



2003 Program Guidance for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

February 21, 2003



This document provides a summary of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's U.S. Fire Administration 2003 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. It explains how to apply, what items can be requested, and how applications will be evaluated. Please read this program guidance carefully. The Final Rule, the Notice of Funds Availability and answers to "frequently asked questions" should also be reviewed when made available on the USFA/FEMA website. Together, these four documents will provide you with the information you need to complete the on-line application. The on-line application will be available at www.usfa.fema.gov from March 3, until April 4, 2003.

Prepared by the U.S. Fire Administration's Grants Program Office

2003 ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT PROGRAM **PROGRAM GUIDANCE**

The purpose of the program is to award one-year grants directly to fire departments of a State to enhance their abilities with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. This program seeks to support departments that lack the tools and resources necessary to protect the health and safety of the public and their firefighting personnel with respect to fire and fire related hazards. Our primary goal is to provide assistance to meet fire departments' firefighting needs.

The authority of this program is derived from the Federal Fire Protection and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. §§ 2201 et seq.), as amended. In fiscal year 2002, Congress appropriated a total of \$360,000,000 to carry out the activities of this Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. At the time of this publication, the Final Rule for the program was under review by the Office of Management and Budget. Also at this time, the program does not have an appropriation but there are indications that the program will be appropriated \$750,000,000 and we will have until September 30, 2004, to obligate those funds. As soon as possible after the appropriation is affirmed, we will issue a Notice of Funds Availability in the Federal Register that will provide the official description of this program.

Eligible applicants for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program are limited to fire departments of a State. A "fire department of a State" is defined as an agency or organization that has a formally recognized arrangement with a State, 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. A municipality or fire district may submit an application on behalf of a fire department when the fire department lacks the legal status to do so, e.g., where the fire department falls within the auspices of the municipality or district. When a municipality or fire district submits an application on behalf of a fire department, the fire department is precluded from submitting an additional application on its own.

A fire department can apply for assistance for its emergency medical services unit provided the unit falls organizationally under the auspices of the fire department. Non-Federal airport and/or port authority fire departments are eligible, but only if they have a formally recognized arrangement with the local jurisdiction to provide fire suppression, on a first-due basis, outside the confines of the airport or port facilities. Airport or port authority fire departments whose sole responsibility is suppression of fires on the airport grounds or port facilities are not eligible for this grant program. Each eligible applicant is limited to one application per program year.

Fire departments, which are Federal, or contracted by the Federal government and who are solely responsible under their formally recognized arrangement for suppression of fires on Federal installations, are not eligible for this grant program. Fire stations that

are not independent but are part of, or controlled by, or under the day-to-day operational direction of a larger fire department or agency are typically not eligible. Fire departments that are for-profit departments (i.e., do not have specific non-profit status or are not municipally based) are not eligible to apply for assistance under this program. Also not eligible for this program are ambulance services, rescue squads, auxiliaries, dive teams, urban search and rescue teams, fire service organizations or associations, and State/local agencies such as a forest service, fire marshal, hospitals, and training offices.

The proposed fiscal year 2003 Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program mirrors the 2002 program with a few minor changes. All the program areas and activities available last year are eligible for funding again this year with the addition of: 1) Modifications to Fire Stations and Facilities activity under the Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety Program, and 2) the Wellness and Fitness Activity under Emergency Medical Services.

Automated Application for 2003

This year's application is automated and available on-line. The application will be accessible from the FEMA and USFA Internet websites. We have designed the automated application with many built-in "help screens" and "drop-down menus" to assist you throughout the application process. The application can be saved and retrieved as many times as you need while you're filling it out right up to the deadline or submittal. ***Once you've submitted your application, though, you cannot change it.*** Another positive feature of the automated system is that it will not allow you to submit an incomplete application, i.e., the system will alert you if you've not provided required information. Also, by submitting your application on-line, you'll be automatically notified that we have received your application via e-mail.

Paper applications will be accepted, but are discouraged. We are discouraging paper applications because of the inherent delays associated with processing a paper application. Also, if awarded, applicants who submit paper applications must continue to manage their grants via paper, including payment requests, requests for modifications, reporting, etc., whereas, electronic applicants can do all these functions on-line. Additionally, paper applications don't have the built-in help that is available to the on-line applicants. Finally, there is no built-in assurance that your paper application is complete when submitted. If you do not have access to the Internet, contact us directly (866-274-0960) to request a paper copy of the application via mail. ***We will not send the paper applications to you via overnight delivery, nor by fax or email.***

The only legitimate paper application is the application that we send you -- do not use any paper application that you did not receive directly from us. Do not print the screens from this year's application and submit it. Do not use previous year's applications. Any paper application that is not in the correct format will be deemed ineligible.

