

**2006 Program Guidance
for the
Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

February 2006**

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program is administered by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Grants and Training. This document details the 2006 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program's priorities. It explains what items can be requested, how to apply, and how applications will be evaluated. Please read this program guidance carefully, as well as the Final Rule and answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs). Each document provides detailed insight into the AFG program. These documents will be posted on the grant program's Web site. Together, these documents will provide you with the information you need to understand the AFG program and enable you to complete the online application. The online application will be available at www.firegrantsupport.com on or about March 6, 2006.



Prepared by the Office of Grants and Training and the U.S. Fire Administration

PROGRAM GUIDANCE FOR THE 2006 ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT PROGRAM

Background

The purpose of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program is to award one-year grants directly to fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical services (EMS) organizations in order to enhance their abilities with respect to fire and fire-related hazards. Our primary goal is to provide assistance to meet fire departments' and nonaffiliated EMS organizations' firefighting and emergency response needs. This program seeks to support organizations that lack the tools and resources necessary to more effectively protect the health and safety of the public and their emergency response personnel with respect to fire and all other hazards.

The authority of this program is derived from the Federal Fire Protection and Control Act of 1974 (15 U.S.C. §§ 2229 et seq.), as amended. In fiscal year 2006, Congress reauthorized the AFG and appropriated a total of \$539,550,000 to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Grants and Training to carry out the activities of the AFG program. Congress also authorized the use of up to five percent (5%) of the appropriated funds for administering the grant program. Also, no less than five percent (5%) of the appropriated funds must be made available to make grants for fire prevention activities. The appropriated funds are available until September 30, 2007.

The AFG program for fiscal year 2006 generally mirrors previous years' programs except for a change with regard to Regional Projects (see page 9 for more detail on the changes in Regional Projects). As in 2005, nonaffiliated EMS organizations (i.e., EMS organizations that are not fire-based and that are not affiliated with a hospital) are eligible applicants. DHS may award up to two percent (2%) of the appropriated funds to nonaffiliated EMS organizations. DHS will also continue the segregation of the Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grants from the AFG, and we will have a separate application period devoted solely to FP&S grants. It is the intention of DHS to have this application period in the fall of 2006, and it will be open to fire departments as in the past. Please monitor the AFG Web site (www.firegrantsupport.com) for updated information on FP&S grants. Be advised eligibility for FP&S grants will be different from AFG. For example, nonaffiliated EMS organizations will not be eligible.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants for the AFG program are limited to fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations. Fire departments or nonaffiliated EMS organizations that are operating in any of the 50 states plus the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, or Puerto Rico are eligible for funding.

A “fire department” is defined as 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 to a population within a fixed geographical area on a first-due basis.

A “nonaffiliated EMS organization” is defined as a public or private nonprofit emergency medical services organization that provides direct emergency medical services, including medical transport, to a specific geographic area on a first-due basis but is not affiliated with a hospital and does not serve a geographic area where emergency medical services are adequately provided by a fire department.

In making the determination regarding “adequately provided,” DHS will conclude that any nonaffiliated EMS organizations would be eligible if they are “adequately providing” direct emergency medical services at the time of application and are in good standing with the community, i.e., licensed and/or chartered to provide EMS services to the community. Rescue squads that provide direct emergency medical services, including medical transport, to the community they serve are included in this category of eligibility.

By “affiliated” we mean receiving any kind of direct support from a hospital in the form of funding, facilities, staff, equipment or apparatus. Contracting with a hospital on a fee-for-service basis would not constitute an “affiliation” in the context of this program. Also, for the purposes of this program, a “hospital” is defined as an organization, clinic, medical center, medical college or university, infirmary, surgery center, or any other institution, association, or foundation that provides medical, surgical, or psychiatric care and treatment for the sick or the injured.

A municipality (such as a fire district) may submit an application on behalf of a fire or EMS organization when the organization, defined as fire department or nonaffiliated EMS organization, lacks the legal status to do so, e.g., when the organization falls within the auspices of the municipality or district. When a municipality submits an application on behalf of an organization, the organization is precluded from submitting an additional application on its own. The Alaska Village Initiative, a nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of Alaska, will also be considered

eligible for purposes of receiving assistance under this program on behalf of Alaska Native villages. Each eligible applicant is limited to one application per program year.

For the purposes of this program, we consider two or more separate fire departments or nonaffiliated EMS organizations that share facilities as being one organization. This determination is designed to assist the grants program office in its fiscal oversight of the program by avoiding or eliminating duplication of benefits. For example, it would not be cost-beneficial to purchase two firefighting vehicles for two fire departments that share a facility to serve the same community when so many other communities need new apparatus; nor would it be cost-beneficial to buy two sets of equipment – one rural, one city – for the same firefighters. We believe that two or more organizations that share facilities should be able to satisfy all of their operational needs with one application. If two or more organizations that share facilities submit more than one application, we will deem all of the applications ineligible.

A fire department can apply for assistance for its emergency medical services (EMS) unit, provided the unit falls organizationally under the auspices of the fire department. Fire departments may NOT apply for assistance as an “unaffiliated EMS organization” under the AFG program. Fire departments whose applications are submitted as a nonaffiliated EMS organization will have their application deemed ineligible. Likewise, a nonaffiliated EMS organization may NOT apply for assistance as a fire department. If a nonaffiliated EMS organization submits an application as a fire department, we will deem that application to be ineligible as well.

Non-Federal airport and/or port authority fire or EMS organizations are eligible only if they have a formally recognized arrangement with the local jurisdiction to provide fire suppression or emergency medical services on a first-due basis outside the confines of the airport or port facilities. Airport or port authority fire and EMS organizations whose sole responsibility is suppression of fires or EMS response on the airport grounds or port facilities are not eligible for this grant program.

Fire departments that are Federal or contracted by the Federal government and are solely responsible under their formally recognized arrangement for suppression of fires on Federal installations or land are not eligible for this grant program. Fire stations that are not independent entities, but are rather part of, controlled by, or are under the day-to-day operational direction of a larger fire department or agency, are not eligible. Fire departments that are for-profit departments (i.e., do not have specific nonprofit status or are not municipally based) are not eligible to apply for assistance under this program. Also not eligible for this program are auxiliaries, fire service organizations or associations, and state/local agencies such as a forest service, fire marshals, hospitals, and training offices. Dive teams and search and rescue teams or any similar organizations that do not provide medical transport are not eligible for EMS assistance as nonaffiliated EMS organizations.

Criteria Development Process

Each year, the grants program office conducts a criteria development meeting to develop the program's priorities for the coming year. DHS brings together a panel of fire service professionals representing the nine major fire service organizations. The organizations that are represented include the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM), the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI), the North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD), and the Congressional Fire Service Institute (CFSI).

The criteria development panel is charged with making recommendations to the grants program office regarding the creation and/or modification of previously established program priorities as well as developing criteria for awarding grants and proposing any necessary changes to the administration of the grant program. The content of this document reflects our implementation of the criteria development panel's recommendations with respect to the priorities, direction, and criteria for awarding grants as they relate to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program.

Automated Application and Tutorial for 2006

The application will be accessible from the grant program office's Web site (www.firegrantsupport.com), the U.S. Fire Administration's (USFA) Web site (www.usfa.fema.gov), and grants.gov Web site (www.grants.gov). 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 complete it, up to the application deadline or the submittal of your application. ***Once you have submitted your application, you cannot change it.*** 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 we have received your application after submission.

An applicant tutorial will be available on the Internet at www.firegrantsupport.com. The tutorial explains the AFG program, helps applicants use the online grant application, provides tips for navigating the application screens and summarizes the changes in the grant program for fiscal year 2006. The tutorial also provides a review of the lessons learned from previous years under the grant program.

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 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 organization. Therefore, prior to submission, please review all work produced by grant writers or other third parties on your behalf. Applicants that falsify their applications or misrepresent their organizations in any material 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.

Paper applications will be accepted but are discouraged due to the inherent delays associated with processing them. 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 perform all of these functions online. In addition, paper applications do not have the built in help that is available to online applicants. Finally, there is no assurance that your paper application is complete when submitted. 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 mail. We will not send the paper applications via overnight delivery, nor by fax or e-mail.

The only eligible 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 online application and submit it. Do not use a previous year's application. Any paper application that is not in the correct format will be deemed ineligible.

We will begin accepting completed applications for the 2006 program on or about March 6, 2006. Monitor the AFG and USFA Web sites for up-to-date information on the application period. Completed applications must be submitted electronically or received by us on or before the close of business (5:00 p.m. EDT) on the last day of the application period, currently projected for April 7, 2006. Applications submitted by mail must be postmarked no later than four calendar days prior to the end of the application period. Assuming an April 7, 2006, due date, we will not accept applications postmarked after April 4, 2006, unless we receive them prior to the end of the application period. Applications not submitted electronically must be mailed to:

FIRE Grant Program Technical Assistance Center
U.S. Fire Administration, Room I-207
16825 South Seton Avenue
Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727-8998

We will not be responsible for applications mailed to any address other than the address listed above. 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.

Project Development

In 2006, we have continued our practice of allowing you to formulate a very comprehensive grant proposal. Depending on the program area 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. Be advised that your application should include only activities that can be completed within the one-year grant period. You may submit only one application per application period, and your application is further limited to only one of the program areas listed below (i.e., Operations and Safety or Vehicle Acquisition). If multiple applications are submitted on behalf of one entity, either intentionally or unintentionally, we will deem all applications ineligible.

Fire Departments

You may submit an application for one of two program areas, and you may include as many activities within the selected program area as necessary to meet your needs. You may submit ***only one application per application period***, and your application is further limited to only one of the program areas listed below. If multiple applications are submitted on behalf of one entity, either intentionally or unintentionally, we will deem all applications ineligible. The program areas and associated activities eligible in this year’s AFG are as follows:

1. Operations and Firefighter Safety Program Area. Eligible activities for fire departments under this program area are limited to training, equipment, personal protective equipment, wellness and fitness, and modifications to fire stations and facilities. Please note fire departments may submit requests for emergency medical services training and equipment for their department’s emergency medical services (EMS) unit under the appropriate functional area (i.e., training or equipment, respectively) if the EMS unit falls organizationally under the auspices of the fire department. Additionally, requests for equipment, personal protective equipment, and training to prepare for response to incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive agents (CBRNE) are eligible under the appropriate activities in this program area. Applicants should strive to ensure all projects applied for under the AFG program are consistent with national standards and address interoperability.

2. Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition Program Area. Eligible apparatus available to fire departments under this program area include, but are not limited to, pumpers, brush trucks, tankers/tenders, rescue vehicles, ambulances, quints, aerials, foam units, and fireboats. You may apply for only **one** vehicle per year. Applicants requesting more than one vehicle on an application will have their application deemed ineligible.

Previous AFG vehicle grant recipients are not eligible to receive a vehicle grant in this year's program.

As stated above, this year you may submit only one application for assistance in only one of these two program areas. Within your selected program area, you may develop a comprehensive project to address all of your needs by applying for as many of the eligible activities that you determine are necessary. For example, if you determine that your needs are in the area of Operations and Firefighter Safety, you could apply for any one of the activities under that program area, or any combination of activities, or all of the activities listed within that area. If you need a vehicle, you must apply under the Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition program area. You may not apply for any vehicles under the Operations and Firefighter Safety program area.

Nonaffiliated EMS Organizations

Nonaffiliated EMS organizations are eligible to apply for assistance during the 2006 AFG application period. The nonaffiliated EMS portion of the AFG mirrors what is available to fire departments in that applicants will have the option to apply for assistance under either the EMS Operations and Safety program area or the EMS Vehicle Acquisition program area. The EMS Operations and Safety area provides you with a range of eligible activities so you can formulate a very comprehensive grant proposal to meet all of your operational needs. The EMS Vehicle Acquisition area allows you to apply for a vehicle to enhance your emergency response capabilities and may include operator training as necessary.

