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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Fiscal Year 2008

**STAFFING FOR ADEQUATE FIRE AND EMERGENCY
RESPONSE**

PROGRAM AND APPLICATION GUIDANCE

May 2008



DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

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Highlights

The Fiscal Year 2008 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants remain largely unchanged from last year's program; however, this year's guidance has been changed to provide accurate references to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards regarding the training of firefighters.

As in last year's program, cash payments given directly to members for participation in activities for recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters, other than those directly linked to operational services, are not eligible. Stipends, such as pay-on-call, and payments of lost wages resulting from attending training and/or participating in operational services, are eligible, if included as part of the grantee's fringe benefit package and supported by formal personnel policies and/or standard operating procedures.

Contributions to individual member retirement accounts are eligible if the activity is highly rated during the application review process and is included as part of the grantee's fringe benefit package and supported by formal personnel policies and/or standard operating procedures. However, incentives for retention (such as contributions into a retirement account) cannot be retroactive.

Ineligible uses of funds include cash payments for years of service or membership and payment for travel for pleasure. Costs associated with award banquets (such as food, facilities, or entertainment) are not eligible; however costs for non-cash awards are eligible.

The limited funding available for SAFER activities precludes the award of funds for operational activities, such as the equipment and training of newly hired or recruited firefighters. Therefore, personal protective clothing, firefighting equipment, and costs for providing training to the firefighter minimum-staffing level, as offered in the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) grant program, are not eligible. However, applicants receiving SAFER funding will receive priority consideration in applying for funding under subsequent cycles of the AFG program. In this case, applicants will be reviewed by the AFG peer evaluation, provided that the AFG funds would be used to support SAFER-funded activities.

In the FY 2008 program year, applicants seeking funding under the Recruitment and Retention Activity will be able to apply for regional initiatives as well as activities targeting internal needs. Applicants seeking funding for both regional and internal needs must combine their request on one application and clearly identify the activities as regional or internal.

Introduction

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grants are managed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) Program Office. SAFER grants provide financial assistance to help fire departments increase their cadre of frontline firefighters. The goal is to assist the local fire departments' staffing and deployment capabilities, in order to respond to emergencies whenever they occur, assuring that their communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards. The SAFER grants have two activities that will help grantees in this endeavor: (1) hiring of firefighters and (2) recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

In Fiscal Year 2008, Congress appropriated a total of \$190 million to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for SAFER grants. The authority for SAFER is derived from the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. 2201 et seq.), as amended. Appropriated funds are available for award until September 30, 2009. Once awarded, the funds are available for expenditure by the grantee for the full period of grant performance.

A. Federal Investment Strategy

The SAFER grants are an important part of the Administration's larger, coordinated effort to strengthen homeland security preparedness. Of particular significance are the National Preparedness Guidelines and its associated work products. The National Preparedness Guidelines is an all-hazards guide for meeting the Nation's four core preparedness objectives: to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks and catastrophic natural disasters.

The National Preparedness Guidelines defines a vision for what should be achieved in order to strengthen the security of the Nation and provides guidance designed to forge a unified national consensus about what to do and how to work together at all levels of government. First responder participation is integral to the Guidelines' success. DHS expects its first responder partners to be familiar with this national preparedness architecture and to practically incorporate elements of this architecture into their planning, operations, and investments.

B. Funding Priorities

The goal of the SAFER grants is to enhance the local fire departments' abilities to comply with staffing, response, and operational standards established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Specifically, the program focuses on standards included in the deployment and assembly sections of NFPA 1710 and/or NFPA

1720, and the respiratory protection section of OSHA 1910.134 (see www.nfpa.org/SAFERActGrant for more details).

SAFER funds should assist local fire departments in staffing and deployment capabilities, in order to respond to emergencies whenever they may occur. As a result of the enhanced staffing, a SAFER grantee's response time should be sufficiently reduced with an appropriate number of trained personnel assembled at the incident scene. Additionally, the enhanced staffing should provide that all frontline/first-due apparatus of SAFER grantees have a minimum of four trained personnel to meet the OSHA standards referenced above. Ultimately, SAFER grantees should realize more efficient response and a safer incident scene, ensuring that communities have more adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards.

Each year, the AFG program office holds a criteria development meeting to develop the funding priorities for SAFER and its other grant opportunities for the coming year. To do this, a panel is convened of fire service professionals, representing the nine major fire service organizations. The organizations that are represented include:

- Congressional Fire Service Institute (CFSI)
- International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI)
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- International Association of Firefighters (IAFF)
- International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI)
- National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM)
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC)
- North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD)

The criteria development panel is charged with making recommendations to the AFG program office, regarding the creation and/or modification of previously established funding priorities, as well as developing criteria for awarding grants and proposing any necessary changes to the administration of the SAFER grants. The content of this Program Guidance reflects implementation of the criteria development panel's recommendations, with respect to the priorities, direction, and criteria for awarding SAFER grants.

SAFER grants are comprised of two primary activities: (1) hiring of firefighters and (2) the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Additional information regarding both of these activities is provided below.

Part I. Eligible Program Activities

A. Hiring of Firefighters Activity

The Hiring of Firefighters Activity involves a grant with a five-year period of performance that provides fire departments with funding to pay a portion of the salaries and benefits of newly hired firefighters. These grants are awarded directly to volunteer, combination, and career fire departments to help the departments increase their number of frontline firefighters. Having more firefighters on staff should enhance the local fire department's abilities to comply with staffing, response, and operational standards established by NFPA and OSHA.

A.1. Funding Priorities

Meeting National Standards: The highest priority under this activity is to provide funding to departments: that are not in compliance with national standards promulgated by the NFPA and OSHA and adopted by DHS; and, that can be brought into compliance with the standards in the most economical manner.

Applications that, if awarded, would result in the largest percentage increase in compliance with the relevant section of NFPA 1710 and 1720 will receive greater consideration than applications that would result in smaller percentage increases in compliance.

- **NFPA 1710** Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Department (Section 5.2.4.2 – Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability). This standard applies primarily to all-career fire departments and combination departments at the combination department's election.
- **NFPA 1720** Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments (Section 4.3 – Staffing and Deployment). This standard applies primarily to all-volunteer fire departments, but may also apply to combination departments if the combination department does not elect to comply with the NFPA 1710 standard.

