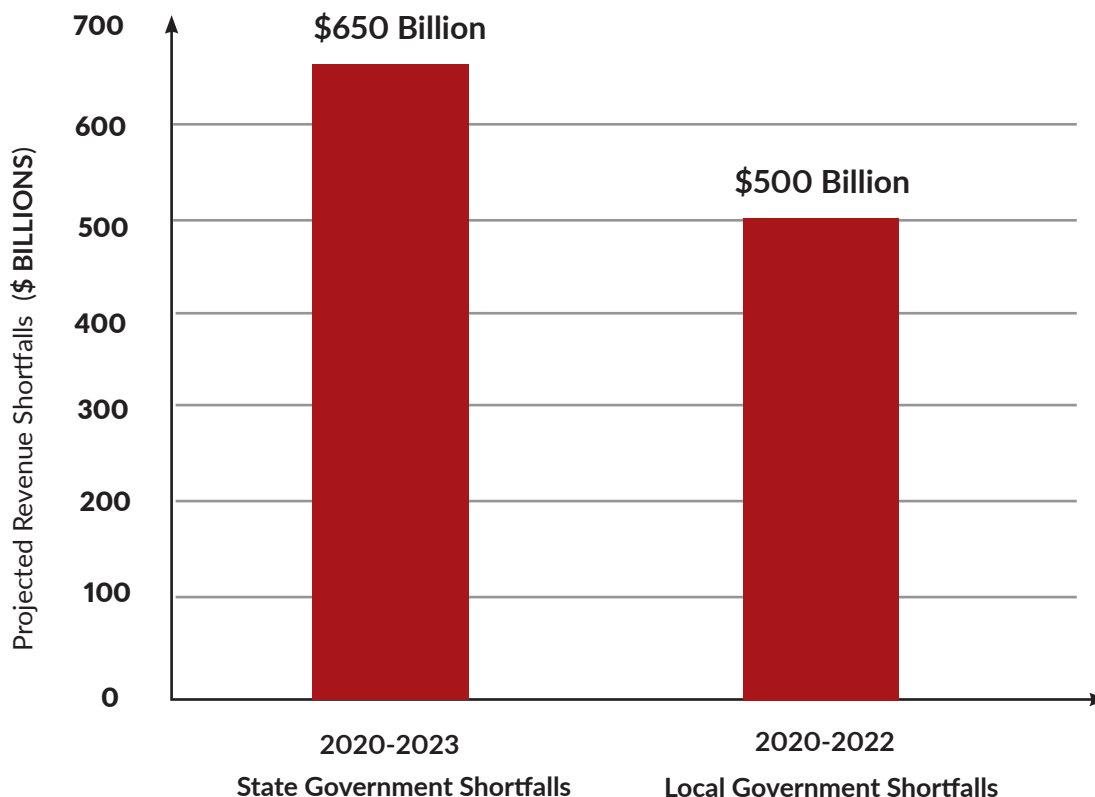
**49%** of departments have not formally trained all of their personnel involved in structural firefighting, up from 46% in 2010.

**55%** of all fire departments responsible for emergency medical services (EMS) have not formally trained all of their personnel up from 48% in 2010.

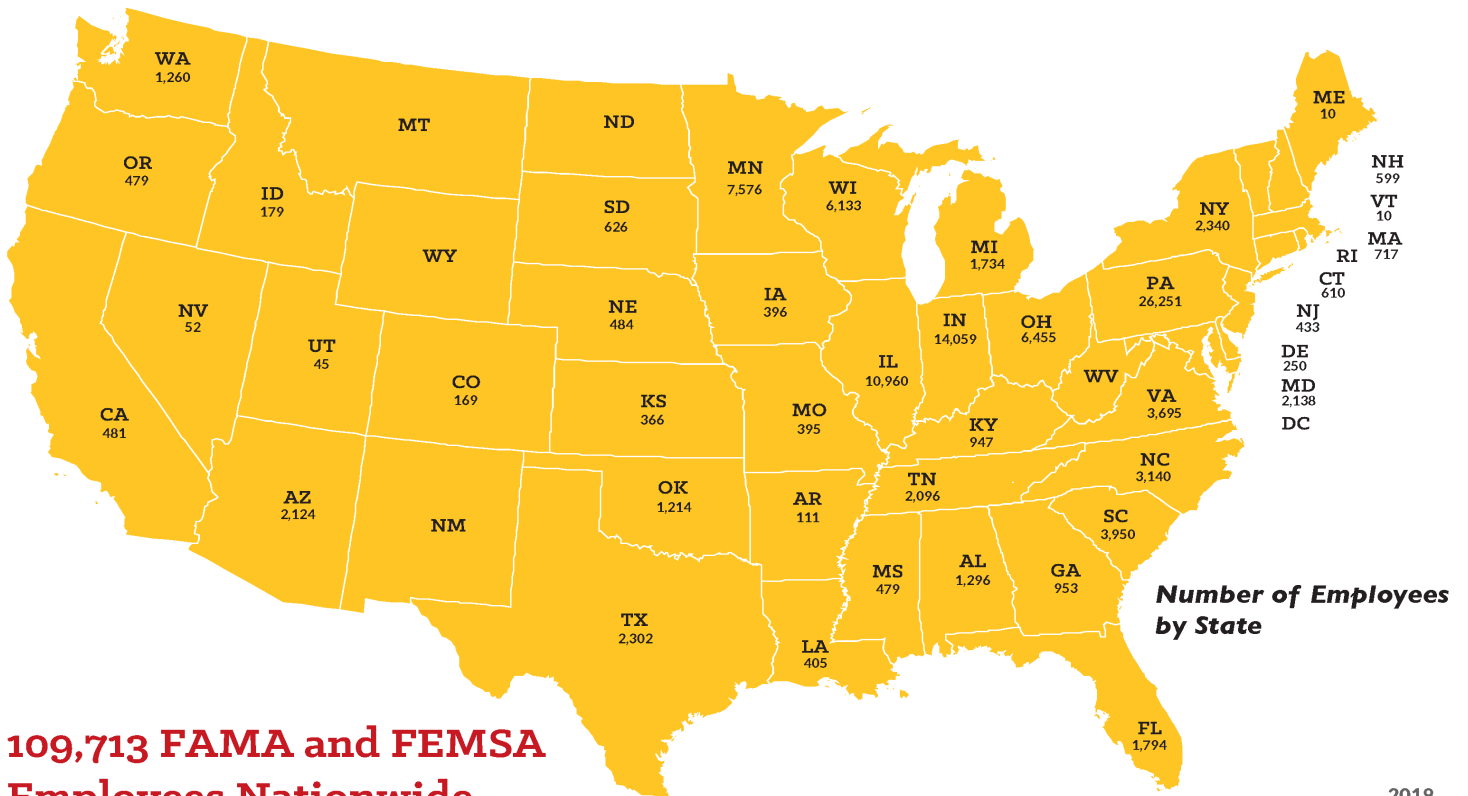
**72%** of all departments have at least one piece of personal protective clothing that is 10 years old, up from 63% in 2010.

**43%** of all fire department engines and pumpers are at least 15 years old, down from 46% in 2010.

## State & Local Budget Shortfalls due to COVID-19



# FAMA and FEMSA Member Employees



**Number of Employees by State**

**109,713 FAMA and FEMSA Employees Nationwide**

2019

Data based on survey of FAMA & FEMSA member companies



**Fire Apparatus  
Manufacturers' Association**

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**FAMA | FEMSA**

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