Remember, you may submit ***only one application per application period***, and your application is further limited to only **one** of the two program areas listed below. If multiple applications are submitted on behalf of one entity, either intentionally or unintentionally, we will deem all applications ineligible. Be advised that your application should include only activities that can be completed within the one-year grant period. The program areas and associated activities eligible in this year's AFG are as follows:

1. EMS Operations and Safety Program Area. Eligible activities available to nonaffiliated EMS organizations under this function are limited to EMS training, EMS equipment including personal protective equipment, wellness and fitness, and modifications to stations and facilities. Also, note requests for equipment, personal protective equipment, and training to prepare for response to incidents involving CBRNE are available under the appropriate activities in this program area. Applicants should strive to ensure all projects applied for under the grant program are consistent with national standards and address interoperability.

2. EMS Vehicle Acquisition Program Area. Eligible apparatus available to nonaffiliated EMS organizations under this area include, but are not limited to

ambulances, transport units and rescue squads. Small specialty access vehicles such as ATVs, snowmobiles, and gators are not considered vehicles; rather, they are considered “equipment” and should be applied for under the EMS equipment activity under the EMS Operations and Safety program area. You may apply for only one vehicle per year. Applications requesting more than one vehicle will be deemed ineligible. Previous AFG vehicle grant recipients are not eligible to receive a vehicle grant in subsequent grant years.

Regional Projects

Any eligible applicant, whether a fire department or a nonaffiliated EMS organization, may act as a “host applicant” and apply for large-scale or regional projects on behalf of itself and any number of organizations in neighboring jurisdictions. A regional project is one in which multiple organizations serving more than one local jurisdiction benefit directly from the activities implemented with the grant funds. A county fire department applying for a county-wide communication system is NOT a regional project because it does not benefit multiple seats-of-government. Regional projects are designed to facilitate interoperability and efficiency among the participating jurisdictions. As such, the only activities available for application under a regional project are training, equipment acquisition and personal protective equipment acquisition. Wellness and fitness, modification to facilities, and vehicle acquisition activities are not eligible as a regional project.

Regional projects require one eligible applicant to act as the “host” for the project. In 2006, host applicants MAY NOT apply for additional needs beyond the scope of the regional project. *Please note: This is a change from last year’s Program Guidance.* The “host” will be responsible for fulfilling all grant requirements such as reporting to NFIRS, control of and accounting for the funds, and distribution and control of the property.

In general, equipment purchased as a result of a regional project will be physically distributed to all the departments that are beneficiaries of the project. This physical distribution of the equipment to other first-responder organizations is the single characteristic that distinguishes regional projects from non-regional requests that have an impact on a region via mutual aid. For example, a non-regional project would be application for an air compressor or a HAZMAT vehicle that would be awarded and physically located in the awardee’s department but shared with the neighboring departments with which a mutual or automatic aid agreement exists.

Examples of viable regional projects would be a multi-jurisdictional communications system or standardization of breathing apparatus. Generally, these types of projects are designed to address issues of interoperability among multiple jurisdictions. In order to apply for such a project, the applicant must: 1) be an eligible

applicant, i.e., either a fire department or a nonaffiliated EMS organization (a county, county association, or a city could not apply for a regional project) and 2) agree, if awarded, to be responsible for all aspects of the grant, including, but not limited to, accountability for the assets and all reporting requirements.

In the application, the host organization will be required to provide the characteristics of the entire region that will be affected by the project (i.e., the population of the affected region – not the applicant’s first-due population). *Please note: This is a change from last year’s Program Guidance where only the applicant’s characteristics were declared.* The applicant must provide detailed information in the project narrative describing the effect of the project. In addition, the applicant must include a list of each of the participating organizations that will benefit from the regional project if the project is approved. These organizations, i.e., either fire departments or nonaffiliated EMS organizations, which will be the beneficiaries of the project, may also apply for funding under the AFG as long as they are not requesting the same items as the host applicant’s regional project. In the example where a host applicant is applying for a multi-jurisdictional communications project, a participating organization that will receive some of the communications equipment can apply for other needs as long as they do not apply for duplicative communications equipment. Host applicants MAY NOT apply for other needs beyond the regional project nor may a host applicant submit a second application for other, non-regional needs.

When evaluating the benefits of any regional project, we will take into account the other partners that will be involved in the project, whether they are other fire departments and/or nonaffiliated EMS organizations or other public service organizations. We will also take into consideration the extent to which the non-fire/EMS partners will contribute to the overall costs of the regional project.

Application Procedure

Eligible applicants can apply for the AFG program online via the “e-grants” application. The system will allow one authorized representative of an applicant to log in and create a username and password for the applicant. If your organization submitted an application in previous years, it is advised that you use the same username and password used for previous applications. The selection of the authorized representative is at the discretion of each applicant. The application includes general questions about your organization and community, as well as questions specific to the proposed project.

DUNS Number

Effective October 1, 2003, all Federal grant applicants must obtain a DUNS number, a unique nine-character identification number provided by the commercial

company Dun & Bradstreet. The Federal government will use 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 Web site (<https://eupdate.dnb.com/requestoptions/government/ccrreg/>).

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 two to three 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 grant application, there is a special data field for entering the DUNS number. This number is required for all Federal grant applications, and extensions may not be granted for applicants who were unable to obtain their number prior to the end of the application period.

Application

As in previous years, you will be required to answer a series of questions designed to provide general information about your organization and community. The answers provided to these questions may be used in the evaluation of your application. We will also use some of the information to determine whether an organization serves an urban, suburban, or rural community. We believe characteristics such as population, water supply, land use, number of stations, number of inhabitable structures over four stories tall in the jurisdiction, and call volume are indicators of the type of community served. We will allow you to designate the type of community you serve; however, we will also use these characteristics to assist us in determining a designation of the type of community that is served. If your declaration and our determination differ, you will be prompted to justify your designation in the narrative section of the application.

This designation is important because we have established different funding priorities in some of the activity areas depending on the type of community served. These funding priorities are delineated in each program area below, if applicable. The community designation (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural) may affect the ranking of your application depending on the program area or activity for which you are applying. This is why you must justify your designation in the narrative of the application if your designation is different from ours.

After completing the general questions, you will be asked a series of activity-specific questions relative to the program area 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 the planned project. The narrative portion of the application should provide the details of activities

proposed to be funded, including budget details for each activity. The narrative should also describe the financial need of your organization and elaborate on the benefits your community and/or organization will gain from the expenditure of the grant funds, particularly noting the benefits that would be realized due to your department's responsibilities for protection of critical infrastructure. Finally, the narrative should explain the extent to which the grant would enhance your daily operations and/or how the grant will positively impact your ability to protect life and property.

We recommend you type your narrative offline in any word processing software, such as Word, Word Perfect, or Notepad. Once the narrative is complete, you can copy it or "cut-and-paste" it from the word-processing document into the narrative block of the application. Space for the narrative is limited, so it should not exceed five pages. Do **NOT** type the narrative using only capital letters. For more specific information regarding the application and its narrative, we advise you to review the applicant tutorial that is available on the grant program's Web site (www.firegrantsupport.com).

Evaluation Process

We will rank all complete and eligible applications based on the substance of the application relative to the established funding priorities for the type of community served. (As explained earlier, the funding priorities and the criteria for evaluating applications are established based on recommendations from the criteria development panel.) The answers to the activity-specific questions provide us with information that we use to determine your application's ranking relative to the stated priorities.

If you apply for more than one activity in your selected project, each activity will be scored separately. Then the scores will be prorated based on the individual activities' funding-level compared to the total requested funding amount in your application. For example, if you are applying under the Operations and Safety area, and are applying for \$9,000 in training and \$1,000 in equipment, the training portion of the proposal will represent 90 percent of the score and the equipment will represent 10 percent of the score. The number of activities included in the application will not provide any advantage or disadvantage with respect to its evaluation.

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

process, the panelists will provide a subjective but qualitative judgment on the merits of each request.

Applications that include requests for equipment and/or training will be evaluated by the panelists relative to the critical infrastructure within the applicant's area of first-due response. Critical infrastructure includes any system or asset that if attacked or impacted by a hazardous event would result in catastrophic loss of life or catastrophic economic loss. Critical infrastructure also includes the following: public water or power systems, major business centers, chemical facilities, nuclear power plants, major rail and highway bridges, petroleum and natural gas transmission pipelines or storage facilities, telecommunications facilities, or facilities that support large public gatherings such as sporting events or concerts. Panelists will be instructed to assess such infrastructure and the hazards confronting the community as explained in the narrative in order to determine the benefits that will be realized from a grant to the applicant.

The panelists will evaluate and score: 1) the clarity of your proposed project, including your project's budget detail; 2) the financial need of your organization; 3) the benefits that would result should you be awarded the grant; and, 4) the extent to which the grant would enhance your daily operations and/or how the grant will positively impact your ability to protect life and property. These four elements carry equal weight when factored into the panelists' scores (i.e., one-fourth).

Each application will be judged on its own merits – not against other applications. The panelists will consider all expenses budgeted, including administrative and/or indirect costs, as part of the cost-benefit review. An applicant may demonstrate cost-benefit by describing, as applicable, how the grant award will do the following: 1) fit in with a regional approach, i.e., is consistent with current capabilities and requests of neighboring organizations or otherwise benefits other organizations in the region; 2) implement interoperability of equipment/technology with other organizations and local, state, and Federal first-responders; and/or, 3) allow the first responder organizations to respond to all hazards including incidents involving seismic (earthquake), atmospheric (tornadoes, hurricanes), or technological (hazardous materials or nuclear) events, or incidents involving CBRNE, as well as fire prevention/suppression. The panelists will review each application in its entirety and rate the application against established evaluation criteria.

Keep in mind we will use the answers to the activity-specific questions when conducting our initial assessment. The answers to these questions are the primary basis for determining whether an application warrants further evaluation. Applicants whose answers indicate their project is consistent with our established priorities (as outlined 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. Applicants that falsify their applications or misrepresent their organizations in any

material manner will have their applications deemed ineligible by the AFG program office and referred to the Office of Inspector General for further action as appropriate.

State Technical Review

Following our preliminary determination of award (i.e., after the panel process is complete) but prior to award, we will involve the state's homeland security office in a technical review of any application seeking equipment and/or training for preparation for incidents involving CBRNE. In addition, we will seek the state's comment on the extent to which any communications equipment conforms to the state's interoperability requirements or plans. Each state will be asked to provide the AFG program office with a representative to carry out this technical review of applications from the state that include CBRNE-related and interoperable communications equipment requests and that have the potential to be funded. During the technical review, the state representative will attest to and certify that such requests are consistent with the state's homeland security strategies and that the requests do not duplicate assistance already provided or imminent. If a state representative determines that an application is either inconsistent with the state plan or duplicates the state's assistance, that portion of the AFG application will not be funded.

AFG Programs and Program Funding Priorities

The program funding priorities differ for fire departments and for nonaffiliated EMS organizations. Please read the guidance document with this in mind and make sure you are researching the appropriate sections for your organization. A "fire department" is defined as 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 to a population within a fixed geographical area on a first-due basis.