Note: SAFER grants are focused only on the “Deployment” or “Staffing and Deployment” sections of these two standards (respectively). Information about these standards is available on the on the NFPA website at www.nfpa.org. The National Fire Protection Association has established a special link that provides

information about these two standards. For more information on the standards, contact NFPA at 1-800-344-3555, or e-mail questions to stds_admin@nfpa.org.

The specific OSHA Respiratory Protection standards to be addressed under SAFER are:

- **1910.134(g)(4)** Procedures for interior structural firefighting, which provides for employer assurances, most notably the two-in two-out rule.
- **1910.134(g)(4)(i)** This standard requires that at least two employees enter the IDLH (immediate danger to life and health) atmosphere and remain in visual or voice contact with one another at all times.
- **1910.134(g)(4)(ii)** This standard requires that at least two employees are located outside the IDLH atmosphere.

Training Requirements: As a condition of this grant, applicants **must provide assurance** that their newly hired firefighters will be certified at the Firefighter I level within the first six months of employment **AND** that their new recruits will be trained to Firefighter II level or equivalent within the first two years of their employment. Applicants who fail to do so will not be considered for award. Awardees are required to submit documentation of training and certification fulfillment within the stated program deadlines. Awardees who fail to follow through on these requirements may be required to return all or a portion of all of the Federal funds disbursed under the grant, and may be disqualified from participation in future AFG and SAFER award cycles. The relevant NFPA standard is as follows:

- **NFPA 1001** Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications (Firefighter-I and Firefighter-II). This standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements for career and volunteer firefighters whose duties are primarily structural in nature. The purpose of this standard is to specify the minimum job performance requirements for firefighters. It is not the intent of the standard to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these requirements.

Applicants that will have trained their new recruits to have EMS certification to the minimum level established by the local agency having jurisdiction will receive higher consideration.

Call Volume and Population Served: Department call volume and the population serviced will both be factored into the initial evaluation. Departments that respond to a high number of incidents and protect higher numbers of people will receive higher consideration than departments that respond to fewer incidents or protect a smaller jurisdiction.

Firefighter Health Measures: The criteria development panel also recommended that, because the health and wellbeing of firefighters is of paramount importance, applicants who indicate that their newly recruited firefighters will undergo an entry-level physical and receive immunizations will receive higher consideration than applications that do not specify that these benefits will be provided.

Meeting the Four-Firefighter Standard: The criteria development panel recommended and DHS concurs that, for the purposes of the SAFER grants, a safe and efficient initial attack requires a minimum of four firefighters. Therefore, applicants who come into compliance with the minimum four firefighter standard for the first arriving engine (or vehicle capable of initiating suppression activities), with the fewest number of additional personnel, will receive higher consideration than applicants seeking a higher number of additional personnel.

Other Priorities: Fire departments that have formal automatic and/or mutual aid agreements and applicants whose request is based on a staffing needs assessment will also receive higher consideration.

A.2. Allowable Expenses

The only eligible costs under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity are the salary and associated benefits for the new firefighter positions. Overtime costs are not eligible. However, costs for overtime, in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requirements, which fire departments routinely pay as a part of the base salary or the firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours, are eligible. Costs to apply for the grant (such as grant-writer fees), administrative costs, and indirect costs associated with hiring of the firefighters are not eligible. Costs of training and equipping firefighters are not eligible. However, the salaries and benefits of firefighters hired under the SAFER grants while they are engaged in training are eligible. Costs for uniforms and physicals are not eligible. In addition, funds to support additional hired positions shall not be used to supplant normal operating budgets or funds received from Federal, State, or local sources for these purposes.

Other Considerations: No changes in scope will be considered once an application is submitted. Applicants may **NOT** reduce the number of positions requested in their application, nor may they change or modify the grant's period of performance. Failure to fully fund awarded positions will be considered as defaulting on the grant agreement, and may require the return of all the Federal funds disbursed under the grant.

Only full-time positions will be funded. However, recognizing that many departments have shifts that exceed a 40-hour workweek, a full-time position is one that is funded for at least 2,080 hours per year (i.e., 40 hours per week, 52

weeks per year). DHS will also consider funding the job-sharing of a full-time position with sufficient justification. A job-share position is a full-time position that is occupied by more than one person. Example: A department may hire two part-time staff persons at 28 hours each to fulfill the scheduled work hours of one 56-hour shift position. Please note, however, that since the number of scheduled shifts that a department typically uses is three or four, the number of individuals that may share in a SAFER-funded position will be limited to four. Part-time positions will not be funded unless they are combined to equal a full-time position.

B. Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters

The purpose of these grants is to assist fire departments with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. The grants are intended to create a net increase in the number of trained, certified, and competent firefighters capable of safely responding to emergencies likely to occur within the grantee's geographic response area. The primary focus of this activity is the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters who are involved with, or trained in, the operations of firefighting and emergency response.

B.1. Priorities

Meeting Staffing Standards: The highest priority under this SAFER activity is to assist departments that are experiencing a high rate of turnover and departments whose staffing levels are significantly below the ideal staffing level required to comply with NFPA standards 1710 or 1720 (see page 5 of this document for details regarding these NFPA standards or contact NFPA directly at 1-800-344-3555, or e-mail questions to stds_admin@nfpa.org) and OSHA Respiratory Protection standards (see page 6 of this document for details regarding applicable OSHA standards). Departments with the lowest retention rates and those with the highest vacancy rates will be a high priority for funding.

Volunteer Membership: DHS concurs with the recommendation of the criteria development panel that departments with the highest percentage of volunteers and departments or organizations with large numbers of volunteers will benefit the most from the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Therefore, applicants whose membership is mostly volunteer, or departments with a significant number of volunteer firefighters, will receive higher consideration than departments with a low percentage of volunteers or a smaller number of volunteer members.