We will begin accepting completed applications for the 2003 program on or about March 3, 2003. Completed applications must be submitted electronically or otherwise received by us on or before the close of business (5:00 p.m. EST) on April 4, 2003. Applications submitted by mail must be postmarked no later than March 31, 2003, or received by us on or before close of business on April 4, 2003. Applications not submitted electronically must be mailed to USFA Grant Program Technical Assistance Center, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland, 21727-8998. No late, incomplete, or faxed applications will be accepted. No electronically submitted applications other than those submitted on-line via the automated grant application system will be accepted.

Project Development

In 2003, we have continued our provision to allow you to formulate a very comprehensive grant proposal. Depending on the program for which you apply, we are allowing your grant proposal to include a number of related “activities” to address all of your needs within a programmatic or functional area. This approach provides you with the opportunity to develop a more comprehensive grant project that addresses a broader range of your fire department’s needs. You may submit only ***one application per program year*** and your application is further limited to only ***one*** of the program areas listed below. Be advised that your application should include only activities that can be completed within the one-year grant period.

You can submit an application for any one of the four program areas this year and, as stated above, you may include as many activities within that one program as necessary to meet your needs. The programs, and associated activities, eligible in this year’s grant program are as follows:

1. ***Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety Program.*** Eligible activities under this function are limited to training, wellness and fitness, firefighting equipment, personal protective equipment, and modifications to fire stations and facilities.
2. ***Fire Prevention Program.*** Eligible activities under this function include, but are not limited to, public education and awareness activities, fire codes enforcement activities, fire inspector certifications, purchase and installation of smoke alarms and fire suppression systems, wildland mitigation, and arson prevention and detection activities.
3. ***Emergency Medical Services Program.*** Eligible activities under this function for fire-based EMS units are limited to equipment, training, and wellness and fitness initiatives. Vehicles, such as ambulances, are not eligible in this programmatic area.
4. ***Firefighting Vehicles Acquisition Program.*** Eligible apparatus under this program include, but are not limited to, pumpers, brush trucks, tankers, rescue,

ambulances, quints, aerials, foam units, and fireboats. You may apply for only one vehicle per year.

As stated above, you may apply for assistance in only one of these four programmatic areas this year. Within your selected programmatic area, you may develop a comprehensive program to address all of your needs by applying for as many of the eligible activities as needed. For example, if you determine that your needs are in the area of fire operations and firefighter safety, you could apply for any one of the activities under that program, or any combination of activities, or all of the activities listed within that program. If you need a vehicle, you must apply under the vehicle acquisition program.

Application Procedure

Eligible applicants can apply for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program online via FEMA's new "e-grants" application process. The system will allow one authorized representative of a department to log in and create a user name and password for the department. The selection of the authorized representative is at the discretion of each department. The information requested on-line is an electronic version of many Federally approved grant forms. The application includes general questions about your department and your community, as well as questions regarding your proposed project.

As in previous years, you will be required to answer a series of questions designed to provide us with general information about your department and your community. The answers you provide to these general questions will determine whether your department services an urban, suburban, or rural community. We have established different funding priorities in some of the program or activity areas depending on the type of community you serve. These funding priorities are delineated in each program area below, if applicable. This designation (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural) may affect the ranking of your application depending on the program area for which you are applying. If you disagree with your designation, you may address your concerns in the narrative section of the application but you may not change the designation.

After you have completed the general questions, you will be asked a series of activity-specific questions relative to the program you selected and the activities for which you plan to apply. Answer the questions for each of the activities that support your project.

Lastly, you will be required to provide a written narrative describing your planned project. The narrative portion of your application should provide the details of activities you propose to be funded including budget details for each of your activities. It should describe the financial need of your fire department, and elaborate on the benefits your community and/or fire department will gain from the expenditure of the grant funds.

We recommend that you type your narrative off-line on any word processing software, such as Word, Word Perfect, Notepad, etc. Once your narrative is complete, you can copy it or “cut-and-paste” it from your word processing source onto the narrative block in the application. Space for the narrative is limited, so your narrative should not exceed five pages.

Evaluation Process

We will rank all complete and eligible applications based on the substance of your application relative to the established program priorities for the type of community served. We determine this relationship from your answers to the activity-specific questions. If you apply for more than one activity in your selected program, each activity will be scored separately, then your scores will be prorated based on the individual activities’ funding level compared to the total requested funding in your application. For example, if you are applying under the Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety Program and you are applying for \$9,000 in training and \$1,000 in firefighting equipment, the training portion of your proposal will represent 90 percent of your score and the firefighting equipment acquisition will represent 10 percent of your score. The number of activities included in your application will not provide any advantage or disadvantage with respect to the evaluation.

Applications that best address the grant program’s priorities (as outlined below and in the Notice of Funds Availability) will score higher than those applications that are not directed toward the priorities. The applications that score the highest will be determined to be in the “competitive range.” A panel of at least three technical evaluation specialists will further evaluate the applications that are in the competitive range, i.e., the highest ranked applications. These panelists will evaluate the application using your project narrative along with the answers to the general questions and the activity-specific questions.

