

Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFGP)



FY 2017 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What's new for FY 2017?

The following changes to the FY 2017 SAFER Grant Program reflect the Department of Homeland Security's implementation of Section 34 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (Pub. L. No. 93-498, as amended) (15 U.S.C. § 2229a). Under this authority, the FY 2017 SAFER Grant Program requires the following:

- **Additional Funding:** Applicants under the **Hiring of Firefighter Activity** will have the option to apply for additional funding to provide specialized training to paramedics, emergency medical service workers, and first responders to recognize individuals who have mental illness and how to properly intervene with individuals with mental illness, including strategies for verbal de-escalation of crisis.

The following changes reflect the Criteria Development Panel's (CDP) recommendations with respect to the priorities, direction, and criteria for awards:

- **Pre-Score Process:** The pre-score for **Recruitment and Retention Activity** applicants has been reduced from 50 to 30 percent of total score. **Hiring of Firefighter Activity** applicants pre-score will remain at 50 percent.
- **Peer Review Panel Process:** The narrative for **Recruitment and Retention Activity** applicants will be increased to 70 percent of total score. **Hiring of Firefighter Activity** applicants narrative score will remain at 50 percent.

What is the purpose of SAFER?

The purpose of SAFER is to provide funding directly to fire departments and national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal organizations representing the interests of volunteer firefighters to assist them in increasing the number of firefighters to help communities meet industry minimum standards and attain 24-hour staffing to provide adequate protection from fire and fire related hazards, and to fulfill traditional missions of fire departments.

To achieve this purpose, SAFER is a competitive, discretionary grant program comprised of two categories:

- 1) **Hiring of Firefighters Activity** grants provide financial assistance to help fire departments hire new firefighters. The goal is to assist departments to improve staffing levels to ensure they have adequate personnel to respond and safely perform at incident scenes, providing protection from fire and fire-related hazards in their communities. **This activity provides three-year grants to assist fire departments by paying the salaries and benefits of the SAFER-funded positions.**
- 2) **Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity** grants assist fire departments and national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal organizations with the recruitment and/or retention of volunteer firefighters. The goal is to create a net increase in the number of trained, certified, and competent firefighters capable of safely responding to emergencies likely to occur within the fire

department's geographic response area. **Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grants can have a period of performance of up to four years.**

How much funding is available for the FY 2017 SAFER Grant Program?

A total of \$345,000,000 has been appropriated for the FY 2017 SAFER Grants.

The appropriated funds are to be administered as indicated below as the result of a recommendation via the Criteria Development Panel (CDP) or as required by Section 34 of the Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of 1974 (Pub. L. No. 93-498, as amended) (15 U.S.C. § 2229a):

- 10 percent is set aside for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters activity (15 USC § 2229a(a)(2))
 - No more than 33 percent of the total amount allocated for the recruitment and retention of volunteers can be awarded to national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters (CDP)
- 10 percent is set aside for grants awarded to volunteer or majority volunteer departments for hiring of firefighters. A majority volunteer fire department is made up of more than 50 percent of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for their services, other than life, health, and worker's compensation insurance, or a nominal stipend payment, including certain paid-on-call personnel. It may be necessary to go out of rank order to select a sufficient number of applications in order to meet the 10 percent requirement. (15 USC § 2229a(a)(1)(H))

If less than 10 percent of the funds available for the hiring of firefighters are awarded to volunteer and majority volunteer fire departments, the remaining funds must be transferred to provide grants for the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters (15 USC § 2229a(a)(1)(H))

What is the maximum amount of funding an applicant can be awarded?

There is no maximum award amount for grant awards made under the FY 2017 appropriations.

Can a department apply for both SAFER Grant categories - Hiring of Firefighters Activity and Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

Yes. However, departments interested in applying for both a Hiring of Firefighters Activity grant and a Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grant must submit **two separate applications, one for each activity**. Each application will require its own unique narrative statement.

Are SAFER Grants “renewable” after the period of performance?

No. SAFER is a competitive/discretionary grant program. Program funds are not renewable and funding is only available to grant recipients during the period of performance associated with the award. Current or former grant recipients do not have a competitive advantage over applicants who have not previously received a SAFER Grant award.

Hiring of Firefighters Activity

Who is eligible to apply for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

Career, combination, and volunteer fire departments may apply for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

What are eligible expenses in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

The salary and associated benefits (actual payroll expenses) for the SAFER-funded positions are eligible. Costs are reimbursable if they are included as part of the standard new hire package, available to all operational firefighter positions, and contractually obligated.

Additionally, if requested and awarded, costs to provide specialized training to the SAFER-funded positions to recognize individuals who have mental illness and how to properly intervene with individuals with mental illness, including strategies for verbal de-escalation of crisis is also eligible.

Will the SAFER hiring grant pay for raises or increases to firefighter pay or benefits in years two and three?

No. The federal portion of grant funds for years one, two, and three is based on the usual annual cost of a first-year (i.e. entry-level) firefighter in your department at the time the grant application was submitted.