A "nonaffiliated EMS organization" is defined as a public or private nonprofit emergency medical services organization that provides direct emergency medical services to a specific geographic area on a first-due basis but is not affiliated with a hospital and does not serve a geographic area in which DHS finds that emergency medical services are adequately provided by a fire department. In making the determination regarding "adequately provided," DHS will conclude that any nonaffiliated EMS organization will be eligible under this definition if the organization is providing direct emergency medical services at the time of application and is in good standing with the community, i.e., licensed and/or chartered to provide EMS services to the community. Included in this category of eligibility are rescue squads that are trained to provide emergency medical services to the community they serve. By "affiliated" we mean receiving any kind of direct support from a hospital in the form of funding, facilities,

staff, or apparatus. Contracting with a hospital on a fee-for-service basis would not constitute an "affiliation" in the context of the AFG.

Fire Department Priorities

As indicated previously in this program guidance, each year the grants program office conducts a criteria development meeting to develop the program's funding priorities for the coming year. A panel of fire service professionals representing the nine major fire service organizations is charged with making recommendations 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 grant program.

Specific rating criteria and funding priorities for the AFG FY2006 grant activities are provided below following the descriptions of this year's eligible program areas. The rating criteria, in conjunction with the program area description, will provide you with an understanding of what information we are seeking about your proposed projects.

(1) Fire Operations and Firefighter Safety Program Area

There are five different fundable activities included in this program area: training, equipment, personal protective equipment, wellness and fitness, and modifications to facilities. You may apply for as many of the activities within this program area as you deem necessary. There are no bonuses or penalties for applying for only one activity or for multiple activities. Please note that fire-based emergency medical services (EMS) training and equipment are available under the appropriate activity in this program area.

Requests in this program area should be consistent with any applicable national standards and have the intent and/or goal of solving applicable interoperability or compatibility problems.¹ Therefore, the applicant should describe in the narrative section how the purchase of equipment will comply with standards and/or facilitate solving interoperability or compatibility problems.

a) Training activities:

DHS may make grants for the purpose of training firefighting personnel. Examples of training activities include, but are not limited to, firefighter I and II certifications; first-responder EMS; driver/operator; fire officer; hazardous materials response; incident command; supervision and safety; CBRNE awareness, performance,

¹ The Responder Knowledge Base (RKB), which can be accessed at <http://www.rkb.mipt.org/>, includes relevant information on first responder standards and allows "guest users" to answer any questions they may have on applicable standards.

planning and management; or train-the-trainer courses in any of these areas. The program priorities described in this section have been developed by a panel of representatives from the nation's fire service leadership and supported by DHS for the AFG.

For the AFG in FY2006 the most benefit is derived from training that is instructor-led, hands-on, and leads to a nationally sanctioned or state certification. Training requests that include Web-based home study or distance learning and the purchase of training materials, equipment, or props are a lower priority. Therefore, applications focused on national or state certification training, including train-the-trainer initiatives, will receive a higher competitive rating. Training that utilizes instructors where the students must demonstrate their grasp of knowledge of the training material via testing and is integral to a certification will receive a high competitive rating, but not as high a rating as training that would lead to national certification. Training that is instructor-led, but does not lead to a certification, or any self-taught courses, are of low benefit, and will not be afforded a high priority.

A high competitive advantage is provided to those proposed training projects benefiting the highest percentage of applicable personnel within a fire department or those proposed training projects that will be open to other departments in the region. Training that brings the department into statutory (or Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)) compliance or compliance with federally mandated initiatives (such as knowledge and understanding of the National Incident Management System and/or incident command systems) would provide the highest benefit relative to training that is not required. Therefore, requests to meet OSHA or other federally mandated compliance will receive the highest consideration. Training that brings a department into voluntary compliance with national standards will also receive a high competitive rating, but is secondary to training that leads to departments meeting statutory compliance. Training that does not have statutory compliance or voluntary compliance with a national standard will receive a low competitive rating. Training designated to enhance multi-jurisdictional capabilities will be afforded a slightly higher rating.

Due to the inherent differences among urban, suburban, and rural firefighting characteristics, there are different priorities in the training activity for departments servicing the different types of communities. Therefore, the AFG is focused on bringing all departments up to a level of basic capability. Any department requesting funding to address basic capabilities will receive the highest consideration regardless of the type of community served. CBRNE awareness training is considered basic; therefore it has a high benefit and will receive the highest consideration regardless of the type of community served.

For departments serving rural communities, AFG support to basic, operational-level firefighting, safety officer training, operational-level rescue, driver training, or first-

responder EMS, EMT-B, and EMT-I, (i.e., training in basic firefighting or EMS duties) has greater benefit than funding officer training or airport rescue and firefighting (ARFF). In rural communities, after basic training, officer training and ARFF will receive a slightly lower cost-benefit rating but a rating that is higher than the rating for other specialized types of training such as mass-casualty, HAZMAT, advance rescue and EMT, or inspector training.

With respect to AFG support to departments serving urban or suburban communities, the recommendations of criteria development have been that in addition to the high benefit to be gained from obtaining basic capabilities, there is a high benefit to be gained by funding specialized training, such as mass casualty, HAZMAT, advance rescue and EMS, or inspector training. These basic training and specialized training priorities would provide a department with a higher benefit than the funding of officer training, safety officer training, or operations training activities.

For AFG FY2006, eligible uses of training funds include but are not limited to tuition, exam and course fees, certification and/or re-certification expenses, purchase of training curricula, training equipment (including trailers and simulators), training props, training services (such as instructors), and attendance at formal training forums. Tow vehicles or other means of transport may be eligible as a transportation expense under this activity if adequately justified. However, we will limit transportation expenses to \$6,000 per year per application. Compensation to volunteer firefighters for wages lost because of attending training under this activity is an eligible expense if justified in the 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 eligible expenses if justified in the 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 cost-benefit element in the evaluation process.

Ineligible activities in this area include construction of facilities, such as classrooms, buildings, towers, etc. Firefighting equipment or personnel protective equipment that is used in training exercises, such as self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), should be requested under the appropriate activity – not in this training activity area. Modular training units that are not trailer-mounted or are otherwise immobile are not eligible. 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. The purchase or lease of real estate is also not eligible. The necessary remodeling of an existing facility to accomplish training activities is allowable if the remodeling is minor in nature (e.g., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000), justified in the proposal, and integral to the completion of the training activities. Remodeling that is not directly related to other

grant activities is not eligible. Remodeling expenses should be included in the application as an “Other” line-item expense and clearly explained in the narrative.

DHS offers a variety of CBRNE training courses free of charge; visit the DHS Web site for details (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/docs/coursecatalog.pdf) or call the DHS Helpline at 1-800-368-6498.

b) Equipment Acquisition Activity:

DHS may make grants for acquiring additional equipment, including equipment for fire suppression, to enhance the safety or effectiveness of firefighting, rescue, and fire-based EMS functions. Additionally, DHS may make grants for equipment necessary for response to CBRNE incidents.

The stated purpose of the AFG is to protect the health and safety of the public and firefighters from fire and fire-related hazards. As such, this grant program will achieve the greatest benefits by providing funds to fire departments purchasing basic firefighting equipment before any other non-firefighting equipment. Equipment that has a direct effect on firefighters’ health and safety will receive a high competitive rating over equipment that has no such effect. Equipment promoting interoperability with neighboring jurisdictions may receive additional consideration in the cost-benefit assessment if the application ranks within the competitive range.

This grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if it provides funds to fire departments for the first-time purchase of basic firefighting, rescue, EMS, and CBRNE preparedness equipment, or to replace used or obsolete firefighting equipment. Our second priority will be to fund departments seeking to expand their functional capabilities within their existing mission areas. The lowest priority is funding equipment to increase an applicant’s available supply (reserve equipment) or to expand an applicant’s services into new mission areas; therefore, those applications will receive the lowest competitive rating along with applications seeking reserve equipment.

For the FY2006 AFG, the purchase of equipment that brings the department into statutory or OSHA compliance will provide the highest benefit and therefore will receive the highest consideration. The purchase of equipment that brings a department into voluntary compliance with national standards will also receive a high competitive rating, but secondary to the training that leads to a department’s statutory compliance. Equipment that does not have an effect on statutory compliance or voluntary compliance with a national standard will receive a lower competitive rating. Applicants should designate which compliance standards would be achieved with this activity. Additionally, among departments serving similar types of communities, those having high call volumes will be afforded a higher competitive rating than those having low call volumes.

Small boats (13 feet or less in length), personal watercraft, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), and appropriate trailers may be considered under this activity if properly justified in the narrative section of the application. Other vehicles are not eligible under this activity but would be eligible under the Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition program area.

Eligible expenses include those expenses necessary to acquire equipment, including communications and monitoring equipment. Compressor systems, cascade systems, or similar SCBA-refill systems are eligible expenditures in this area. Remodeling or renovations to an existing facility to accommodate equipment purchased with grant funds are allowable if justified in the narrative and if the remodeling or renovation is minor in nature (i.e., limited to minor interior changes costing less than \$10,000). Remodeling that is not directly related to other grant activities is not eligible. Traffic signal preemption systems are eligible. The costs of shipping equipment purchased under this program and applicable sales tax are also an eligible expense. Warranties and maintenance agreements are NOT eligible. Sirens or other outdoor warning devices are not eligible.

Individual communications equipment (portable radios) and mobile communications equipment (including mobile repeaters) are eligible but telephones, cell phones, and satellite phones are not eligible. Under the AFG, DHS will limit funding for portable radios to the number of seated positions based on the applicant's firefighting vehicle fleet unless otherwise justified in the narrative and only fund the number of mobile radios required to equip the vehicle inventory listed in the application. We will not fund mobile radios for personally owned vehicles with the exception of the chief fire officer's personal vehicle if adequately justified in the application. Mobile data systems (MDTs) are eligible. Integrated communications systems such as base stations, computer-aided dispatch, fixed-site repeaters, wireless and broadband mobile data systems, are eligible under this activity. The purchase of any communications systems or equipment under this activity should have the intent or goal of solving interoperability problems, as applicable. Note that each state will have the opportunity to review requests for communications equipment, with respect to interoperability and the state's homeland security strategy. Any applicant seeking funding for eligible equipment should provide details in the narrative section of the application regarding their local plan to enable or enhance interoperability for the jurisdiction.

Equipment used in response to CBRNE incidents is also eligible. Equipment exclusively designed for use in CBRNE incidents is eligible this year and includes special monitoring equipment (biological, radioactive, etc.) and CBRNE-related pharmaceuticals for first-responders, such as auto injectors. AFG program funds cannot be used for equipment to support CBRNE activities if the funding would duplicate benefits provided through other Federal programs.

Requests for emergency medical services (EMS) equipment are eligible under this equipment acquisition activity. Eligible expenses for EMS equipment in this activity may include, but are not limited to, defibrillators, basic and advanced life support equipment, universal precaution supplies (i.e., personal protective equipment), computers, and infectious disease control and decontamination systems.

No grant funds may be used to construct facilities such as buildings, sheds, or towers to house communications equipment. Telephones, cell phones, and satellite phones are not eligible. Bomb disposal equipment and robots are not eligible. Vehicles, medications, disposable or otherwise expendable supplies (such as gloves, syringes, and cervical collars) are not eligible expenses. 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), SCBAs, spare cylinders, and personal alert safety systems, are not eligible under this activity; however, they are eligible under the Personal Protective Equipment Acquisition activity detailed below.

c) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Acquisition Activity:

DHS may make grants for acquiring PPE required for active firefighting personnel by OSHA and other PPE for firefighting personnel.

One of the stated purposes of AFG is to protect the health and safety of the public and of firefighters. To achieve this goal and maximize the benefit to the firefighting community, the AFG in FY2006 will prioritize funding to those applicants needing to provide PPE to a high percentage of their personnel. In concurring with the recommendations of the criteria development panel for AFG in FY2006, we will give the highest competitive rating in this activity to fire departments where a large percentage of their active firefighting staff does not have any PPE. We will also give a high competitive rating to departments wanting to purchase enough PPE to equip 100 percent of their active firefighting staff. We will also give a high 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 or purchasing equipment to have extra equipment on-hand in the event it is needed. For those departments replacing obsolete or substandard equipment, the condition of the equipment to be replaced will be factored into the score with a higher priority given to replacing equipment that is damaged, torn, or contaminated over equipment that is worn but usable.