When reviewing your narrative, the panelists will evaluate the clarity of your proposed project including your project’s budget detail, the financial need of your department, and the benefits that would result should you be awarded the grant. These three elements carry equal weight when factored into the panelists’ scores (i.e., one-third). Each application will be judged on its own merits. The panelists will consider all expenses budgeted, including administrative and/or indirect, as part of their cost-benefit review. The panelists will review each application in its entirety and compare the application against established evaluation criteria – not against other applications.

Keep in mind that we will use your answers to the activity-specific questions for our initial assessment. Your answers to these questions are the primary basis upon which we will determine whether your application warrants further evaluation. Applicants whose answers indicate that their project is consistent with our established priorities (outlined in the Notice of Funds Availability and below), will have a better chance of

reaching the competitive range and the second level of review than those applicants whose projects do not reflect the established priorities.

Programs and Program Priorities

Specific rating criteria and priorities for each of the grant categories are provided below following the descriptions of this year's eligible programs. The rating criteria, in conjunction with the program description, will provide you with an understanding of what information we are seeking about your proposed projects.

(1) Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety Program.

There are five different activities available for funding under this program area. They are: training activities, wellness and fitness activities, firefighting equipment acquisition, personal protective equipment acquisition, and modifications to fire stations and facilities activities. You can apply for as many of these five activities as you think are necessary in one application. There are no bonuses or penalties for applying for only one activity or for multiple activities.

The purchase of any equipment (communications systems and equipment or personal protective equipment or firefighting equipment) under this program should have the intent and/or goal of solving your interoperability or compatibility problems, as applicable. Any applicant seeking funding for equipment herein should provide details in the narrative section of their application regarding their local plan to enable interoperability for their jurisdiction.

a) Training activities:

FEMA may make grants for the purpose of training firefighting personnel. Examples of training activities include, but are not limited to firefighting I and II certifications, driver/operator, fire officer, hazardous materials response, incident command, supervision and safety, or training firefighting personnel to provide training in any of these areas.

We believe that more benefit is derived from the direct delivery of training than from sending trainees away for training or the purchase of training materials, equipment or props. Therefore, applications focused on direct delivery of training, including train-the-trainer initiatives, will receive a higher competitive rating. We will rate more highly those proposed programs that benefit the highest percentage of applicable personnel within a fire department or those proposed programs that will be open to other departments in the region.

Due to the inherent differences between urban, suburban, and rural firefighting characteristics, we have developed different priorities in the

training activity for departments that service these different types of communities. For departments serving rural communities, we believe that funding basic, operational-level firefighting, rescue, and responder training (i.e., training in basic firefighting duties or operating fire apparatus) has greater benefit than funding officer training, safety officer training, or incident-command training. But, there is a greater cost-benefit to officer training than for other specialized training such as mass casualty, HAZMAT, advance rescue, or inspector training for departments servicing rural communities.

Conversely, for departments that are serving urban or suburban communities, we believe there is a higher benefit to be gained by funding specialized training such as mass casualty, HAZMAT, advance rescue, or inspector training than the funding of officer training, safety officer training, or operations training, which in turn has a higher benefit than basic, operational, or awareness level activities. Training designated for the establishment or maintenance of a rapid intervention teams will be afforded a slightly higher rating.

Eligible uses of training funds include but are not limited to purchase of training curricula, training equipment (including trailers), training props, training services, attendance at formal training forums, etc. Tow vehicles or other means of transport may be eligible as a transportation expense under this activity if adequately justified in your grant proposal, but we will limit transportation expenses to \$6,000 per year per application. Compensation to volunteer firefighters for wages lost as a result of attending training under this program is an eligible expense if justified in your grant proposal. Overtime expenses paid to career firefighters to attend training, or overtime expenses paid to firefighters to cover for colleagues while the colleagues are in training are an eligible expense if justified in your grant proposal. Even though compensation is an eligible expense, proposals that contain such compensation expenses may be less favorably scored than similar proposals without compensation expenses due to the benefit/cost element in the evaluation process.

Activities that are not eligible in this area include construction of facilities such as classrooms, buildings, towers, etc. Modular training units may be eligible if they are mobile. Grant funds cannot be used for modular training units if the units are to be permanently fastened to the ground. No grant funding can go toward site preparation to accommodate any training activity, facility or prop. Renovations to an existing facility necessary to accomplish training activities are allowable if the renovations are minor and comply with the definition in the Final Rule and published in the Federal Register (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000).

Renovation expenses should be included in the budget as an “other” line-item expense and explained in the narrative.

b) Wellness and fitness activities:

FEMA may make grants for the purpose of establishing or expanding wellness and fitness initiatives for firefighting personnel.

We believe that in order to have an effective wellness/fitness program, fire departments must offer an entry physical examination, an immunization program, and periodic health screenings. Accordingly, applicants for grants in this category must currently offer or plan to offer with grant funds all three benefits in order to receive consideration and funding for any other initiatives in this activity. After entry-level physicals, annual physicals and immunizations, high priority is given to formal fitness, incident rehabilitation, and employee assistance programs. Lower priority is given to stress management and illness rehabilitation.