Recruitment/Retention Plan: It is critical to have a plan to direct any recruitment and/or retention activities. Accordingly, applications requesting funding for recruitment and/or retention programs that are based on formal plans will receive higher consideration than applications that are not. Applicants who claim to have a recruitment and retention plan should summarize the plan in their

narrative. A designated project coordinator and a marketing plan are necessary for the successful implementation of any recruitment and/or retention program. Therefore, requests that include a coordinator's position and a marketing plan will receive higher consideration than requests that do not. In accordance with the recommendations of the criteria development panel, applications with recruitment and/or retention plans that include accident and/or injury insurance and lost wages for members will also receive a higher competitive ranking.

Continuity: Applicants will receive higher consideration if their recruitment and retention activities are designed to continue beyond the grants' period of performance.

Call Volume and Population Served: Department call volume and the population serviced will both be factored into the initial evaluation. Departments that respond to a high number of incidents and protect larger numbers of people will receive higher consideration than departments that respond to fewer incidents or protect a smaller jurisdiction.

Firefighter Health Measures: The criteria development panel recommended that, because the health and wellbeing of firefighters is of paramount importance, applicants who indicate that their newly recruited firefighters will undergo an entry-level physical and receive immunizations will receive higher consideration than applications that do not indicate that these benefits will be provided.

Training Requirements: Applicants who indicate that newly recruited firefighters will meet the minimum fire and EMS certification requirements prescribed by the locality or State within 12 months of appointment to the department will receive additional consideration.

Regional Requests: Requests for recruitment and/or retention activities that have a regional impact (i.e., an impact beyond the immediate boundaries of the applicant's first-due area) will receive a higher competitive advantage than applications that will benefit only the applicant. An applicant may apply for both regional initiatives as well as internal needs on one application. Please note: There are no regional projects under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity – only Recruitment and Retention activities qualify as regional projects.

B.2. Allowable Expenses

Applicants who propose to initiate both a recruitment and retention plan as a part of their application will receive equal consideration for the recruitment activities and the retention activities. Proposals in this activity may include providing incentives for volunteer firefighter members to continue their service in a fire department. Examples of the type of initiatives that may receive assistance include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Insurance packages such as accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D), disability, health, dental, life, etc.
- Reimbursement to the member for attending required basic training, i.e., compensation for lost wages, mileage, lodging, per diem.
- Marketing costs to recruit new volunteer members.
- Physicals may be eligible if the applicant can adequately demonstrate that the provision of the physicals would enhance the applicant's ability to recruit and/or retain volunteer firefighters.
- Explorer, cadet, and/or mentoring programs.
- Staffing needs assessment.
- Tuition assistance for higher education (including college tuition) and professional certifications. **Note:** Coursework or certifications in this category should be above and beyond what the department typically funds for required minimum-staffing firefighter certification.
- Length of service awards and other retirement benefits.

With proper justification, applications for assistance in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity could include activities that would require as many as four years to complete. Additionally, applicants for Recruitment and Retention activities may include reasonable costs for administering the grant in their application.

For each activity requested, the applicant must establish the link between the activities being requested and the identified recruitment and/or retention problems or issues. DHS will not fund activities where the applicant has not made a sufficient correlation between the activity and its positive effect on the recruitment and/or retention of volunteer firefighters.

All funded activities under recruitment and retention must be governed by formally adopted standard operating procedures (SOPs). Minimally, these SOPs should specify who qualifies for each of the incentives, specific requirements for earning the incentives, and the disposition of the awarded incentives if an individual fails to fulfill the stipulations.

B.3. Ineligible Items

- Cash awards for participation in activities other than those directly linked to operational services (responding to incidents, attending training, providing operational stand-by services).
- Reimbursement for or payment for travel for pleasure.
- Reimbursement for costs associated with award banquets (reimbursement for actual awards, i.e., plaques, trophies, is eligible).
- Personal protective clothing.
- Firefighting equipment.

- Costs for training that are regularly paid for within the department's normal operating funding, such as tuition or instructor fees for department-mandated basic-level training.
- Costs incurred prior to award.

C. National Standards for Deployment and Staffing

As indicated above, SAFER grants are designed to help fire departments meet national standards promulgated by the NFPA and the Occupational Health and Safety Administration. The specific standards to be addressed through SAFER are detailed in Part I of this document.

Part II.

Available Funding and Eligible Applicants

This section describes the total available FY 2008 SAFER funding, how those funds are allocated, and departments and organizations that are eligible to apply for funding under the FY 2008 SAFER grant program. Potential applicants under either activity must be aware that eligibility for SAFER is contingent upon a stable budget. Grants will not be awarded to a municipality or other recipient whose annual operational budget has been reduced below 80 percent of its average annual funding in the three years prior to the date of application.

A. Available Funding

Congress appropriated a total of \$190 million for the FY 2008 SAFER program. Funds are to be administered as indicated below.

- Ten percent (10%) of the appropriated amount must be for grants awarded under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity.
- Ten percent (10%) of the appropriated amount must be for grants awarded to volunteer or mostly volunteer departments for Hiring of Firefighters Activity.
- Recipients of grants in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity must commit to a five-year period of performance during which the Federal contribution toward the costs of the salaries will diminish over the course of the performance period.
- For the 2008 program year, the Federal share of salaries and associated benefits is limited to a total of \$108,380 per position over the course of the performance period (this figure is based on last year's limit of \$105,425 and adjusted for 2007 inflation at a rounded rate of 2.8%¹).
- There is no funding request limit for any application or any limit to the number of positions eligible for funding per application. However, applicants requesting large numbers of firefighters must make a strong case for their request.
- There is no local match requirement and no maximum Federal share limit under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity.
- DHS will also limit the Federal share in each of the years of the grant. Based on a total funding cap of \$108,380 over five years, the allocated amount of Federal funds that Hiring of Firefighters Activity grantees

¹ Consumer Price Index for 12 months ending September 2007, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

should budget for under SAFER for salary and benefits for newly hired firefighters should not exceed the lesser of the following:

Year One:	90 percent of the actual costs or \$39,015
Year Two:	80 percent of the actual costs or \$34,675
Year Three:	50 percent of the actual costs or \$21,670
Year Four:	30 percent of the actual costs or \$13,020
Year Five:	No Federal share - all costs funded by grantee

A.1. Funding Limitations

There is no maximum award amount. However, DHS has found that applicants have found it more difficult to justify larger requests than smaller ones. After completing the evaluation process outlined in Part II of this guidance document, applications will be ranked on a competitive basis and awards will be made using rank order as the primary basis of the decision, regardless of the type of SAFER grant being awarded. However, there are some exceptions to this process. The law requires that DHS set aside 10 percent of the available funding for hiring firefighters for volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments. For the purpose of fulfilling this statutory requirement, DHS will consider a department to be “mostly volunteer” if 50 percent or more of its membership is made up of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for their services, other than life, health, and worker’s compensation insurance, or a stipend payment such as paid-on-call. In order to satisfy this statutory requirement, it may be necessary to go out of rank order to select a sufficient number of applicants in order to meet the 10 percent requirement.