For departments replacing old or damaged equipment, departments with the oldest equipment will get the highest priority and departments with the newest equipment will get the lowest priority. Finally, the number of fire response calls that your department

makes in a year will be considered. The higher priority will go to departments with higher call volumes, while applications from departments with low call volumes will be afforded lower competitive ratings. 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.

Application requests for personal alert safety system (PASS) devices will only be considered if the equipment requested meets current national standards, i.e., integrated and/or automatic or auto-on PASS. This is because of the safety benefits afforded firefighters with automated PASS devices. Eligible PPE includes clothing for structural or wildland fire suppression, such as “turnout gear” or “bunker gear” (including boots, pants, coats, gloves, hoods, goggles, retro-reflective highway apparel, vests, helmets, coveralls, and fire shelters), SCBAs, spare cylinders, and PASS (within the limits noted above). We will limit funding for SCBAs to the number of seated positions based on the applicant’s firefighting vehicle fleet unless otherwise justified in the narrative. Each SCBA request will be limited to one spare cylinder unless the applicant can adequately justify more than one spare per unit. Protective clothing for response to hazardous materials incidents and other specialized incidents is eligible under this activity. Protective clothing designed for EMS activities or for response to CBRNE incidents is also eligible in this activity. Eligible PPE for CBRNE incidents includes SCBAs that have been certified for use in CBRNE atmospheres and PPE that is nationally certified for use in CBRNE incidents. (It is not necessary for every SCBA request to be CBRNE-certified.) We will fund CBRNE-certified SCBA if such a request is adequately justified in the narrative and directly related to the state’s homeland security plan. Eligible PPE for EMS activities includes PPE ensembles (coats and trousers) that afford universal precautions against exposure to infectious diseases, etc.

The purchase of three-quarter length rubber boots is an ineligible expenditure under this activity. Bomb disposal suits are not eligible. Uniforms (formal/parade or station/duty) and uniform items (hats, badges, etc.) are also ineligible expenditures under this activity. Personal communications equipment such as radios and pagers are not eligible under this activity but are eligible under the Equipment Acquisition activity.

d) Wellness and Fitness Activities:

The governing statute for AFG establishes that the program may make grants for the purpose of establishing or expanding wellness and fitness initiatives for firefighting personnel. Pursuant to appropriations to the program for FY2006, these activities are eligible for this year. The funding priorities described in this section have been recommended by a panel of representatives from the Nation’s fire service leadership and have been accepted by DHS for the AFG.

Accordingly, for the FY2006 AFG, the most effective wellness/fitness activities of fire departments must offer 1) periodic health screenings, 2) entry physical examinations, and 3) an immunization program. Applicants for grants in this activity must currently offer, or plan to use grant funds to provide, ***all three benefits*** to receive consideration and funding for any other initiatives under this activity. After entry-level physicals, annual physicals, and immunizations, high priority is given to formal fitness and injury prevention projects. Lower priority is given to stress management, injury/illness rehabilitation, and employee assistance.

In accordance with the recommendations of the criteria development panel, the greatest benefit will be realized by supporting new wellness and fitness projects and higher competitive ratings will be provided to those applicants lacking wellness/fitness activities over those applicants that already employ a wellness/fitness activity. Applicants that already provide the three requisite benefits and wish to expand their wellness and fitness activity will receive a slightly lower consideration than departments that are seeking to initiate a wellness and fitness activity. Finally, since participation is critical to achieving any benefits from a wellness or fitness activity, we will give higher competitive ratings to departments whose wellness and fitness activities mandate participation and are open to all personnel.

Eligible expenditures in a wellness and fitness activity for firefighting personnel may include the procurement of medical services to ensure the firefighting personnel are physically able to carry out their duties. The purchase of medical equipment is not eligible expenditure under this category. Eligible expenditures to carry out wellness and fitness activities may include costs for personnel, physicals, physical fitness equipment (including shipping charges and sales tax as applicable), supplies, or other related contract services (e.g., health-care consultants, trainers, and nutritionists) directly associated with the implementation of the proposed activity. Examples of eligible incentives would be T-shirts or hats of nominal value, vouchers to local businesses (movies, restaurants, etc.) or time-off.

Transportation expenses and fitness club memberships for the firefighters or their families are not eligible under the wellness and fitness activity. Cash incentives are not eligible. Other ineligible expenses in this area include construction of facilities to house a fitness activity, such as exercise or fitness rooms, showers, etc. The purchase of real estate is also not eligible. Minor remodeling or renovations to an existing facility are allowable if justified in the narrative, if minor in nature (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000), and integral to the completion of the wellness and fitness activity. Remodeling that is not directly related to other grant activities is not eligible. Remodeling expenses should be included in the budget as an "Other" line-item expense and explained in the narrative.

e) Modifications to Fire Stations and Facilities:

Under the governing statute, DHS may make grants to modify fire stations, fire training facilities, and other facilities to protect the health and safety of firefighting personnel. Pursuant to appropriations to the program for FY2006, these activities are eligible for this year. The funding priorities described in this section have been recommended by a panel of representatives from the Nation's fire service leadership and have been accepted by DHS for the AFG.

Please note that activities involving modifications to facilities are subject to all applicable environmental and historic preservation requirements. Applicants seeking assistance to modify their facilities may undergo additional screening in order for their application to be considered for award. Specifically, DHS is required to ascertain to what degree the proposed modifications to fire stations or facilities might affect an applicant's structures relative to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and National Flood Insurance Program regulations. DHS must assess the effect, if any, and approve the project prior to any implementation. No project can proceed – except for planning – prior to formal DHS approval. Noncompliance with this provision (i.e., proceeding with a project, other than planning, prior to formal approval) may jeopardize an applicant's award and subsequent funding.

The stated purpose of the AFG is to protect the health and safety of the public and firefighters. As such, eligible projects under this activity are those in which the activities specifically have a direct effect on the health and safety of firefighters. Therefore, eligible measures under this activity are limited and focused on promoting fire and life safety in fire stations and facilities. The eligible activities, if incorporated, would make any facility safer for firefighters.

Initiatives eligible for funding in this area are the installation of sprinkler systems, vehicle exhaust extraction systems, smoke and fire alarm notification systems, and emergency facility generators. We will NOT fund any requests for modifications other than the initiatives listed herein. Any vehicle exhaust extraction system funded under this activity should be either extensive enough to extract all toxic vapors and particulates emitted from internal combustion engines and meet all applicable Federal, state, and local standards or be a part of a larger comprehensive system that does. Some exhaust extraction systems may meet standards for removal of certain carcinogens, but not others; therefore, it may be necessary to utilize more than one system or employ complementary systems to fully protect your firefighters.

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 to be used to supplement new construction.

For the FY2006 AFG, more benefit would be derived from modifying fire stations than from modifying fire-training facilities or other fire department facilities. Requests involving facilities that would be open for broad usage and have a high occupancy capacity will receive a higher competitive rating than those involving facilities that have limited use or low occupancy capacity. The frequency of use would also have a bearing on the benefits to be derived from grant funds. In addition, 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 occupied or otherwise in use 24-hours-per-day, 7-days-per-week will receive a higher competitive rating than facilities used on an irregular or part-time basis.

We will not fund any requests for modifications other than the initiatives listed above, specifically, vehicle exhaust extraction systems, smoke/fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems, and emergency generators. 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 system, but no applicant can request more than \$100,000 in funding per fire station under their authority. You may request funding for modifications for each station if you have multiple stations up to the \$100,000 per station limit as long as the entire request does not exceed the Federal share limit.

(2) Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition Program Area

DHS may make grants for acquiring new firefighting vehicles, used fire apparatus, or refurbished apparatus. The funds may also be used to refurbish a vehicle the department currently owns. New vehicles purchased with AFG program funds must be compliant with current National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, specifically, NFPA 1901 or 1906 standards. Used apparatus must be compliant with NFPA 1901 or 1906 standards for the year the vehicle was manufactured. Refurbished apparatus must meet NFPA 1912 standards. Applicants may apply for only one vehicle per year under this program. Applications where more than one vehicle is requested will be deemed ineligible. Applicants awarded vehicle grants from the AFG program in previous years are not eligible for another vehicle award in this program year.

Vehicle awardees for FY 2006 will be required to include a performance bond as part of the contract with the vehicle manufacturer. Extensions to a grant's period of performance may not be considered if a performance bond is not included in the purchase contract. Note: This is a new requirement for this program year.

Due to the inherent differences among urban, suburban, and rural firefighting conventions, we have different priorities in the vehicle program area for departments that service different types of communities. Due to the competitive nature of this program and the imposed limits of funding available, it is unlikely we will fund any vehicles that are not listed as a Priority One.

The following chart delineates the funding priorities for this program area by each type of community.

Firefighting Vehicle Program Priorities			
Priority	Urban Communities	Suburban Communities	Rural Communities
Priority One	Pumper Aerial Quint (Aerial < 76') Quint (Aerial > 76') Rescue	Pumper Aerial Quint (Aerial < 76') Quint (Aerial > 76') Brush/Attack	Pumper Brush/Attack Tanker/Tender Quint (Aerial < 76')
Priority Two	Command HAZMAT Light/Air Rehab	Command HAZMAT Rescue Tanker/Tender	HAZMAT Rescue Light/Air Aerial Quint (Aerial > 76')
Priority Three	Foam Truck ARFFV Brush/Attack Fire Boat Tanker/Tender Ambulance	Foam Truck ARFFV Rehab Light/Air Fire Boat Ambulance	Foam Truck ARFFV Command Rehab Fire Boat Ambulance

Regardless of the type of community served, there is more benefit to be realized by funding fire departments owning few or no vehicles of the type they are seeking than there would be by providing vehicle funding to a department that owned numerous vehicles of the type being requested. When we assess the number of vehicles a department has within a particular class, we will include all vehicles with similar functions. For example, we will consider the following to be classified in the “pumper” category: pumpers, engines, pumper/tankers, rescue-pumpers, quints (with aerials less than 76 feet in length), and urban interface vehicles such as Type I, II or III. Applicants must include in their vehicle inventory any vehicle that is on order if the department or its sponsoring municipality has signed a contract or otherwise committed to purchase said vehicle.

As with other activities eligible under the AFG, one of the goals in the vehicle acquisition program is the safety of firefighters. Applicants with unsafe vehicle characteristics will receive the higher consideration than applicants seeking to replace vehicles that already have safety features. The highest consideration is provided to applicants wanting to replace vehicles that have been converted to use as firefighting

vehicles but were not originally designed for firefighting. We will give high consideration to applicants with firefighting vehicles that have an “open-cab” configuration² as well as vehicles that did not include seatbelts in their original design. Applicants with these unsafe vehicle characteristics will receive higher consideration over applicants seeking to replace vehicles having these safety features. However, applicants wanting to benefit from this consideration must certify the unsafe vehicle will be permanently removed from service if awarded a grant.

This grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if we provide vehicles to fire departments purchasing basic firefighting apparatus (categorized above in priority order) that they have never owned. The greatest benefits would also be realized by departments seeking to replace used or obsolete apparatus. A secondary priority will be to fund departments seeking to add more vehicles to their existing fleet within their existing mission areas. The lowest priority is funding of new apparatus to expand an applicant’s services into new mission areas.