We believe the greatest benefit will be realized by supporting new wellness and fitness programs, and therefore, we will accord higher competitive ratings to those applicants lacking wellness/fitness programs over those applicants that already possess a wellness/fitness program. Finally, since participation is critical to achieving any benefits from a wellness or fitness program, we will give higher competitive rating to departments whose wellness and fitness programs mandate or provide incentives for participation.

Eligible expenditures in a wellness and fitness activity for firefighting personnel may include the procurement of medical services to ensure that the firefighting personnel are physically able to carry out their duties (purchase of medical equipment is not eligible under this category). Expenditures to carry out wellness and fitness activities may include costs for personnel, physicals, equipment (including shipping), supplies, or other related contract services (i.e., health-care consultants, trainers, and nutritionists) directly associated with the implementation of the proposed activity are eligible.

Transportation expenses and fitness club memberships for the firefighters or their families would not be eligible under the wellness and fitness activity. Other expenses that are not eligible in this area include construction of facilities to house a fitness program such as exercise or fitness rooms, showers, etc. Modifications to an existing facility are allowable if the modifications involve only renovations as defined in the Final Rule and published in the Federal Register (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000). Renovation expenses should be included in the budget as an “other” line-item expense and explained in the narrative.

c) **Firefighting equipment acquisition:**

FEMA may make grants for the purpose of acquiring additional firefighting equipment, including equipment needed directly for fire suppression or to enhance the safety or effectiveness of firefighting or rescue activities.

The stated purpose of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of firefighters from fire and fire-related hazards. As such, we believe that this grant program will achieve the greatest benefits by providing funds to fire departments purchasing basic firefighting equipment before any other non-firefighting equipment. We believe this grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if we provide funds to fire departments purchasing basic firefighting equipment never owned prior to the grant to bring the departments up to the applicable minimum operational level (i.e., as required by statute, regulation, or professional firefighting guidance). Our second priority would be to replace used or obsolete firefighting equipment. Since our priority is to equip departments with basic firefighting equipment, departments that are seeking to expand into new mission areas will receive a lower competitive rating. Equipment designated for the establishment or maintenance of a rapid intervention teams will also be afforded a slightly higher rating.

Small boats (under 13 feet in length), jet-skis, and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) may be considered under this activity if properly justified in the narrative section of the application. Other vehicles, as defined in the interim final rule and published in the Federal Register, are not eligible under this activity.

Eligible expenses include those expenses necessary to acquire additional firefighting equipment, including communications and monitoring equipment. Compressor systems, cascade systems, or similar SCBA refill systems are eligible expenditures in this area. Modifications to an existing facility to accommodate such equipment are allowable if the modifications involve only minor renovation as defined in the interim final rule and published in the Federal Register (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000). Individual communications (portable radios) and/or mobile communications equipment (including mobile repeaters) are eligible. Base stations and automated dispatch systems as well as personal accountability systems are eligible. The cost of shipping equipment purchased under this program is also an eligible expense.

Thermal imaging cameras are eligible, but the number of cameras that can be purchased with grant funds will be based on the population

served by the department applying for assistance. Departments that serve communities of less than 20,000 can purchase one thermal imaging camera with grant funds if awarded a grant; departments serving communities between 20,000 and 50,000 can purchase two cameras with grant funds if awarded a grant; and departments serving communities of over 50,000 can purchase three cameras with grant funds if awarded a grant.

Integrated communications systems such as base stations, computer-aided dispatch, fixed-site repeaters, etc., are eligible under this activity. No grant funds can be used to construct facilities such as buildings, sheds, or towers to house communications equipment. The purchase of any communications systems and/or equipment under this activity should have the intent and/or goal of solving your interoperability problems, as applicable. Any applicant seeking funding for equipment herein should provide details in the narrative section of the application regarding their local plan to enable interoperability for the jurisdiction.

Personal protective equipment, including clothing for structural and wildland fire suppression such as “turnout gear” or “bunker gear” (including boots, pants, coats, gloves, hoods, goggles, vests, helmets, coveralls, and fire shelters), self-contained breathing apparatus, spare cylinders, and personal alert safety systems, is not eligible under this activity, but is eligible under the Personal Protective Equipment Acquisition activity.

d) **Personal protective equipment acquisition:**

FEMA may make grants for the purpose of acquiring personal protective equipment required for active firefighting personnel by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and other personal protective equipment needed for firefighting personnel.

One of the stated purposes of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of firefighters. In order to achieve this goal and maximize the benefit to the firefighting community, we believe that we must fund those applicants needing to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to a high percentage of their personnel. Accordingly, we will give a high competitive rating in this category to fire departments in which a large percentage of active firefighting staff do not have any personal protective equipment and to departments that wish to purchase enough PPE to equip 100 percent of their active firefighting staff or 100 percent of their on-duty staff, as appropriate. We will also give a higher competitive rating to departments that are purchasing the equipment for the first time as opposed to departments replacing obsolete or substandard equipment (e.g., equipment that does not meet current NFPA and OSHA

standards), or purchasing equipment for a new mission. For those departments that are replacing obsolete or substandard equipment, the age of the equipment to be replaced will be factored into the score with a higher priority given to older equipment.

