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Assistance to Firefighters Grants DHS/FEMA Accepting Applications Starting Today

The Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is now accepting applications for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The goal of the program is to enhance response capabilities and to more effectively protect the health and safety of the public from fire hazards. This is the single biggest opportunity from the federal government to support fire safety on an annual basis. FEMA will start accepting applications today, April 15th. The application period closes at 5pm eastern standard time on Wednesday, May 20, 2009.

For FY 2009, there will be \$510 million available for this program. Awards are made to local fire service agencies and unaffiliated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers. Funding may support training, firefighter health and safety programs, and the acquisition of equipment or response vehicles. Applicants may apply for funding in either of two categories:

- Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety (including training, equipment, personal protective equipment, wellness and fitness, and modifications to facilities); and
- Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition (including actual vehicles and the apparatus needed to provide actual fire and emergency services). Funds under this category may also be used to refurbish an existing vehicle if that vehicle was originally designed for fire and/or emergency services. All acquisition must be compliant with or meet National Fire Protection Association standards.

Please note that the modifications of facilities program area is separate from funding provided in the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA or the “economic stimulus”), and will only fund minor renovations that are solely designed to protect the health and safety to firefighting personnel.

There is a non-federal matching requirement, but it varies based on the service area of the jurisdiction applying. Fire departments (and nonaffiliated EMS organizations) that serve more than 50,000 people must have a 20% match. Those with service areas of between 20,000 and 50,000 people have a 10% non-federal match. Eligible fire departments and EMS agencies that service fewer than 20,000 people have a 5% non-federal match. The match does not have to be in hand at the time of application but must be available by the draw down period. Award caps are also based on the size of the service area, varying from \$1 million to \$2.75 million.

For FY 2009, FEMA is strengthening its commitment to ensuring that grant recipients adhere to strict contracting guidelines. There are extra reporting requirements for grantees relative to open bidding and the collection of multiple bids for equipment and services paid for through this grant. For example, awardees will have to certify that their contracting personnel are free of any conflicts in their local bidding process.

Interested agencies should consult the FY 2009 program guidance for more information. The Ferguson Group can provide the document that upon request and offer technical assistance in applying for this grant.

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Federal representation is not just for the biggest corporations and organizations or the largest local governments and state agencies. Towns, cities, counties, local government consortiums, academic institutions, tribes, non-profits, and companies – medium and small – also significantly benefit from specialized advocacy before the United States Congress and the Executive Branch agencies. The Ferguson Group’s legislative and policy professionals have served public and private sector clients of all sizes, implementing winning strategies, and achieving impressive results. The Ferguson Group is the largest federal representative of local governments in Washington, DC.

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