A higher competitive rating in the apparatus program area is given to fire departments owning few or no firefighting vehicles relative to other departments serving similar types of communities. A higher competitive rating is given to departments that have an aged fleet of firefighting vehicles. A higher competitive rating is also provided to departments that respond to a significant number of incidents relative to other departments servicing similar communities. Finally, due to the inherent safety benefits to be realized in departments using a comprehensive driver-training program meeting NFPA 1002 or equivalent, we will provide a competitive advantage to requests where the applicant has a comprehensive driver-training program in place. Applicants seeking driver training with their vehicle request will receive a slightly lower competitive advantage than departments with a comprehensive driver-training program already in place. Applicants without a comprehensive driver-training program and who are not seeking funding for driver training in this application will **NOT** be considered for a vehicle award.

No competitive advantage has been assigned to the purchase of standard model commercial vehicles versus custom vehicles or the purchase of 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 reviewing the cost-benefit section of the project narratives. Panelists may be provided with guidance for use in their evaluation of the reasonableness of vehicle costs. We also reserve the right to impose funding limits on requests for

² We consider “open-cab” to be any vehicle without a roof or no sides above the door. A three-sided cab (one that has a roof and sides from floor to roof but with an open jump seat area) is NOT considered an “open-cab.”

vehicles whose costs we deem excessive or otherwise not in the best interest of the program.

Eligible expenditures under this program would include the cost of the vehicle and associated equipment necessary to conform to applicable national standards (NFPA 1901 or 1906). New, used, or refurbished vehicles are eligible; however, any used or refurbished vehicles must conform to the 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 reasonable and justified 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. Operator training may be eligible for any vehicle award if justified in the narrative.

As stated above, previous AFG vehicle award recipients are ineligible for another vehicle award in this program year. 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.

Nonaffiliated EMS Organization Priorities

DHS may make grants to enhance the provision of emergency medical services for nonaffiliated EMS organizations. Funding for these organizations is limited to no more than two percent (2%) of the appropriated amount. In accordance with the recommendations of the criteria development panel, it is more cost-effective to enhance or expand an existing emergency medical service organization by providing training or equipment than it would be to create a new service. As such, communities that do not currently offer emergency medical services but are attempting to initiate this service will receive the lowest competitive rating. This is because there is not sufficient benefit to be derived from an investment in communities that do not currently support such a service.

As indicated previously in this program guidance, each year the grants program office conducts a criteria development meeting to develop the program's funding priorities for the coming year. A panel of fire service professionals representing the nine major fire service organizations is charged with making recommendations 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 grant program.

Specific rating criteria and funding priorities for the AFG FY2006 grant activities are provided below following the descriptions of this year's eligible program areas. The

rating criteria, in conjunction with the program area description, will provide you with an understanding of what information we are seeking about your proposed projects.

(1) EMS Operations and Safety Program Area

There are five different activities available for funding under this program area: EMS training, EMS equipment, personal protective equipment, wellness and fitness, and modifications to facilities. Please note that requests for equipment and training to prepare for response to incidents involving CBRNE are available under the applicable equipment and training activities. Applicants should strive to ensure all projects applied for under the grant program are consistent with national standards and address interoperability.

If you opt to apply under the EMS Operations and Safety Program area, you may request assistance for as many of the activities as you deem necessary. There are no bonuses or penalties for applying for only one activity or for multiple activities.

a) EMS Training Activity:

DHS may make grants for the purpose of training emergency medical personnel. Examples of training activities include, but are not limited to first-responder, EMT-Basic, EMT-Paramedic, HAZMAT Operations, or Rescue Operations. The program priorities described in this section have been developed by a panel of representatives from the Nation's fire service leadership and are supported by DHS for the AFG.

The most benefit would be realized by upgrading a service that currently meets a basic life support capacity to a higher level of life support. Therefore, a higher competitive rating will be given to nonaffiliated EMS organizations that are planning to upgrade services from first responder to EMT-B level. Since training is a pre-requisite to the effective use of EMS equipment, organizations whose requests are more focused on the training activities will receive a higher competitive rating than those organizations whose requests are more focused on equipment. Our second priority is to elevate emergency responders' capabilities from EMT-B to EMT-I or higher.

Eligible uses of training funds include but are not limited to tuition, exam and course fees, certification /or re-certification expenses, purchase of training curricula, training equipment (including trailers and simulators), training props, training services (such as instructors), and attendance at formal training forums or conferences that provide continuing-education credits. EMS equipment or personnel protective equipment used in training exercises should be requested in the appropriate activity (i.e., EMS equipment acquisition or personnel protective equipment acquisition) – not under this training activity. Tow vehicles or other means of transport may be eligible as a transportation expense under this activity if adequately justified in the grant proposal, but we will limit transportation expenses to \$6,000 per year per application. Compensation

to volunteer emergency responders for wages lost because of attending training under this activity is an eligible expense if reasonable and justified in the grant proposal. Overtime expenses paid to emergency responders in order for them to attend training, or overtime expenses paid to emergency responders to cover for colleagues while the colleagues are in training, are eligible expenses if reasonable and justified in the grant proposal. Even though compensation is an eligible expense, proposals containing such compensation expenses may be ranked less favorably than similar proposals without compensation expenses due to the cost-benefit element in the evaluation process.

Ineligible activities in this area include construction of facilities, such as classrooms, buildings, and towers. Modular training units that are not trailer-mounted or are otherwise immobile are not eligible. 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. The purchase or lease of real estate is also not eligible. The necessary remodeling of an existing facility to accomplish training activities funded by the grant is allowable if the remodeling is minor in nature (e.g., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000), justified in the proposal, and integral to the completion of the training activities funded by the grant. Remodeling that is not directly related to other grant activities is not eligible under this program. Remodeling expenses should be included in the application as an “Other” line-item expense and clearly explained in the narrative.

DHS offers a variety of CBRNE training courses free of charge; visit the DHS Web site for details (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/docs/coursecatalog.pdf) or call the DHS Helpline at 1-800-368-6498.

b) EMS Equipment Acquisition:

Because training is a pre-requisite to the effective use of EMS equipment, organizations whose requests are more focused on the training activities will receive a higher competitive rating than organizations whose requests are more focused on equipment. Organizations that request training to the EMT-B level and request the basic support equipment will receive a higher priority. Requests seeking assistance to purchase equipment to support advance level EMS services are a secondary priority. Items that are eligible but a lower priority include tents, shelters, generators, lights, and heating and cooling units.

Eligible expenses for equipment acquisition in this program could include basic and advanced life support equipment to support EMT-B through EMT-P with higher priority given to organizations requesting equipment to support service at the EMT-B level. Examples of eligible items available under this section include but are not limited to the following items: basic life-support (BLS) equipment, advanced life-support (ALS) equipment, rescue tools, small specialty access vehicles (all-terrain vehicles, rescue boats

under 13 feet, personal watercraft, gators, snow mobiles, etc.), communications equipment (mobile and portable radios), and HAZMAT and decontamination equipment. Other eligible items include computers, automated external defibrillators (AEDs), and infectious disease control and decontamination systems. Protective clothing is NOT eligible under this equipment category; however, it is available under the personal protective equipment acquisition activity below.

For the AFG in FY2006, individual communications equipment (portable radios) and/or mobile communications equipment (including mobile repeaters) are eligible but telephones, cell phones, satellite phones, and sirens or other outdoor warning devices are not eligible. We will only fund the number of mobile radios required to equip the vehicle inventory listed in the application. We will not fund mobile radios for personally owned vehicles under EMS. Mobile data systems are eligible. Integrated communications systems such as base stations, computer-aided dispatch, fixed-site repeaters, and wireless and broadband mobile data systems are eligible under this activity. The purchase of any communications systems or equipment under this activity should have the intent or goal of solving interoperability problems. Note that each state will have the opportunity to review requests for communications equipment, with respect to interoperability and the state's homeland security strategy. Any applicant seeking funding for equipment under this activity should provide details in the narrative section of the application regarding their local plan to enable interoperability for the jurisdiction.

Any equipment requested under this section, particularly decontamination and HAZMAT equipment, is fundable to the current level of your capabilities (i.e., we will not fund level-A equipment for organizations only trained to the HAZMAT operation level unless the application also includes a request for training compatible with the equipment request). Not eligible in this program are vehicles (such as ambulances), equipment used for firefighting purposes, medications, disposable or otherwise expendable supplies (such as gloves, syringes, and cervical collars), body armor, uniforms, and new construction such as communications towers or facilities. The costs of shipping equipment purchased under this program and applicable sales tax are also an eligible expense. However, warranties and maintenance agreements are NOT eligible.

c) Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Acquisition:

DHS may make grants for acquiring PPE required for active EMS first-responder personnel by OSHA and other PPE for EMS personnel.

One of the stated purposes of this grant program is to protect the health and safety of the public and of first-responders. To achieve this goal and maximize the benefit to the EMS community, we must fund those applicants needing to provide PPE to a high percentage of their personnel. Accordingly, the highest competitive rating in this activity is given to organizations where a large percentage of active EMS staff does not have

adequate PPE. We also give a high competitive rating to organizations wanting to purchase enough PPE to equip 100 percent of their active EMS staff. We also give a high competitive rating to organizations purchasing the PPE for the first time as opposed to organizations 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 organizations replacing obsolete or substandard equipment, the condition of the equipment to be replaced will be factored into the score with a higher priority given to replacing equipment that is damaged, torn, and/or contaminated.

The number of EMS response calls your organization makes in a year will be considered with the higher priority going to organizations with higher call volumes. Applications from organizations with low call volumes will be given lower competitive ratings. We will not provide any advantage or disadvantage for different types of communities (i.e., urban, suburban, or rural) with respect to call volume.

Examples of eligible clothing would be EMS turnout gear, non-disposable universal precautionary supplies (i.e., medical PPE), extrication jumpsuits, helmets, gloves, and boots. Protective clothing must meet national standards or local EMS protocols. The purchase of SCBA may also be eligible if the organization has a formally adopted standard operating procedure that requires SCBA availability. If you are applying for funding for SCBA, we may require you to submit documentation to support the eligibility of SCBA.

Any equipment requested under this section, particularly decontamination and HAZMAT suits are fundable to the current level of your training (i.e., we will not fund level-A suits for organizations only trained to the HAZMAT operation level unless the application also includes a request for training compatible with the equipment request). Uniforms (formal/parade or station/duty) and uniform items (hats, badges, etc.) are not eligible expenses under this activity. Nonaffiliated EMS organizations also may not apply for non-EMS PPE such as body armor, wildland firefighting gear, and firefighting turnout gear. Personal communications equipment such as radios and pagers are not eligible under this activity but are eligible under the Equipment Acquisition activity.

d) Wellness and Fitness Activities:

The governing statute for AFG authorizes the program to make grants to establish or expand wellness and fitness initiatives for first-responders. Pursuant to appropriations to the program for FY2006, these activities are eligible for this year. The funding priorities described in this section have been recommended by a panel of representatives from the Nation's fire service leadership and have been accepted by DHS for the AFG.

Accordingly, for the FY2006 AFG, an effective wellness/fitness activity of a nonaffiliated EMS organization must offer 1) periodic health screenings, 2) entry physical examinations, and 3) an immunization program. Applicants for grants in this activity must currently offer, or plan to use grant funds to provide, ***all three benefits*** to receive consideration and funding for any other initiatives under this activity. After entry-level physicals, annual physicals, and immunizations, high priority is given to formal fitness and injury prevention programs. Lower priority is given to stress management, injury/illness rehabilitation, and employee assistance.