Due to safety benefits afforded firefighters, for applications that include a request for PASS devices, we will give higher priority to applications with integrated PASS devices over applications with non-integrated PASS devices. Finally, the number of fire response calls that your department makes in a year will be considered with the higher priority going to departments with higher call volume while applications will be scored depending on call volume, the call volume of rural departments will be compared only to other rural departments, suburban departments will be compared only to other suburban departments, and urban departments will be compared only to other urban departments.

Eligible personal protective equipment includes clothing for structural and/or wildland fire suppression such as “turnout gear” or “bunker gear” (including boots, pants, coats, gloves, hoods, goggles, vests, helmets, coveralls, and fire shelters), self-contained breathing apparatus, spare cylinders, and personal alert safety systems. Protective clothing for response to hazardous materials incidents and other specialized incidents is also eligible under this activity.

The purchase of three-quarter length rubber boots is an ineligible expenditure under this activity. Uniforms (formal/parade or station/duty) or uniform items (hats, badges, etc.) are also ineligible expenditures under this activity. Personal communications equipment such as radios and pagers are ineligible under this activity, but are eligible under firefighting equipment acquisition activity.

e) **Modifications to fire stations and facilities:**

FEMA may make grants to modify fire stations, fire training facilities, and other facilities to protect the health and safety of firefighting personnel.

The stated purposes of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of firefighters, as such, eligible projects under this activity that are designed specifically to directly protect the health and safety of firefighters. We believe that more benefit would be derived from modifying fire stations than would be realized by modifying fire-training facilities or other fire department facilities. Facilities that would be open for broad usage and have a high occupancy capacity would receive a higher competitive rating than facilities that have limited use and/or low occupancy capacity. The frequency of use would also have a bearing on the benefits to be derived from grant funds. The

frequency and duration of a facility's occupancy have a direct relationship to the benefits to be realized from funding in this activity. As such, facilities that are occupied or otherwise in use 24-hours-per-day/seven-days-a-week would receive a higher competitive rating than facilities used on an irregular or part-time basis.

Eligible measures under this activity are limited but focused on promoting fire and life safety in fire stations and facilities. We believe that each of the eligible measures, if incorporated, would make any facility safer for firefighters. Measures that are eligible for funding are the installation of sprinkler systems, installation of vehicle exhaust extraction systems, the installation of smoke and/or fire alarm notification systems, and minor renovations to facilities that are necessary in order to accomplish other activities under this grant. The grant funds are to be used to retrofit existing structures that do not have the eligible safety features or to upgrade facilities whose features are dated. The funds may not be used to supplement new construction.

There are no monetary limits on the individual initiatives under this activity whether it is a vehicle exhaust system, a sprinkler system or a smoke/fire alarm systems, but no applicant can request more than \$100,000 in the modifications per fire station under their authority.

(2) Fire Prevention Program.

FEMA may make grants for the purpose of establishing or enhancing a fire prevention program. Appropriate activities in this program include, but are not limited to the following: public education, public awareness, enforcing fire codes, inspector certification, purchase and installation of smoke alarms and fire suppression systems, and arson prevention and detection activities. Applicants can apply for funding for as many fire prevention initiatives under this function as necessary.

We believe that the public as a whole will receive the greatest benefit from fire prevention funds directed to fire departments that currently do not have a prevention program. Also, we believe the public will benefit more from long-term fire prevention programs than to limited efforts. Therefore, we will give a higher competitive rating to programs that will be self-sustaining after the grant period. Because of the benefits to be attained, we will give a higher competitive rating to programs that target one or more of USFA's identified high-risk populations (i.e., children under fourteen years of age, seniors over sixty-five and firefighters), and programs whose impact is/will be periodically evaluated.

We believe projects that provide long-term benefits to the entire community such as public education programs and programs that develop and enforce codes and standards, and/or arson prevention and detection programs provide the greatest benefits. Therefore, such community-wide activities will be accorded the highest

competitive rating. Programs where the focus is on the purchase and installation of residential and public detection and suppression systems achieve positive benefits but not the highest competitive rating. The purchase of public information materials and presentation aids and equipment achieve the least benefit; therefore, these types of activities will be accorded the lowest competitive rating.

Eligible expenses to carry out these activities would include costs such as a fire education safety trailer, personnel, transportation, equipment (including appropriate personal protective equipment), supplies, and contracted services which are directly associated with the implementation of the proposed activity. Tow vehicles or other means of transport may be eligible as a transportation expense if adequately justified in the proposal, but transportation expenses will be limited to \$6,000 per application.

Construction as defined in the Final Rule is not eligible under this program. Modifications to an existing facility are allowable if the modifications involve only renovations as defined in the Final Rule and published in the Federal Register (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000). Renovation expenses should be included in the budget as an “other” line-item expense and explained in the narrative. A safety village that is not transportable would be considered construction, and therefore, not eligible.