If less than 10 percent of these available funds are awarded to volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments, the remaining funds must be transferred to the component of SAFER that provides grants for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters.

Regardless of the merit of an application, applicants are reminded that grants will not be awarded to a municipality or other recipient whose annual budget has been reduced below 80 percent of the average annual funding in the three years prior to the date of application.

SAFER awardees under either the Hiring of Firefighters Activity or the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity will receive priority consideration in order to be reviewed in the peer evaluation process in the next subsequent cycle of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program. SAFER awardees will receive priority consideration only in applying for AFG funding for the following activities:

- Personal Protective Clothing
- Wellness and Fitness

- Training

These AFG requests must be directly linked to costs incurred by the additional firefighter positions recruited or hired as a result of the SAFER grant award. Applicants must explain in the AFG application narrative the additional requirements resulting from the SAFER award. Final decisions on funding rest with the peer review panel and DHS.

B. Eligibility

B.1. Hiring of Firefighters Activity

Eligible Applicants: Volunteer, career, and combination fire departments are eligible to apply under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity. Municipalities and fire districts may submit applications on behalf of fire departments that lack the legal status to do so, such as departments under the auspices of the municipality or district. Each eligible applicant is limited to one application per application period.

Ineligible Applicants

- Federal fire departments and fire departments under contract to the Federal Government whose sole responsibility is the suppression of fires on Federal installations or lands.
- Local and statewide organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters.
- For-profit fire departments and organizations, such as those that do not have specific nonprofit status or are not municipally based.
- Fire stations that are not independent, or are part of, controlled by, or under the day-to-day operational direction of a larger fire department or agency.
- Ambulance services, Emergency Medical Services organizations, rescue squads, auxiliaries, dive teams, and urban search and rescue teams.
- State and local agencies, such as forest service, fire marshals, emergency management offices, hospitals, and training offices.
- Non-Federal airport and/or port authority fire departments whose sole responsibility is suppression of fires on the airport grounds or port facilities, unless the airport/port fire department has 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.

B.2. Recruitment and Retention of Firefighters Activity

Eligible Applicants: Eligibility for this activity is limited to volunteer and combination fire departments (see “SAFER Grants Definitions”). Statewide or local organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters and individual fire departments (volunteer or combination) may apply for assistance for regional projects. An individual fire department may act as a “host applicant” and apply for regional projects on behalf of itself and any number of neighboring fire departments. For example, a host applicant could apply for a regional media campaign promoting volunteerism.

The applicant must include in the narrative section of the application a list of participating third-party organizations that will benefit from the regional project if the project is approved. In completing the “Department Characteristics” section of the application, the regional applicant must include data that approximates the characteristics of the entire region affected by the grant. The third-party organizations that will benefit from the recruitment and retention project may also apply for funding under SAFER, as long as the third-party organizations do not apply for a project that could conflict with, or duplicate, the host applicant’s project. The host applicant also may apply for other needs beyond the regional project. In the narrative section of the application, the host applicant should specify which of the activities being requested are for the regional request.

Ineligible Applicants:

- Career fire departments are **not eligible** to receive assistance under the Recruitment and Retention Activity.
- Federal fire departments and fire departments under contract to the Federal Government whose sole responsibility is the suppression of fires on Federal installations or lands.
- For-profit fire departments and organizations (i.e., do not have specific nonprofit status or are not municipally based).
- Fire stations that are not independent, or are part of, controlled by, or under the day-to-day operational direction of a larger fire department or agency.
- Ambulance services, Emergency Medical Services organizations, rescue squads, auxiliaries, dive teams, urban search and rescue teams.
- State and local agencies, such as a forest service, fire marshals, emergency management offices, hospitals, and training offices.
- Non-Federal airport and/or port authority fire departments whose sole responsibility is suppression of fires on the airport grounds or port facilities, unless the airport/port fire department has 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.

Part III.

Evaluation Process

Following the close of the application period, each submitted application will undergo a two-phase evaluation: an evaluation by the automated grant application system and peer review. The automated evaluation assesses each application's relationship to the program's priorities. The automated evaluation assigns each application with a score whereby the highest scores represent the applications that best match the program's stated priorities. Subsequently, the applications will be evaluated by a panel of representatives from the fire service. Each phase of the evaluation will be equal in value with respect to the final award determinations.

A. Automated Evaluation Process

All complete and eligible applications will be evaluated based on the substance of the application relative to the established SAFER grant funding priorities. The answers to activity-specific questions as well as information under Department Characteristics provide the basis to determine the application's standing, relative to stated priorities. Applications that best address the SAFER grant funding priorities will score higher in the automated evaluation than those applications that are not directed toward the priorities. The automated evaluation will account for one-half of the overall consideration provided each application, with the peer review accounting for the balance of the consideration.

B. Peer Review Process

A panel of at least three technical evaluation specialists will provide the second phase of the applications' evaluation. These panelists will evaluate the application using the narrative, along with the answers to the general questions and the activity-specific questions, to determine the worthiness of the request for an award. Evaluation criteria will be provided to the panelists for use in the assessment of the applications. Each application will be judged on its own merits, not compared to other applications.

C. Applications

Volunteer and combination fire departments are eligible to apply under both the Hiring of Firefighters Activity and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity on the same application. Please note, however, that each department or organization can submit only one application per application period. Applicants that choose to apply for both the Hiring of Firefighters and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters activities should do so within one application. Such applications will be scored in their entirety against the established funding priorities and the recommendation to award the application

will be based on the entire application – not on an individual section (for example, we will not fund only the Recruitment and Retention portion of an application on an application that requested both Recruitment/Retention and Hiring activities).