The greatest benefit will be realized by supporting new wellness and fitness programs, and therefore, we will afford higher competitive ratings to those applicants lacking wellness/fitness programs over those applicants that already employ a wellness/fitness program. Applicants already providing the three requisite benefits that wish to expand their wellness and fitness program will receive a slightly lower consideration than departments seeking to initiate a wellness and fitness program. Finally, since participation is critical to achieving any benefits from a wellness or fitness program, we will give higher competitive ratings to departments whose wellness and fitness programs mandate participation and are open to all personnel.

Eligible expenditures in a wellness and fitness activity for EMS personnel may include the procurement of medical services to ensure the EMS personnel are physically able to carry out their duties. The purchase of medical equipment is not an eligible expenditure under this category. Eligible expenditures to carry out wellness and fitness activities may include costs for personnel physicals, physical fitness equipment (including shipping charges and sales tax as applicable), supplies, or other related contract services (e.g., health-care consultants, trainers, and nutritionists) directly associated with the implementation of the proposed activity. Examples of eligible incentives for participation in a wellness and fitness program would be T-shirts or hats of nominal value, vouchers to local businesses (movie theaters, restaurants, etc.), or time-off awards.

Transportation expenses and fitness club memberships for EMS personnel and their families are not eligible under the wellness and fitness activity. Cash incentives are not eligible. Other ineligible expenses in this area include construction of facilities to house a fitness program, such as exercise or fitness rooms, showers, etc. The purchase of real estate is also not eligible. Minor remodeling or renovations to an existing facility are allowable if justified in the narrative, if the remodeling is only minor in nature (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000), and if the remodeling is integral to the completion of the wellness and fitness activities funded by the grant. Remodeling that is not directly related to other grant activities is not eligible. Remodeling expenses should be included in the budget as an “Other” line-item expense and explained in the narrative.

e) Modifications to EMS Stations and Facilities:

Under the governing statute, DHS may make grants to modify EMS stations, EMS training facilities, and other facilities to protect the health and safety of first-responder personnel. Pursuant to appropriations to the program for FY2006, these activities are eligible for this year. The funding priorities described in this section have been recommended by a panel of representatives from the Nation's fire service leadership and have been accepted by DHS for the AFG.

Please note that activities involving modifications to facilities are subject to all applicable environmental and historic preservation requirements. Applicants seeking assistance to modify their facilities may undergo additional screening in order for their application to be considered for award. Specifically, DHS is required to ascertain to what degree the proposed modifications to fire stations or facilities might affect an applicant's structures relative to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and National Flood Insurance Program regulations. DHS must assess the effect, if any, and approve the project prior to any project implementation. No project can proceed – except for planning – prior to formal DHS approval. Noncompliance with this provision (i.e., proceeding with a project, other than planning, prior to formal approval) may jeopardize an applicant's award and subsequent funding.

The stated purpose of the AFG is to protect the health and safety of the public and our nation's first responders. As such, eligible projects under this activity are those in which the activities specifically have a direct effect on the health and safety of first responders. Therefore, eligible safety measures eligible for funding under this activity are limited and focused on promoting fire and life safety in EMS stations and facilities. We believe each of the eligible measures, if incorporated, would make any facility safer for first responders.

Measures eligible for funding are the installation of sprinkler systems, vehicle exhaust extraction systems, smoke or fire alarm notification systems, and emergency facility generators. We will NOT fund any other requests for modifications than the initiatives listed herein. Any vehicle exhaust extraction system funded under this activity should be either extensive enough to extract all toxic vapors and particulates emitted from internal combustion engines and meet all applicable Federal, state, and local standards or be a part of a larger comprehensive system that does. Some exhaust extraction systems may meet standards for removal of certain carcinogens, but not others; therefore, it may be necessary to utilize more than one system or employ redundancies to fully protect your first-responders.

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 to be used to supplement new construction. Many of these modifications may require environmental or historic review, which may delay an award.

More benefit would be derived from modifying an EMS station than by modifying an EMS-training facility or other EMS facility. Requests involving facilities that would be open for broad usage and have a high occupancy capacity will receive a higher competitive rating than those involving facilities having limited use or low occupancy capacity. The frequency of use will also impact the benefits to be derived from the 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, 7-days-per-week will receive a higher competitive rating than facilities used on an irregular or part-time basis.

As stated above, we will not fund any other requests for modifications other than the initiatives listed herein (specifically, vehicle exhaust extraction systems, smoke/fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems, or emergency generators). 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 system. However, no applicant may request more than \$100,000 in the modifications per station under their authority. You may request funding for modifications for each station if you have multiple stations up to this \$100,000 per station limit as long as the entire request does not exceed the Federal share limit.

(2) EMS Vehicle Acquisition Program Area

DHS may make grants for acquiring new, used or refurbished EMS vehicles. The funds may also be used to refurbish a vehicle the organization currently owns. New vehicles purchased with AFG program funds must be compliant with current General Services Administration standards, specifically KKK-A-1822E (<http://apps.fss.gsa.gov/vehiclestandards/assocDocs.cfm>). Used apparatus must be compliant with Federal or industry standards for the year the vehicle was manufactured. Refurbished apparatus must also meet applicable standards. Applicants may apply for only one vehicle per year under this program.

Due to the inherent benefits of an ambulance or any transport vehicle to an EMS service provider, these types of vehicles are the highest priority. Due to the costs associated with obtaining and outfitting non-transport rescue vehicles, we believe non-transport rescue vehicles should have a lower competitive rating than transport vehicles. Vehicles having a limited function, such as aircraft, boats, and all-terrain vehicles, will receive the lowest competitive rating. Because of the very limited funding for EMS vehicle awards, we anticipate this program will be very competitive. As such, it is unlikely we would fund any vehicles not listed as a "Priority One" this year. The following chart delineates our priorities in this program area for each type of community.

EMS Vehicle Priorities

Priority One	Priority Two	Priority Three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambulance or transport unit to support EMT-B needs and functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First responder non-transport vehicles • Special operations vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Command vehicles • Rescue boats (over 13 feet in length) • Hovercraft • Other special access vehicles

While there are many inherent differences among urban, suburban, and rural communities, we have not differentiated priorities in this year’s EMS vehicle program for different types of communities.

As with other activities eligible under the AFG, one of our priorities in the vehicle acquisition program is the safety of first-responders. As such, it is our objective to give a competitive advantage to applicants seeking to replace unsafe vehicles. We will give the highest consideration to applicants wanting to replace vehicles that have been converted to use as EMS vehicles but were not originally designed for EMS services, as well as vehicles that did not include seatbelts in their original design. Applicants with these unsafe vehicle characteristics will receive this higher consideration over applicants seeking to replace vehicles having these safety features. However, applicants wanting to benefit from this consideration must certify that the unsafe vehicle will be permanently removed from service if awarded a grant.

Along with the priorities illustrated above, there is more benefit to be realized by funding applicants owning few or no vehicles of the type they are seeking than there would be by providing vehicle funding to an organization with numerous vehicles of the type they are seeking. When we assess the number of vehicles an organization has within a particular class, we will include all vehicles with similar functions. For example, we would include transport vehicles within the same class as ambulances. We will also give higher competitive ratings to applicants that have an aged fleet of emergency vehicles. In addition, we will also provide a higher competitive rating to applicants that respond to a significant number of incidents relative to other organizations servicing similar communities.

This grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if it provides vehicles to EMS organizations purchasing basic response vehicles as a first-time purchase (categorized above in priority order) or to replace used or obsolete apparatus. Secondary

to that, we will fund organizations seeking to add more vehicles to their existing fleet within their existing mission areas. The lowest priority is funding of new response vehicles to expand an applicant's services into new mission areas.

Finally, due to the inherent safety benefits to be realized in organizations that utilize a comprehensive driver-training program, we provide a high competitive advantage for applicants who have an established comprehensive driver-training program. Applicants seeking driver training with their vehicle request will receive a slightly lower competitive advantage. Applicants without a comprehensive driver-training program and who are not seeking funding for driver training in this application will **NOT** be considered for a vehicle award.

No competitive advantage has been assigned to the purchase of standard model commercial vehicles versus custom vehicles, or the purchase of used vehicles versus new vehicles in the preliminary evaluation of applications. It has been our experience that the technical evaluation panelists often prefer low-cost vehicles when evaluating the cost-benefit section of the project narratives. We also reserve the right to impose 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 **ONLY** the cost of the vehicle and requested driver training. We will **NOT** provide funding for associated equipment. New, used, or refurbished vehicles are eligible; however, any used or refurbished vehicles must conform to the national standards that were in effect the year the vehicle was manufactured. ATVs, gators, and similar equipment are considered to be "EMS equipment" **NOT** vehicles and, therefore, are not eligible under this category. An allowance for transportation to inspect a vehicle under consideration or during a vehicle's production would be eligible if reasonable and justified in the grant proposal. Additionally, operator training may be eligible for any vehicle award if justified in the narrative.

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, Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments, or OMB Circular A-122, Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations, as applicable. (For more information about Circulars, go to

www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.) Applicants may apply for administrative costs if the costs are directly related to the implementation of the program for which they are applying. Administrative costs are identifiable costs directly associated with the implementation and management of the grant, and cannot exceed five percent (5%) of the award.

If you are requesting administrative expenses, you must list the costs under the “Other” category in the budget and explain the purpose for the administrative costs 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 include shipping, office supplies, and computers associated with the NFIRS reporting requirements. Grant funds may not be used for maintenance agreements, product warranties, insurance, Internet service provider fees, or any similar monthly service fees. 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 [see (7) below]. We will assess the reasonableness of the administrative costs requested in each application and determine if they are reasonable and in the best interest of the program.

(2) Indirect Costs: Indirect costs are those incurred for common or joint objectives and cannot be readily identified with a particular final cost objective. A cost may not be allocated to an award as an indirect cost if any other cost incurred for the same purpose, in like circumstances, has been assigned to an award as a direct cost. Typical examples of indirect costs may include depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, the costs of operating and maintaining facilities, general administration, and other general expenses such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting.

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 supporting the indirect cost rate to us for review prior to submitting any claims for reimbursement of indirect costs. The appropriate documentation for an approved indirect rate is a federally approved indirect cost rate agreement. 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 be applicable for an equipment or vehicle grant.

(3) Audit Costs: Grantees must comply with the organizational audit requirements of OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations, which states recipients of Federal funding that expend more than \$500,000 in Federal funds (from all Federal sources) in their fiscal year are required to have a single audit. (For more information about the Circulars, go to

www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars.) If a single audit is required, a portion of the audit costs would be allowable if included in the application budget. We will allow you to charge a prorated share of the costs of the single audit to the grant. For example, if you expend \$100,000 from the AFG program and \$400,000 from the Forestry Service during your fiscal year, we will allow you to charge one-fifth of the audit costs to the AFG program grant should you receive this award. We do not require any other audits; therefore, you cannot charge any other audit expenses to the grant.

(4) Remodeling or Renovation Costs: Remodeling or renovations to an existing facility are allowable only if minor in nature (i.e., limited to minor interior alterations costing less than \$10,000). To be eligible, the remodeling must be essential to the successful completion of the grant's scope of work. Construction costs are not eligible under the AFG program nor are costs for the purchase of real estate. Construction includes major alterations to a building and/or changes to the profile or footprint of the structure. Enhancements to existing structures such as the installation of apparatus bay ventilation systems and retrofitting fire stations with sprinkler systems 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. Fees payable on a contingency basis are not an eligible expense that can be charged to the grant. For grant writer fees to be eligible as a pre-award expenditure, the fees must be specifically identified and listed in the application and the fees must have been paid prior to any contact with grants management staff or award, i.e., paid within 30 days of the end of the application period. Applicants may be required to provide documentation to support these pre-award expenditures.