(3) Emergency Medical Services Program

FEMA may make grants for the purpose of establishing or enhancing a fire department’s emergency medical services program. Applicants can apply for the training activity or equipment acquisition activity or wellness and fitness activities or any combination of activities under this function as necessary.

Our overall objective in this program is to help fire departments start an EMS program or to expand an existing EMS program by providing training and equipment necessary to achieve their desired level of service. Because of the inherent benefits, the primary goal of this program is to train and equip a department’s firefighters to achieve a basic EMS certification level (i.e., first responder and EMT) and work toward an EMT-B level of service before assisting departments with established EMS programs in upgrading existing services.

In this program area, we will give the highest competitive rating to fire departments that are planning to acquire a basic life-support level of service over upgraded or expanded services. We believe that enhancing or expanding an existing service that currently meets basic life-support to an intermediate life-support system would a higher benefit than enhancing existing services to the paramedic level.

Higher priority will be given to departments with a high call volume relative to departments serving communities with similar characteristics (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural

communities). Departments that strive to comply with a State, Federal, or national standard will be afforded a slightly higher competitive standing.

Eligible expenses for the training activities under this program could include instructional costs (i.e., books, materials, equipment, supplies, and exam fees), certification/re-certification expenses, as well as continuing education programs. Eligible expenses for equipment acquisition in this program could include, but are not limited to, defibrillators, basic and advanced life support equipment, universal precaution supplies (i.e., medical PPE), computers, expendable supplies (but not medications), infectious disease control and decontamination systems, mobile and portable communication equipment, integrated communication systems (such as computer-aided dispatch, towers, fixed repeaters, etc.).

The purchase of any communications systems and/or equipment under this activity should have the intent and/or goal of solving your interoperability problems, as applicable. Any applicant seeking funding for equipment herein should provide details in the narrative section of the application regarding their local plan to enable interoperability for their jurisdiction. No grant funds can be used to construct facilities such as buildings, sheds, or towers to house communications equipment. Transportation expenses for training may be eligible if adequately justified in the proposal.

Not eligible in this program are vehicles such as ambulances. Requests for vehicles must be submitted under the Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition Program, which is detailed below. Medications are also not eligible. Fitness club memberships for the EMS personnel or their families are not eligible under the wellness and fitness activity.

Other expenses that are not eligible in this area include construction of communication towers or the construction of facilities to house a fitness program such as exercise or fitness rooms, showers, etc. Renovations to an existing facility necessary to accomplish wellness and fitness activities are allowable if the renovations are minor and comply with the definition in the final rule and published in the Federal Register (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000).

(4) Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition Program

FEMA may make grants for the purpose of acquiring new firefighting vehicles, used fire apparatus, or refurbished apparatus. The funds may also be used to refurbish a vehicle the department currently owns. Applicants may apply for only one vehicle per year under this program.

Due to the inherent differences between urban, suburban, and rural firefighting conventions, we have developed different priorities in the vehicle acquisition program for departments that service different types of communities. The following chart delineates

our priorities in this program area for each type of community. Due to the competitive nature of this program and the imposed limits of funding available for this program, it is unlikely that we would fund many vehicles that are not listed as a priority-one or a priority-two this year.

Vehicle Acquisition Program Priorities			
	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Priority One	Pumper Quint Rescue-pumper Aerial Rescue	Pumper Quint Rescue-pumper	Pumper Tanker Brush Rescue-pumper Pumper-tanker
Priority Two	HAZMAT Light/Air Rehab	Brush Rescue Aerial HAZMAT	Rescue Light/Air Quint
Priority Three	ARFF Foam Brush Command Fire Boat	Light/Air Tanker Pumper-tanker Rehab Command	HAZMAT Rehab Command
Priority Four	Tanker Pumper-tanker Watercraft Ambulance	ARFF Foam Watercraft Fire Boat Ambulance	ARFF Foam Aerials Watercraft Fire Boat Ambulance

Regardless of the type of community served, we believe that there is more benefit to be realized by funding fire departments that own few or no firefighting apparatus than there would be realized by providing funding to a department with numerous vehicles. Therefore, we will give a higher competitive rating in the apparatus category to fire departments that own few or no firefighting vehicles relative to other departments serving similar types of communities. We will also give higher competitive rating to departments that have an aged fleet of firefighting vehicles, and departments that wish to replace or relegate to reserve status an old, high-mileage vehicle. We will also provide a higher competitive rating to departments that respond to a significant number of incidents relative to other departments servicing similar communities.

We believe that more benefit will accrue to a community that needs a new vehicle (i.e., the initial purchase of a new or used vehicle) as its primary response vehicle than to replace or relegate a non-compliant vehicle (i.e., a vehicle that does not conform to applicable standards) to reserve status. Relegating a compliant vehicle has a lower priority than relegating a non-compliant vehicle, but relegating a compliant vehicle has more benefit than purchasing a vehicle to expand the operational capacity of a department into a new mission area.