It is not necessary for the applicant to write two separate narratives; however, applicants who request assistance in both activities should be sure to address both activities under each of the applicable narrative elements. For example, when composing the narrative segment regarding how the community and current firefighters are at risk, applicants should make sure to address this element from both the hiring perspective and the recruitment/retention perspective.

D. Reasonableness of Requests

The panelists will consider all expenses budgeted as part of the cost-benefit determination and may recommend appropriate adjustments. Regardless of the eligibility of any costs requested or the panelists' determination, DHS reserves the right to reduce any requests for assistance, in whole or in part, that it deems to be excessive or otherwise contrary to the best interests of the program.

E. Award Procedure

Once the peer review panel has reviewed the applications, the scores from the automated evaluation are combined with the peer review scores to determine the final score. The applications are then ranked according to the final scores. Applications that make it into the “fundable range” will undergo a technical review by a subject matter specialist whereby claims made in the application will be assessed and validated. The ranking will be summarized in a Technical Report prepared by the AFG program office. AFG program office staff will make award recommendations to the grants management specialists in DHS. The specialists will then contact the applicant to discuss and/or negotiate the content of the application before final award decisions are made.

DHS will select a sufficient number of awardees from this application period to obligate all of the available FY 2008 funding. Awards will be announced on a weekly basis until funding is exhausted. Awards will not be made in any specified order, i.e., not by State, grant activity or type, or any other characteristic.

Part IV. Application Requirements

This section summarizes the process for applying for an FY 2008 SAFER grant.

A. Automated Grant Application

Eligible applicants should apply for a SAFER grant online via the DHS “e-grants” application process. The online application can be accessed through the USFA website at www.usfa.fema.gov, www.grants.gov, the AFG program website at www.firegrantsupport.com, or accessed directly at <https://portal.fema.gov>. (If you do not have Internet access, see the instructions below for submitting a paper application.) The SAFER program office staffs a help desk for any applicants that have questions or needs technical assistance. The help desk is available at 1-866-274-0960.

The automated SAFER grant application is designed with many built-in “Help” screens and drop-down menus to assist throughout the application process. The application can be saved and retrieved as many times as necessary until the deadline or submittal. However, **once an application is submitted, it cannot be changed**. The automated system will not allow you to submit an incomplete application, i.e., the system will alert you if you have not provided required information. You will be automatically notified via e-mail that DHS has received your application.

Each department or organization can submit only one application per application period. Applicants may apply for either the Hiring of Firefighters Activity or for the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity, or both on the same application. However, we will evaluate applications that include requests for both activities in their entirety and fund them accordingly, i.e., we will not make a partial award for one of the two activities based on the quality of the grant application. It is not necessary for applicants to write two separate narratives; however, applicants that request assistance in both activities should be sure to address both activities under each of the applicable narrative elements (see pages 24 – 25 for details regarding the requisite narrative elements).

B. Applicant Tutorial

An applicant tutorial will be available on the AFG program’s website at www.firegrantsupport.com. This tutorial explains the SAFER grant program and priorities for funding, describes the application screens, and provides information to assist applicants in developing a comprehensive, competitive and well-organized application.

Additionally, the tutorial will be accessible while the applicant completes the online application. By clicking the “Tutorial” button on the application screen, the user will be able to view the tutorial information about the specific application screen on which they are currently working.

C. Application Process

Log-in: The system will allow one authorized representative of a department to log in and create a username and password for the department. The selection of the authorized representative is at the discretion of each applicant. Previous grant applicants for the Assistance to Firefighters, Fire Prevention and Safety, or SAFER grant programs **must use the same username and password that were used for their previous applications**. You may call the SAFER help desk if you need assistance in this or any other matter (1-866-274-0960).

Application Period: Applications for SAFER grants will be accepted from about **May 27, 2008**, through close of business on **June 27, 2008**. Monitor the AFG and USFA websites for up-to-date information on application period dates. Completed applications must be submitted electronically or otherwise received by the AFG program office on or before the close of business (5 p.m. EDT) on the last day of the application period. No late, incomplete, or faxed applications will be accepted. No electronically submitted applications other than those submitted online via the automated grant application system will be accepted.

Paper Application: If you do not have access to the Internet, contact us directly (1-866-274-0960) to request a paper copy of the application via regular mail. **We will not send the paper application to you via overnight delivery, fax or e-mail.** The only legitimate paper application is the application that the AFG program office sends you—do not use any paper application that you did not receive directly from the AFG program office. Do not print the screens from the online application and submit them as your application. Any paper application that is not in the correct format will be deemed ineligible.

Paper applications are accepted, but we discourage their use because of the inherent delays and mistakes 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 of these functions online. In addition, paper applications do not have the built-in “Help” screens that are available to online applicants. Finally, there are no assurances that your paper application is complete when submitted.

Paper applications submitted by mail must be postmarked no later than four calendar days before the end of the application period. Assuming a June 27, 2008, end-date, applications that are postmarked after June 24, 2008, will not be accepted unless they are received before the end of the application period.

Applications that are not submitted electronically must be mailed to the following address:

SAFER Grant Office Technical Assistance Center
c/o U.S. Fire Administration
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727-8998

DHS will not accept applications mailed to any address other than the one listed above.

Fundable Activities: There are two activities in which applicants may request funding under the SAFER grants: (1) hiring of new firefighters and (2) recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Volunteer and combination fire departments are eligible to apply for both the Hiring of Firefighters Activity and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity on the same application. Career fire departments may apply for funding only in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity. Organizations that support volunteerism or otherwise have an interest in volunteer firefighters may apply only for the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity.

Department Characteristics: The application includes general questions about your department (or organization) and your community, as well as questions regarding your proposed activity. After you have completed the general questions, you will be asked to complete a series of questions relative to the activity you have selected.

Request Details: Answers to the activity-specific questions will be used for the initial assessment to determine whether an application warrants further evaluation. Applicants whose answers indicate that their activity is consistent with the established SAFER priorities (as outlined on pages 6 – 9) will have a better chance of reaching the competitive range and the second level of review than applicants whose activities do not reflect the established priorities. Applicants that falsify their application or misrepresent their department or organization in any material manner will have their application deemed ineligible by the AFG program office and referred for further action as appropriate.