The hiring of a grant writer or use of any other third-parties in the preparation of the application does not eliminate the applicant's responsibilities for assuring the information contained in the application is true and correct. Applicants that falsify their applications or misrepresent their organizations in any material manner will have their applications deemed ineligible by the AFG program office and referred to the Office of Inspector General for further action as appropriate.

(8) Pre-payments: A grantee may not use grant funds to prepay for any products or services in advance of delivery of the products or the rendering of services. A down payment for the purchase of vehicle is allowable if required in the purchase contract, but we will only allow up to 25 percent of the Federal share to be drawn for this purpose. The grantee may use grant funds to pay for the purchase of any vehicle's chassis if the chassis is being supplied by a third-party vendor (i.e., a company other than the vehicle manufacturer). Documentation to support the independence of the third-party vendor may be required prior to our approval of any payments for any chassis. Federal funds may not be used for any other periodic or progress payments except the final payment, which should not be requested until after the vehicle is received, inspected, and accepted by the grantee.

Reasonableness of a Request

The panelists will review all of 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 the 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.

Applications that include requests for CBRNE equipment or training will be evaluated by the panelists relative to the critical infrastructure the applicant protects. Critical infrastructure includes any system or asset that if attacked would result in catastrophic loss of life or catastrophic economic loss. Critical infrastructure also includes the following: Public water and power systems, major business centers, chemical facilities, nuclear power plants, major rail and highway bridges, petroleum and/or natural gas transmission pipelines and storage facilities, telecommunications facilities, and facilities that support large public gatherings such as sporting events or concerts.

Applicants who falsify their applications or misrepresent their organizations in any material manner will have their applications deemed ineligible by the AFG program office and referred to the Office of Inspector General for further action as appropriate.

Award Procedure

Awards will be made on a competitive basis using rank order as the primary basis for our decisions, regardless of program. However, there are some exceptions to this process. The legislation authorizing the AFG program restricts how the funds may be used. Grant awards for vehicles may not exceed 25 percent (25%) of the total

appropriated funding, and nonaffiliated EMS organizations may not receive more than two percent (2%) of the appropriated funding. Once we reach these limits, it will then be necessary for us to deviate from rank order with respect to the remaining vehicle requests or nonaffiliated EMS requests.

Throughout the process, career organizations will be competing against other career organizations for up to 45 percent (45%) of the available funding. Volunteer and combination organizations will compete among each other for at least 55 percent (55%) of the available funding. Historically, less than 10 percent (10%) of the applications we receive for AFG program funding are from career organizations. Therefore, the funding levels may not reach the 45 percent (45%) ceiling for career organizations.

To fulfill our obligations under the law, we may also make funding decisions using the size and nature of the community served (urban, suburban, or rural), the type of organization (career, combination, or volunteer), and the geographic location of the organization. In these instances where we are making decisions based on geographic location, we will use states as the basic geographic unit. The geographic location of an applicant will be used primarily as a final discriminator, e.g., 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 AFG 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 organizations (career, combination and volunteer) and certain types of communities (urban, suburban or rural) as well as an equitable geographic distribution, we reserve the right to fund or not to fund previous grant recipients under this program in order to fulfill our 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 application's merits with respect to the detail provided in the narrative on the activity, the applicant's financial need, and the purported benefit to be derived for the cost. The panel evaluators will independently score each application, discuss the merits and shortcomings of the application, and reconcile any major discrepancies if necessary. A consensus is allowed but not required.

Once every application in the competitive range has been through the panel review, the applications will be ranked according to the average score awarded by the panel. The ranking will be summarized in a Technical Report prepared by the AFG

program office. The AFG program office will then make award recommendations to the Grants Management Branch of the Financial and Acquisition Management Division at FEMA. The Grants Management Branch will then contact the applicant to discuss and/or negotiate the content of the application before making final award decisions.

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, by program, or any other characteristic.

Award amounts are limited based on the population of the jurisdiction. Specifically, an applicant that serves a jurisdiction with a population of 500,000 people or less may not receive grants in excess of \$1.0 million in any fiscal year. An applicant that serves a jurisdiction with more than 500,000 but not more than one million people may not receive grants in excess of \$1.75 million. Finally, an applicant that serves a jurisdiction of more than one million people may not receive grants in excess of \$2.75 million in any fiscal year.

Grantees' Responsibilities

Recipients (grantees) must agree to:

(1) Perform the tasks (scope of work) as outlined in the grantee's application and approved by the AFG program office in accordance with the Articles of Agreement.

(2) Share in the costs of the projects funded under this grant program. Fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations serving populations of over 50,000 must match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 20 percent (20%) of the total project costs. Fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations serving populations of 50,000 or fewer must agree to match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 10 percent (10%) of the total project cost. Fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations serving areas with a population 20,000 or fewer, must match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 5 percent (5%) of the total project cost. All non-Federal match funds must be in cash; in-kind contributions are not acceptable. No waivers of this requirement will be granted except for applicants located in Insular Areas as provided for in 48 U.S.C. § 1469a.

The grantee is not required to have the cash match in hand at the time of application nor at the time of award. But, before a grant is awarded, we will ascertain that the grantee either has the funding in hand or has a viable plan to obtain the funding necessary to fulfill the matching requirement.

(3) 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 an organization's funding.

(4) Retain grant files and supporting documentation for three years after the conclusion and closeout of the grant or any audit subsequent to closeout.

(5) Ensure all procurement actions are conducted in a manner that provides, to the maximum extent possible, open and free competition. In doing so, the grantee must follow its established procurement processes when purchasing vehicles, equipment, and services with the grant funds. If the grantee has no established procedures, it should obtain at least two quotes/bids for the items being procured and document in the grant files the process used. Sole-source purchasing is not an acceptable procurement method except in unusual circumstances.

(6) Submit a Performance Report to us after six months. At grant closeout, the grantee needs to report how the grant funding was used and the benefits realized from the award in a detailed final report. An accounting of the funds must also be included.

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

(8) 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 the grantee is a fire department. Nonaffiliated EMS organizations do not have to comply with the NFIRS reporting requirement. If fire department grantees do not currently participate in the incident reporting system and do not have the capacity to report at the time of the award, that grantee must agree to provide information to the NFIRS system for a 12-month period commencing as soon as they develop the capacity to report. We expect non-reporting grantees to pursue the capacity to report immediately after notification of award and for these non-reporting grantees to be actively reporting to NFIRS within the approved period of performance. AFG program grantees from previous years will not be allowed to close out their grants until they demonstrate they are complying with this requirement. Failure to close out previous years' grants may affect the consideration of future awards.

(9) Following the audit requirements of OMB Circular A-133, Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-profit Organizations, grantees who expend \$500,000 or more in Federal funds in their 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.)

(10) Comply with Homeland Security Presidential Directive-5 (HSPD-5). Starting October 1, 2004, HSPD-5 requires all recipients of Federal preparedness funding – including recipients of Federal grants and contracts – to adopt the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as a condition for receipt of the Federal funds. Recipients of FY2006 AFG funds must comply with this directive (see Appendix). AFG recipients will be considered in compliance with this 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. Organizations already trained in ICS do not need re-training if the previous training was consistent with DHS standards. In order for us to document compliance, grantees will be required to certify their recognition of NIMS/ICS as part of their grant closeout process.

DHS offers ICS and NIMS training for those organizations that have not implemented the Incident Command System or those that are unfamiliar with the principles and policies of NIMS. For example, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers ICS training from introductory courses to advanced ICS training. For more information regarding ICS and NIMS training, visit the NIMS Web site at www.fema.gov/nims. For more information about ICS training, contact the DHS Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID) at 1-800-368-6498, or visit the Web site of the DHS Emergency Management Institute (EMI) and the National Fire Academy (NFA) at www.usfa.fema.gov. Your state emergency management training office may also be a source of information in this regard.

Excess Funds

Occasionally, due to successful competitive bid processes, some grantees have funds remaining after the completion of their obligations outlined above. Fire department grantees that complete the approved scope of work prior to the end of the performance period and still have grant funds available have three options for the use of the excess funds:

(1) Grantees may use as much as \$5,000 to continue or expand the activities for which they received the award. For example, if a grantee has funds remaining after completion of the activities listed in their grant agreement, the grantee may use up to \$5,000 of the excess funds to purchase other eligible items without seeking our approval.

(2) Grantees may use excess funds to create or expand a fire prevention program. In order to use excess funds for fire prevention, it will be necessary for grantees to submit an amendment to their grant. In the amendment request, it will be necessary to explain the following:

- i) What fire prevention efforts are you currently engaged in?
- ii) Where the use of excess funds would fit within your existing efforts, if applicable.
- iii) Who is the target audience for your fire prevention project and how did you identify this audience?
- iv) How will you evaluate the effectiveness of the requested fire prevention project?

Excess funds over \$5,000 must be used for fire prevention or option number three (3) below.

(3) Grantees may return excess funds to the AFG program office. To exercise this option, a grantee must close out their award and state in the final performance report the remaining funds are not necessary for the fulfillment of the grant obligations. The grantee must also indicate they understand the funds will be deobligated and unavailable for future expenses. The deobligation of the excess funds will affect (decrease) the Federal portion of the grant and the amount of the grantee's match.

Fire department grantees that complete the approved scope of work prior to the end of the performance period and still have grant funds available may also use excess funds in a combination of activities from Options 1 and 2. Nonaffiliated EMS organizations that have excess funds may use the funds only for options one and three above (i.e., nonaffiliated EMS organizations may spend up to \$5,000 to expand the scope of their award or return the excess funds to us) as they are not eligible to expend grant funds for fire prevention activities.

Any use of excess funds has to be disclosed as part of your reports, i.e., mid-term performance report and final closeout.

APPENDIX

Applicants to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program should be aware of a number of key national preparedness initiatives and priority focus areas. Applicants for the AFG program are encouraged to closely review the language in this Appendix in order to stay abreast of significant initiatives being highlighted by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and to be aware of the program requirements should they become a recipient of AFG financial assistance.

An important requirement for 2006 recipients is compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and responsibilities of recipients in support of established national goals for the Nation's first responders. Requirements for NIMS and requirements connected to interoperable communications are also included in this Appendix for those interested in broad communications projects.

In addition, Homeland Security Presidential Directive-8 (HSPD-8) directs the grant program office to assure that Federal resources are directed toward ensuring the Nation is prepared to prevent, respond, and recover from major events, especially the prevention and response to terrorists' attacks. It is our belief that funding any fire departments through the AFG is consistent with HSPD-8 and will ensure that first-responders are prepared to respond to major events. As in prior years' programs, equipment and training for preparing for and responding to events that involve chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or explosive devices (CBRNE) are eligible this year.

NATIONAL INITIATIVES

This section provides background information on key national preparedness initiatives and priority focus areas. Applicants for Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) are encouraged to review closely the language in these sections in order to stay abreast of significant initiatives being highlighted by DHS and to be aware of the program requirements that will be associated with their grant, if they become a recipient of AFG financial assistance.

A. National Incident Management System (NIMS)

Issued on March 1, 2004, NIMS is a nationwide approach for Federal, state, territorial, tribal, and local governments to work effectively and efficiently together to prepare for, prevent, respond to, and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of cause, size, or complexity.

On September 8, 2004, DHS issued a letter to governors outlining the requirements for implementing NIMS in FY05 and beyond. The NIMS Integration Center (NIC) is working with Federal departments and agencies to ensure that they develop a plan to adopt NIMS and that all FY06 Federal preparedness assistance program documents begin the process of addressing state, territorial, tribal, and local NIMS implementation.

Implementation of and compliance with NIMS is critical to ensuring full and robust preparedness across our nation. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5) established ambitious deadlines for NIMS adoption and implementation. FY05 was the start-up year for NIMS implementation. Because FY06 is a critical year for NIMS adoption, grantees must certify they will comply with all edicts involving NIMS.