While no competitive advantage has been assigned to the purchase of commercial vehicles versus custom vehicles, or used vehicles versus new vehicles in the preliminary evaluation of applications, it has been our experience that depending on the type and size of department, the technical evaluation panelists often prefer low-cost vehicles when evaluating the cost/benefit section of the project narratives. Panelists may be provided with guidance for use in their evaluation on the reasonableness of vehicle costs. We also reserve the right to instill funding limits on requests for vehicles whose costs we deem excessive or otherwise not in the best interest of the program.

Eligible expenses under this program would include the cost of the vehicle and associated equipment necessary to conform to applicable national standards. New, used or refurbished vehicles are eligible; however, any used or refurbished vehicles must conform to national standards that were in effect the year the vehicle was manufactured. An allowance for transportation to inspect a vehicle under consideration or during a vehicle's production would be eligible if justified and included in the grant proposal. Also eligible would be the additional costs associated with the purchase and installation of a vehicle-mounted exhaust filtration system for any vehicle purchased with grant funds.

Applicants will not be allowed to modify the scope of work of a vehicle award, i.e. change the type of vehicle requested after award. Vehicles contracted for or otherwise purchased prior to the end of the established application period are not eligible for funding. Aircraft, bulldozers, and construction-related equipment are not eligible.

Other Eligible Costs

(1) ***Administrative Costs:*** Administrative costs are allowable under any of the program areas listed above, in accordance with OMB Circular A-87. (For more information about the Circulars, go to www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.) Administrative costs are identifiable costs directly associated with the implementation and management of the grant. If you are requesting administrative expenses, you must list the costs under the "other" category in the budget and explain what the costs are for in your project narrative. The administrative costs should be based on actual expenses, not a percentage of the overall grant. We will reimburse actual expenses only. Examples of eligible administrative costs would be shipping, office supplies, computers associated with the NFIRS reporting requirements, etc. The cost of a grant

writer (if specifically listed on your application), is eligible and can be charged to the grant as administrative costs in accordance with the provisions outlined below.

(2) **Indirect Costs:** If you have an approved indirect cost rate, you may charge indirect costs to the grant. If you are charging indirect costs to the grant, you must submit the documentation that supports the indirect cost rate to us for review and approval prior to submitting any claims for indirect costs. The appropriate documentation for an approved indirect rate is a certified audit. We will allow the rate to be applied as long as it is consistent with its established terms. For example, some indirect cost rates may not apply to capital procurements; in these cases, indirect cost rates would not apply for a grant for equipment or vehicle acquisition.

(3) **Audit Costs:** Some grantees with large awards may be required to undergo an audit in accordance with OMB Circular A-133. Specifically, recipients of Federal funding that spend in excess of \$300,000 of Federal funds in a year must undergo an audit. (For more information about the Circulars, go to www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.) The costs incurred for such an audit would be an eligible expenditure if included in the proposal's budget. You may wish to consider including anticipated costs of such an audit if you are applying for a significant level of funding. We do not require any other audits; therefore, we will not pay for any other audits.

(4) **Renovation Costs:** Renovations to an existing facility are allowable only if the costs comply with the final rule as published in the Federal Register (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000). Construction costs are not eligible under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. Construction includes major alterations to a building that changes the profile or footprint of the structure. Enhancements to existing structures such as the installation of apparatus-bay ventilation systems and retrofitting burn buildings to accommodate natural gas or propane burn simulators are eligible for application under the Modifications to Fire Stations and Facilities Activity.

(5) **Pre-award Costs:** Generally, grantees cannot use grant funds to pay for products and services contracted for, or purchased prior to the effective date of the grant. However, expenses incurred after the application deadline but prior to award may be eligible for reimbursement if the expenses were justified, unavoidable, consistent with the grant's scope of work, and specifically approved by us. We will consider requests for reimbursement for pre-award costs on a case-by-case basis.

(6) **Pre-application Costs:** Expenses, obligations, commitments or contracts incurred or entered into prior to the application deadline are **not** eligible to be included as a grant expense with the exception of grant preparation costs (see (7) below).

(7) **Grant Writer Fees:** Fees for grant writers may be included as a pre-award or pre-application expenditure (as provided in section 152.7(b) of the Final Rule).

But, fees payable on a contingency basis are not an eligible expense that can be charged to the grant. For grant writers' fees to be eligible as a pre-award expenditure, the fees must be specifically identified and listed in the application. In order to be eligible, the fees must also be paid prior to award, e.g., paid within 60 days of the end of the application period. Applicants may be required to provide documentation to support these pre-award expenditures.

Reasonableness of Cost

The panelists will review all the applications in the competitive range and judge each application on its own merits. The panelists will consider all expenses budgeted, including administrative and indirect, as part of the cost-benefit determination and may recommend appropriate adjustments. Regardless of eligibility of any costs requested, we reserve the right to reduce any requests for assistance, in whole or in part, that we deem to be excessive or otherwise contrary to the best interests of this program.