Narrative: After answering all the questions in the application, you will be required to provide a written narrative statement describing your planned activity. The narrative portion of your application should provide specifics about your proposed project or projects. Specific elements that must be addressed in the narrative are detailed in the appropriate activity sections below (pages 24 – 25).

We recommend that you type your narrative offline in 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

document into the Narrative Statement block in the application. Space for the narrative is limited; your narrative should not exceed six pages. Do **NOT** type your narrative using only capital letters.

Grant Writers: You may decide to hire or engage a grant writer to assist you in the application process. However, as the applicant, you are responsible for the cost of these services as well as the information contained in your application. By submitting the application, you are certifying that all of the information contained therein is true and an accurate reflection of your department. Therefore, prior to submission, it is imperative that you review all work produced by grant writers or other third parties on your behalf. Applicants who falsify their applications or misrepresent their organizations in any manner will have their applications deemed ineligible by the AFG program office and referred to the DHS Office of Inspector General for further action, as appropriate.

D. DUNS Number

Effective October 1, 2003, all Federal grantees must obtain a DUNS number, a unique nine-character identification number provided by the commercial company Dun & Bradstreet. The Federal Government uses the DUNS number to better identify related organizations that receive funding under grants and cooperative agreements and to provide consistent name and address data for electronic grant applications. Additional information about DUNS numbers can be found on the Dun & Bradstreet website (<http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/index.jsp>).

There is no charge to obtain a DUNS number, and it is the applicant's responsibility to obtain one. Applicants are encouraged to apply for a DUNS number well in advance of the application period because it may take up to two weeks or more to obtain the number online. It is recommended that applicants request a DUNS number as soon as possible by calling 1-866-705-5711. When completing the online SAFER application, there is a special data field for entering the DUNS number. If applying on paper, use the box entitled "Federal Identifier" on the SF 424, Application for Federal Assistance, to enter the DUNS number. This number is required for all Federal grant applications, and extensions will not be granted for applicants who were unable to obtain their DUNS number prior to the end of the application period.

E. Project Period

The project period for awards under SAFER will be as follows:

a) Hiring of Firefighters Activity

The Hiring of Firefighters Activity is a five-year grant that provides fire departments with funding to pay a portion of the salaries of newly hired

firefighters. These newly hired positions must be in addition to authorized and funded active firefighter positions. Grantees must maintain the number of authorized and funded positions as declared at the time of application and maintain the awarded new firefighter positions throughout the five-year period of performance. Grantees that fail to maintain this level of staffing risk losing their grant. Volunteer, combination, and non-profit career fire departments are all eligible to apply for assistance in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity. These grants require the grantee to match an increasing portion of the salary over a four-year period; in the fifth year of the grant, the grantee must fund the entire cost of any positions funded as a result of a grant award. There will be no extensions to any SAFER grant's period of performance.

The long-term nature of the eligible activities under these grants makes it essential that an applicant's local governing body be involved in the application process. As such, each applicant must certify in their application that their governing body has been informed of the applicant's intention to submit a SAFER grant request; that the local governing body acknowledges the commitment required for the grant if awarded; and that appropriate financial support will be secured for the applicant's cost-sharing obligations. The commitment from the local governing body is critical to the success of any grant awarded under this program. As such, DHS may require that applicants provide documentation from the local governing body that affirms this support.

A recruitment period of 90 days, which begins when the application is approved for award, will be provided for all grantees under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity. The five-year period of performance will start after this recruitment period. The award documents will provide specifics on the period of performance. The period of performance will commence whether or not the grantee has filled the new firefighter positions. If an awardee fills its awarded firefighter positions during the 90-day recruiting period, it will be afforded credit toward the final 12 months of the grant performance period, when the grantee must fund the entire salary. Grantees wishing to receive this credit must submit an amendment request. Thus, salary and benefits costs incurred during the 90-day recruitment period are not eligible for reimbursement.

Costs that may be claimed include the remaining payroll expenses incurred from any employment gaps, beginning with the start of the period of performance. No extensions of the grant performance period will be considered. Awardees will draw the Federal share of the awarded amount on a reimbursement basis no more frequently than quarterly, i.e., grant funds will reimburse the grantee for actual salary expenses incurred in the previous quarter. If quarterly reimbursement becomes a cash flow burden, grantees may request, in writing, a more frequent reimbursement timeframe to accommodate the cash flow requirements of their grant. DHS will review each request and provide a written response.

Performance reports are to be included with each payment request regardless of frequency but no less frequently than quarterly. If a grantee is submitting payment requests quarterly, the performance request must be submitted within 30 days of the end of the quarter. A performance report is due quarterly even if no payment is sought.

Once a SAFER-funded position is filled, the funded position must remain filled until the end of the period of performance. During the five-year period of performance, SAFER grantees must also maintain their staffing at a level equal to, or greater than, their staffing level at the time of the application. In the event that the staffing level falls below the staffing level at application, or if a funded position becomes vacant or otherwise inactive, we will consider the grantee to be in default of their grant agreement if the position is not filled or staffing levels decline for an extended period of time (e.g., six months or more).

Consequences for grantees that do not fulfill their grant award obligations range from, at a minimum, deobligating all Federal funds awarded for the period of the vacancy for each vacant position, to returning the defaulted portion of the Federal funds disbursed for the funded position, to returning all Federal funds disbursed under the grant and having the grant cancelled. For example, if one of four positions funded by SAFER is vacated for an extended period time, DHS would require the grantee to remit all Federal funds disbursed for that one position. If staffing levels decline below the required level noted above, and this deficiency is not corrected within six months, DHS may require the grantee to return all grant funds.

b) Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity

The Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity provides assistance to grantees for periods of up to four years. Applicants may request assistance for any portion of the four-year period in 12-month periods. No extensions will be granted for any SAFER grant's period of performance.

The purpose of these grants is to assist with the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Volunteer departments, combination departments and local or statewide organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters are eligible to apply for assistance under this activity. There are no non-Federal match requirements for this activity.