States and Territories

- Incorporate NIMS into existing training programs and exercises;
- Ensure Federal preparedness funding supports state, local and tribal NIMS implementation;
- Incorporate NIMS into Emergency Operations Plans;
- Promote intrastate mutual aid agreements;
- Coordinate and provide NIMS technical assistance to local entities; and
- Institutionalize the use of the Incident Command System.

State, Territorial, Local and Tribal Jurisdictions

- Complete the NIMS Awareness Course: “National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction” IS 700. This independent study course developed by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) explains the purpose, principles, key components and benefits of NIMS. The course is available on the EMI Web page at: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700.asp>.
- Formally recognize NIMS and adopt NIMS principles and policies. States, territories, tribes and local entities should establish legislation, executive orders, resolutions, or ordinances to formally adopt NIMS. Go to <http://www.fema.gov/nims> and see NIMS Resources for examples.
- Determine which NIMS requirements already have been met. Clearly, state, territorial, tribal, and local entities have already implemented many of the concepts and protocols identified in NIMS. However, as gaps in compliance with NIMS are identified, states, territories, tribes and local entities should use existing initiatives,

such as the Homeland Security Grant Programs, to develop strategies for addressing those gaps.

- Develop a strategy and timeframe for full NIMS implementation. States, territories, tribes, and local entities were encouraged to achieve full NIMS implementation during FY 2005. To the extent that full implementation was not possible during FY 2005, Federal preparedness assistance must be leveraged to complete NIMS implementation during FY 2006. By FY 2007, Federal preparedness assistance will be conditioned by full compliance with NIMS. States should work with tribal and local governments to develop a strategy for statewide compliance with NIMS.
- Institutionalize the use of the Incident Command System (ICS). All Federal, state, territory, tribal and local jurisdictions are required to adopt ICS in order to be compliant with NIMS. See NIMS and the Incident Command System at <http://www.fema.gov/nims> under NIMS Resources.

FY 2006 and FY 2007 Requirements

In order to receive FY 2006 preparedness funding, applicants must certify as part of their FY 2006 grant applications that they have met or will meet the FY 2005 NIMS requirements. The NIMS Integration Center Web page, <http://www.fema.gov/nims>, is updated regularly with NIMS information and implementation guidance.

B. HSPD-8: National Preparedness

HSPD-8 establishes policies to strengthen the preparedness of the United States to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters and other emergencies by requiring a National Preparedness Goal, establishing mechanisms for improved delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to state and local governments, and outlining actions to strengthen preparedness capabilities of Federal, state, and local entities. Statewide all-hazards preparedness strategies should be consistent with the National Preparedness Goal, assess the most effective ways to enhance preparedness, address areas facing higher risk especially to terrorism, and address local government concerns and Citizen Corps efforts.

The National Preparedness Goal aims for Federal, state, local, and tribal entities to achieve and sustain nationally accepted risk-based target levels of capability for prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery for major events, especially terrorism. The target levels of capability are based upon National Planning Scenarios, a Universal Task list (UTL), and a Target Capabilities List. These tools are being developed with input from the homeland security community at all levels and will continue to be updated over time. States should have taken steps in FY05 to review and incorporate these tools in their preparedness efforts in preparation for full implementation of HSPD-8 in FY06.

The National Planning Scenarios illustrate the scope and magnitude of major, catastrophic events for which the nation needs to be prepared. They include 12 terrorist attacks (including chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosive, and cyber), two natural disasters, and pandemic influenza. The scenarios provide the detail in terms of casualties, property damage, and economic losses needed to project capability requirements for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Summaries of the National Planning Scenarios are available on the Secure Portal located at <https://odp.esportals.com>. The National Planning Scenarios will be made available as soon as they are finalized.

The UTL defines the essential tasks that need to be performed from the incident scene to the national level for major events illustrated by the National Planning Scenarios. Federal, state, local, and tribal entities select the appropriate tasks that apply to their assigned missions. The UTL also includes information on operating conditions and standards needed to develop quantifiable performance measures for planning, equipment, training, and exercises. The UTL is available on the Secure Portal located at <https://odp.esportals.com>.

The Target Capabilities List identifies the capabilities needed to perform the tasks identified in the UTL for the major events illustrated by the National Planning Scenarios. A capability consists of properly planned, organized, equipped, trained, and exercised personnel needed to perform a task. The Target Capabilities List will include tiers to account for reasonable differences in capability levels among entities based on population density, critical infrastructure, and other risk factors. Entities are preparedness organizations established by levels of government with participation from the private and nonprofit sector, as described in NIMS. The Target Capabilities List will also include performance metrics. The Target Capabilities List is available on the Secure Portal located at <https://odp.esportals.com>.

DHS has developed detailed National Planning Guidance (due by March 31, 2005) in coordination with Federal, state, local, and tribal entities that describes the National Preparedness Goal, the target levels of capability, and how to apply them in the development and update of preparedness assessments and strategies. The current variety of assessments, surveys, and data calls will be realigned over time to support the Goal. As necessary, Federal regulatory requirements will be modified to support the National Preparedness Goal, to the extent permitted by law. DHS will provide information about changes in preparedness assessments and strategies in upcoming information bulletins and various forums.

C. National Response Plan (NRP)

The NRP is an all-discipline, all-hazards plan released publicly in January 2005 that established a single, comprehensive framework for the management of domestic

incidents. It provides the structure and mechanisms for the coordination of Federal support to state, local, and tribal incident managers and for exercising direct Federal authorities and responsibilities. The NRP assists in the important homeland security mission of preventing terrorist attacks within the United States; reducing the vulnerability to all natural and manmade hazards; and minimizing the damage and assisting in the recovery from any type of incident that occurs.

As part of NRP implementation, state, territorial, local, and tribal governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are requested to:

- Utilize established incident reporting protocols to notify local and regional Joint Terrorism Task Forces and the Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC), as appropriate.
- Coordinate with the HSOC regarding procedures for establishing connectivity for domestic incident management purposes. Local government procedures should be coordinated with the respective state government and/or EMA.
- Modify existing incident management and EOPs within 120 days (or no later than the next major plan maintenance cycle) to ensure proper alignment with NRP coordinating structures, processes, and protocols.

D. Public Safety Communications and Interoperability Guidance

In May 2004, DHS adopted SAFECOM developed language for grant guidance in an effort to ensure interoperability through the various layers of Federal, state, and local government. (See DHS Information Bulletin #113). SAFECOM developed this general grant criteria in concert with representatives of the public safety community in an effort to coordinate the way in which funding is allocated and to maximize the prospects for interoperable communications.

The intent of the SAFECOM grant guidance is to ensure that the communications equipment being procured will lead to improved multi-disciplinary and/or multi-jurisdictional interoperable public safety communications. The grant guidance provides a list of questions to be answered in order to demonstrate how the applicant's proposed project would enhance interoperability. The guidance also encourages that, where appropriate, applicants purchase equipment that meets standards that have been developed and adopted by the public safety communications community—American National Standards Institute (ANSI)/TIA/EIAA-102 Phase 1 (Project 25) suite of standards. This recommendation is intended for government-owned or -leased land mobile public safety radio equipment. Its purpose is to make sure that such equipment or systems are capable of interoperability with other public safety land mobile equipment or systems. It is not intended to apply to commercial services that offer other types of interoperability solutions and does not exclude any application if it demonstrates that the

system or equipment being proposed will lead to enhanced interoperability. The grant guidance does not propose to preclude funding of non-Project 25 equipment when there are compelling reasons for using other solutions. Absent these compelling reasons, DHS intends that Project 25 equipment will be preferred for digital systems to which the standard applies.

The SAFECOM interoperable communications guidance addresses the following issues:

- Criteria
 - o Personnel Involved with Public Safety Communications Interoperability
 - o Lifecycle of Public Safety Communications Projects
 - o Common Public Safety Communications Goals
 - o Common Criteria for All Grant Applicants
 - o Standards
 - o Governance
- Criteria for Public Safety Communications Equipment Grants
 - o Building, Upgrading, Enhancing, Replacing and Maintaining Public Safety Communications Systems and Equipment
- Supplemental Criteria for Public Safety Equipment Grants
 - o Planning for Public Safety Communication Systems
 - o Training Public Safety Staff on Issues Related to Emergency Response Communications
 - o Managing Public Safety Communications Projects
 - o Generic Examples of Linking Disparate Public Safety Communications Systems

The SAFECOM grant guidance materials are available in their entirety on the SAFECOM Web site (<http://www.safecomprogram.gov>) in the electronic library. They can also be accessed through DHS Information Bulletin #113, posted at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/docs/bulletins.htm>, which draws links between AFG and other G&T Programs.

E. Office of Grants and Training

In an effort to streamline and effectively coordinate funding to the states and territories, DHS established the Office of Grants and Training (G&T) within the Preparedness Directorate, which is tasked with preparing the nation for acts of terrorism,

natural disasters and other catastrophic events. G&T manages a national program to enhance the capacity of state and local agencies to respond to incidents of terrorism, particularly those involving chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive incidents, as well as natural disasters, through coordinated training, exercises, equipment acquisition, and technical assistance.

G&T is charged with coordinating the implementation of HSPD-8, which establishes national policies to prevent and respond to threatened or actual domestic terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies by creating a national domestic all-hazards preparedness goal; providing mechanisms for improved delivery of Federal preparedness assistance to state and local governments; and outlining actions to strengthen the preparedness capabilities of Federal, state, and local entities.

DHS has responded to numerous requests from state and local homeland security officials by creating in G&T a one-stop shop for homeland security grant funding. G&T distributes grants to states and local homeland security stakeholders through a number of assistance programs:

- **Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program:** The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program helps local fire departments purchase firefighting equipment, fund firefighter health and safety programs, enhance emergency medical services programs, and conduct fire education and prevention programs.
- **Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP):** Provides funding for planning, equipment, training, exercises, and program management and administration for emergency prevention, preparedness, and response personnel in support of efforts to implement state and Urban Area Homeland Security Strategies. Six programs are combined into a single application kit and set of program guidelines under the HSGP:
 - o **State Homeland Security Program (SHSP):** Provides financial assistance directly to each of the states and territories to prevent, respond to, and recover from acts of terrorism. SHSP supports the implementation of the State Homeland Security Strategy to address the identified planning, equipment, training, and exercise needs.
 - o **Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI):** Addresses the unique equipment, training, planning and exercise needs of large high-threat urban areas.
 - o **Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program:** Provides law enforcement communities with funds to support prevention activities such as: information sharing to preempt terrorist attacks; target hardening to reduce vulnerability of selected high value targets; recognition and mapping of potential or developing

threats; counterterrorism and security planning; interoperable communications; and, interdiction of terrorists before they can execute a threat or intervention activities that prevent terrorists from executing a threat.

o Citizen Corps Program: DHS grassroots initiative that encourages citizens to play a role in hometown security through personal preparedness. Citizen Corps provides local opportunities to channel citizen action through preparedness, training, and volunteer service opportunities coordinated by over 1,200 local Citizen Corps Councils nationwide.

o Emergency Management Performance Grants: Supports comprehensive emergency management at the state and local levels and encourages the improvement of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities for all hazards.

o Metropolitan Medical Response System: Provides funding to 124 designated jurisdictions to write plans, develop training, purchase equipment and pharmaceuticals, and conduct exercises related to catastrophic incidents. The program enhances local capability to respond to all-hazard, mass casualty events.

- Transportation and Interoperability Grants: These grants provide funding to enhance security at port and transit facilities, as well as interoperability communications.
- Competitive Training Grants Program: Provides funding for training initiatives to further DHS's mission of preparing the nation in the event of a terrorist incident.