Award Procedure

Awards will be made on a competitive basis using rank order as the primary basis of our decision, regardless of program. But, there are some exceptions to this process. The law requires that we use no less than five percent of the available funding on fire prevention grants. Therefore, it may be necessary to go out of rank order to select a sufficient number of awards to comply with this requirement. We are also limited in the amount of funds that can be awarded for vehicles, i.e., we cannot award grants for vehicles in excess of 25 percent of the available funding. Once we reach that limit, it would then be necessary for us to deviate from rank order with respect to the remaining vehicle requests.

Throughout the process, career departments will be competing against other career departments for up to 46 percent of the available funding. Volunteer and combination departments will compete among each other for at least 54 percent of the available funding.

In order to fulfill our obligations under the law, we may also make funding decisions using the size and character of the community a department serves (urban, suburban, or rural), the type of department (career, combination, or volunteer), and the geographic location of the fire department. In these instances where we are making decisions based on geographic location, we will use States as the basic geographic unit. Geographic location of an applicant will be used primarily as a final discriminator, i.e., in cases where applicants have similar qualifications, we may use the geographic location of the applicants to maximize the diversity of the awardees.

Fire departments that have received funding under the Assistance to Firefighter Grant Program in previous years are eligible to apply for funding in the current year. However, due to our responsibilities under this program to assure adequate distribution of

awards among certain types of departments (career, combination and volunteer) and certain types of communities (urban, suburban or rural) as well as a equitable geographic distribution, we reserve the right to fund or not to fund previous recipients of grants under this program in order for us to fulfill these responsibilities. We may also take into account an applicant's performance on prior grants when making funding decisions on current applications.

As stated earlier, each application will be evaluated based on the answers to the activity-specific questions. The applications that best address the program's established priorities will be deemed to be in the "competitive range" and subject to a second level of review. This second level of review is conducted via a panel of technical reviewers who will assess the applications' merits with respect to the detail provided in the narrative on the activity, the applicant's financial need, and purported benefit to be derived from the cost. The panel evaluators will independently score each application before them and discuss the merits/shortcomings of the application to reconcile any major discrepancies, if necessary. A consensus is not required.

Once every application in the competitive range has been paneled, the applications are ranked according to the average score awarded by the panel. The ranking will be summarized in a Technical Report prepared by the Grants Program Office. The Grants Program Office will then make award recommendations to the Grants Management Branch of the Financial and Acquisition Management Division. The Grants Management Branch will then contact the applicant to discuss and/or negotiate the content of the application before making the final award decision.

We will select a sufficient number of awardees from this one application period to obligate all of the funding available this year. Awards will be announced over several months as the decisions are made. Awards will not be made in any specified order, i.e., not by State or by program or any other characteristic.

Grantees' Responsibilities

Recipients (Grantees) must agree to:

(1) Share in the costs of the projects funded under this grant program. Fire departments in areas serving populations over 50,000 must agree to match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 30 percent of the total project cost. Fire departments serving areas with a population of 50,000 or less will have to match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 10 percent of the total project cost. All cost-share contributions must be cash. There are no requirements on the timing of the cost-share, i.e., the cash doesn't have to be on-hand at the time of application nor at the time of award. Grantees have the whole grant performance period to accumulate their match. No "in-kind" contributions will be considered for the statutorily required cost-share. No waivers of this requirement will be granted except for fire departments of Insular Areas as provided for in 48 U.S.C. 1469a.

(2) Maintain operating expenditures for the one-year grant period in the areas funded by this grant activity at a level equal to or greater than the average of their operating expenditures in the two years preceding the year in which this assistance is received. This program is meant to supplement rather than replace a fire department's funding.

(3) Retain grant files and supporting documentation for three years after the conclusion and closeout of the grant.

(4) Ensure that all procurement actions are conducted in a manner that provides, to the maximum extent possible, open and free competition. In doing so, you must follow your established procurement processes when purchasing vehicles, equipment, and/or services with the grant funds. If the fire department has no established procedures, you should obtain at least two quotes/bids for the items you are procuring and document in your grant files the process used.

(5) Report to us the progress made on the performance you have made on your grant after six months. At grant closeout, you need to report how the grant funding was used and the benefits realized from the award in a final report. An accounting of the funds should also be included.

(6) Make grant files, books and records available if requested for our inspection to ensure compliance with any requirement of the grant program.

(7) Agree to provide information, through established reporting channels, to the U.S. Fire Administration's national fire incident reporting system (NFIRS) for the period covered by the assistance. If a grantee does not currently participate in the incident reporting system and does not have the capacity to report at the time of the award, that grantee must agree to provide information to the system for a twelve-month period commencing as soon as they develop the capacity to report.

(8) Follow the audit requirements of OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-profit Organizations, which calls for grantees who expend \$300,000 or more in Federal funds in a year (from all Federal sources), must have a single audit performed in accordance with the Circular. (For more information about the Circulars, go to www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.)

Prepared by the U.S. Fire Administration's Grants Program Office