A 90-day recruitment period will be provided for all grantees under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. Specifics regarding the period of performance will be detailed in the award documents. Payment requests are reimbursable and will be submitted no less frequently than quarterly (i.e., grantees may request reimbursement of incurred first-quarter expenses during the second quarter of the performance period). Performance reports will be included with each payment requests. If a grantee is operating on a quarterly

basis, the performance report and payment requests would be due within 30 days of the end of the quarter covered in the request. Performance reports are due no less frequently than quarterly, even if there were no expenditures during the reporting period.

F. Application Details

The SAFER application has different versions depending on the type of applicant declared at the beginning of the application. Fire departments applying for Hiring of Firefighters or fire departments eligible for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters grants will answer general questions about their organization and community, as well as questions specific to the proposed project. The answers to these questions will be used to evaluate the application and to determine whether the organization serves an urban, suburban, or rural community. Characteristics such as population served, number of stations, call volume, and number of civilian and firefighter casualties, along with the number of firefighter positions, will be requested.

State or local volunteer interest groups will answer a number of general questions regarding their organization and a series of activity-specific questions relative to the program area selected and the activities for which they plan to apply. Answer the questions for each of the activities that support your project.

Lastly, all applicants must provide a written narrative statement describing the planned project. The specific elements for the narrative statements are as follows:

a) Narrative Statement for Hiring of Firefighters Activity

The narrative statement for applications requesting assistance in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity must include the following six elements. Each element will be evaluated independently by the review panelists:

- **Project description:** This statement should describe what the applicant needs the grant funds for, i.e., how the newly hired firefighters will be used within the department and a description of the specific benefit these firefighters will provide for the fire department and community.
- **Impact on daily operations:** A statement regarding how the community and current firefighters are at risk without the needed firefighters, and to what extent that risk will be reduced if the applicant is awarded.
- **Cost-benefit analysis:** An explanation of the applicant's inability to address the need without Federal assistance.
- **Minority recruitment:** A statement relating to how the applicant will ensure, to the extent possible, that it will seek, recruit, and hire

members of racial and ethnic minority groups and women to increase their ranks within the department.

- **Financial obligation:** A statement regarding how the applicant plans to meet the match requirements for the five-year performance period should they receive the grant award. This statement should include any long-term plans to retain the new firefighter positions.
- **Volunteer discrimination:** A statement regarding how the applicant plans to meet the requirement to ensure that firefighters in positions filled under SAFER grants are not discriminated against for, or prohibited from, engaging in volunteer activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours.

Note: These elements carry equal weight when factored into the review panelists' scores.

b) Narrative Statement for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity

The narrative statement for applications requesting assistance in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity must include the following four elements. Each element will be evaluated independently by the review panelists:

- **Project description:** This statement should describe how the applicant will use the grant funds. The project description should include: how the recruitment of new volunteer firefighters and/or retention of current volunteer firefighters will be used within the department or organization to meet identified operational needs; a description of the specific benefit these firefighters will provide for the fire department(s) or community; a description of the recruitment and/or retention problems or issues the department has identified; how the activities being requested address those identified needs; specifics about the recruitment and/or retention plan; what specific benefit the efforts would provide the surrounding community or communities; and, if the application includes a regional request, specify which of the activities are for the regional request and which are exclusive to the host applicant.
- **Impact on daily operations:** A statement regarding how the community and current firefighters (or geographic area of concern for an eligible organization) are at risk without the needed firefighters, and to what extent that risk will be reduced if the applicant is awarded.
- **Cost-benefit analysis:** An explanation of the applicant's inability to address the need without Federal assistance.
- **Minority recruitment:** A statement relating to how the applicant will ensure, to the extent possible, that it will seek, recruit, and retain members of racial and ethnic minority groups and women to increase the ranks within their fire department.

Note: These elements carry equal weight when factored into the review panelists' scores.

Appendix 1 Definitions

For the purposes of the SAFER grants, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) Automatic-aid: An agreement whereby fire departments are dispatched simultaneously on the initial alarm or where fire departments participate in “closest-unit” response dispatching.

(2) Benefits: Includes regular compensation paid to employees during periods of authorized absences from the job, such as vacation leave, sick leave, military leave, etc, provided such costs are absorbed by all organization activities in proportion to the relative amount of time or effort actually devoted to each; and employer contributions or expenses for social security, employee insurance, workmen’s compensation, pension plan costs, and the like, provided such benefits, whether treated as indirect costs or as direct costs, shall be distributed to particular awards and other activities in a manner consistent with the pattern of benefits accruing to the individuals or group of employees whose salaries and wages are chargeable to such awards and other activities. Overtime expenses, other than those meeting FLSA requirements (page 7), are **not** eligible as benefits costs.

(3) Career Fire Department: An agency or organization in which all members receive financial compensation for their services (organizations that provide reimbursement on a paid-on-call basis are considered to be a “combination fire department” for the purposes of this program).

(4) Combination Fire Department: An agency or organization in which at least one active firefighter receives financial compensation for their services (including paid-on-call) and/or at least one active firefighter does not receive financial compensation for their services, other than life, health, and workers’ compensation insurance.

(5) Emergency Medical Services Organization: A public or private organization that provides direct emergency medical services, including medical transport.

(6) Fire Department: 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 on a first-due basis to a fixed geographical area. Fire departments may be comprised of members who are all volunteer, all career, or a combination of volunteer and career.

(7) Firefighter: An individual having the legal authority and responsibility to engage in fire suppression; being employed by a fire department of a municipality, county, or fire district; being engaged in the prevention, control, and extinguishing of fires; and/or responding to emergency situations in which life, property, or the environment is at risk. This individual must be trained in fire suppression, but may also be trained in emergency medical care, hazardous materials awareness, rescue techniques, and any other related duties provided by the fire department.

(8) Initial Full Alarm Assignment: Those personnel, equipment, and resources ordinarily dispatched upon notification of a structural fire.

(9) Mostly Career: A department is considered mostly career if 50 percent or more of their active firefighting membership is salaried staff.

(10) Mostly Volunteer: A department is considered mostly volunteer if more than 50 percent of their active firefighting membership is NOT compensated for their service other than a nominal stipend and/or insurance.

(11) Mutual-aid: An agreement whereby assisting fire departments are dispatched into another fire department's jurisdiction only when the first-arriving unit on a scene calls for assistance, or when specially requested by dispatch.

(12) Non-supplanting: The SAFER grant will not provide assistance to fund positions that are currently funded by the applicant. In other words, grantees cannot use Federal grant dollars to substitute for their own budget. Awardees must maintain the number of firefighters they stipulated at the time of application, plus the funded SAFER positions, throughout the period of performance.

(13) Operational Budget: The budget that supports fire-related programs and/or emergency response activities (salaries, maintenance, equipment, apparatus, etc.).

(14) State: For the purpose of these grants, "State" is defined as any of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

(15) Statewide or Local Firefighter Interest Organizations: Statewide and local firefighter interest groups are organizations that are in existence to support or represent the interests of firefighters in front of legislative bodies at the local, State, and Federal level. Such organizations include State or local firefighter and/or fire chiefs associations, fire department auxiliaries, volunteer firefighter relief organizations, and associations. DHS shall make the final determination as to whether an applicant is an appropriate firefighter interest group.

(16) Staffing and Deployment: The minimum staffing requirements to ensure that a sufficient number of members are available to operate safely and effectively as defined in NFPA 1710 and 1720, as well as OSHA Respiratory Protection standard 1910.134(g)(4)(i) and 1910.134(g)(4)(ii).

(17) Volunteer Fire Department: An agency or organization in which no member receives financial compensation (in the form of salary or wages) for their services other than life and health insurance, workers' compensation insurance and/or stipend per call. We consider a department to be "mostly volunteer" if more than 50 percent of its membership is made up of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for their services.

Appendix 2

Grantee Responsibilities

Grant recipients (grantees) must agree to the following:

(1) Perform the tasks (scope of work) outlined in the grantee's application and approved by the AFG program office in accordance with the articles of agreement within the period of performance.

(2) Grantee's under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity must train their newly hired firefighters to the Firefighter-I level (NFPA 1001) within the first six months of employment **AND** train their new recruits to Firefighter-II level (NFPA 1001 or equivalent) within the first two years of their employment.

(3) Share in the costs if awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity. The grantee's portion of the salary and benefit costs for hiring firefighters under this grant must be equal to at least the following:

- 10 percent of the actual costs in year one
- 20 percent of the actual costs in year two
- 50 percent of the actual costs in year three
- 70 percent of the actual costs in year four
- 100 percent of the actual costs in year five

If the employee's salary and benefit costs are greater than the allowable Federal maximum, the grantee will, in effect, assume a greater cost share. All cost-share contributions must be cash. 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. Regardless of the potential for fire departments in Insular Areas to obtain a waiver of the cost-share requirements, the \$108,380 Federal limit will remain in effect. Grantees that do not fulfill their obligations under these grants will be considered in default and required to return the Federal funds disbursed under the grant award.

(4) SAFER grants are intended to supplement grantees' staffing, NOT supplant grantees' staffing. If awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity, grantees must retain a level of staffing that is equal to the level of staffing at the time of application, in addition to the staffing of the SAFER-funded positions. Grantees that fail to maintain this level of staffing risk losing the Federal funds awarded under this grant.

(5) Maintain operating expenditures for the period of the grant in the areas funded by this grant 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. These grants are meant to supplement rather than replace an organization's funding.

(6) Retain grant files and supporting documentation for three years after the conclusion and closeout of the grant. The AFG program office may require access to any pertinent books, documents, papers, or records that belong to a grant recipient. The DHS Office of Inspector General or the Comptroller General of the United States may also require access to a grantee's books and records.

(7) Provide periodic performance reports in conjunction with the payment requests to the AFG program office. In all years of the grant's period of performance, for both the Hiring of Firefighters and the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activities, grantees must submit performance reports with each payment request, as well as a final performance report at grant closeout. All grantees will be required to produce a final report on how the grant funding was used and the benefits realized from the award. An account of the grant funds must also be included in the performance reports.

(8) Follow the audit requirements of OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Nonprofit Organizations, which calls for grantees that expend \$500,000 or more in Federal funds in a year (from all Federal sources) to have a single audit performed in accordance with the Circular. (For more information about the Circulars, go to www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.)

(9) Notwithstanding any provision of other laws, firefighters hired under these grants shall not be discriminated against for, or be prohibited from, engaging in volunteer activities in another jurisdiction during off-duty hours.

(10) Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 requires that, beginning October 1, 2005, all recipients of Federal preparedness funds (including recipients of Federal grants and contracts) adopt the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as a condition for the receipt of the Federal funds. Recipients of FY 2008 SAFER grants will be considered to be in compliance with the NIMS requirement if the grantee: (1) has an operational knowledge of the Incident Command System (ICS); (2) has an understanding of NIMS' principles and policies; and (3) agrees to adopt and/or comply with all directives, ordinances, rules, orders, edicts, etc., passed down by the local or State authorities with respect to incident management. Responders who have already been trained in ICS do not need retraining if their previous training is consistent with DHS standards. In order for us to document compliance, grantees will be required to certify to their compliance with the NIMS/ICS requirements as part of their grant closeout process. Grantees may contact their State Emergency Preparedness Officer or State Fire Marshall for local NIMS compliance requirements.

(11) To the extent possible, grantees will seek, recruit, and appoint members of racial and ethnic minority groups and women to increase their ranks within the applicant's department.

(12) Failure to fulfill the recipient's responsibilities may result in requiring the recipient to return a portion, or all, of the grant funding as per section 24 (15 USC 2229a).

Appendix 3

Excess Funds

Occasionally, due to successful competitive bid processes, breaks in service, etc., some grantees have funds remaining after the completion of their obligations outlined above. Grantees awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity that complete the approved scope of work and still have grant funds available must return all excess funds to the AFG program office. Grantees awarded under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity that have completed the approved scope of work and still have grant funds available may use the excess funds to continue with recruitment or retention activities consistent with the original scope of work, as long as it is within the originally approved period of performance. This shall be done through the amendment request process. Irrespective of any amendment, there will be no extensions to any SAFER grants.