What are some ineligible expenses in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

- The salaries and benefits of full-time firefighters who are employees at the time of grant award are ineligible to be funded under this grant.
- Pre-application costs, such as grant writer fees, administrative costs, and indirect costs associated with hiring of firefighters
- Costs to train and equip firefighters (however, the salaries and benefits of firefighters hired under the SAFER grants funding while engaged in training or if the department was awarded funds for specialized training to recognize individuals who have mental illness and how to properly intervene with individuals with mental illness, including strategies for verbal de-escalation of crisis, those costs are eligible.)
- Costs for uniform allowances that are not contractually obligated or not included as part of the standard benefits package for all employees are ineligible.
- Overtime costs (except overtime costs routinely paid as a part of the base salary or the firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act [FLSA])
- Costs to fund promotions (e.g., pay a current member a higher salary by placing them in a new SAFER-funded position)

What type of firefighter positions will be funded?

Under the FY 2017 SAFER Grant Program. The Hiring of Firefighters Activity is no longer sub-divided into "Rehire," "Retention," "Attrition," and "New" positions.

Additionally, only full-time firefighter positions will be funded. Full-time positions are those that are scheduled for at least 2,080 hours per year (e.g., 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year). The grant program will consider funding job-share positions if sufficient justification is provided.

As the goal of SAFER Grants is to enhance incident scene safety, all applicants must certify that the primary assignment (more than 50 percent of time) of all SAFER-funded positions will be must be an operational fire suppression vehicle, regardless of collateral duties.

Volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments may hire individuals to fill officer-level positions (e.g., chief, fire inspector, training officer, safety officer, etc.) in addition to their primary operational assignment.

Is there a waiver that would allow us to retain firefighters facing layoff?

No. The SAFER grant may only be used to hire new, additional firefighters. There is no waiver for this option.

What is a job-share position?

A job-share position is a full-time position occupied by more than one person. For FY 2017, there is no cap on the number of employees who may share a single job-share position.

How much time does a department have to hire the SAFER-funded positions?

For all grant recipients awarded under the Hiring of Firefighters activity, a default 180-day recruitment period begins when the application is approved for award (i.e. award date).

The three year period of performance automatically starts after the 180-day recruitment period, regardless of whether the grant recipient has successfully hired the awarded positions. In order to maximize the available federal share of funds, departments should take steps to fill the SAFER-funded positions within the 180-day recruitment period. Salary and benefit costs for the SAFER-funded positions can only be billed to the grant during the period of performance.

There are no extensions to the grant period of performance, so any delays in filling the SAFER positions will lead to unexpended grant funds. If the SAFER positions are filled before the start of the period of performance, departments may submit an amendment requesting to start their grant period of performance early.

If a grant recipient is able to hire their SAFER-funded firefighters during the 180-day recruitment period, the period of performance may begin at that time. However, grant recipients must submit an amendment requesting that the period of performance start before the end of the 180-day recruitment period.

Can the start date of the period of performance be delayed if a department is unable to hire the SAFER-funded positions during the 180-day recruitment period?

No. The period of performance cannot be delayed or started later than 180 days after the award date.

What is the Period of Performance under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

The FY 2017 SAFER Period of Performance for the Hiring of Firefighters Activity is three years.

Are firefighters hired prior to an offer of award eligible under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

No. Full-time firefighters hired prior to an offer of award are not eligible under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

How does SAFER define the “date of an award offer?” Is this the first day of the period of performance?

The SAFER Program defines the “date of an award offer” as the date that the award notification letter is sent to the applicant in the eGrants system.

What are the requirements for the matching funds in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

Hiring of Firefighters Activity grants are required to contribute non-Federal funds as described below.

Position Cost Limit (No Waiver Available):

The amount of Federal funding provided to a recipient for hiring a firefighter in any fiscal year may not exceed—

- in the first and second years of the grant, 75 percent of the usual annual cost of a first-year firefighter in that department at the time the grant application was submitted; and
- in the third year of the grant, 35 percent of the usual annual cost of a first-year firefighter in that department at the time the grant application was submitted.

“Usual annual costs” includes the base salary (exclusive of overtime) and standard benefits package (including the **average** health, dental, and vision costs, FICA, life insurance, retirement/pension, etc.) offered by fire departments to first-year (i.e. entry-level) firefighters.

Cost Share (Wavier Available):

In addition to the Position Cost Limit, the Federal portion of the costs of hiring new firefighters under this grant may not exceed:

- 75 percent of the actual costs incurred in the first and second years of the grant; and
- 35 percent of the actual costs incurred in the third year of the grant.

What is a waiver?

In cases of demonstrated economic hardship, and upon the request of the recipient, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator may waive or reduce the Cost Share requirement, the Minimum

Budget Requirement, and/or the restriction on supplanting. SAFER Hiring of Firefighters Activity grant recipients may apply for one, two, or all three of the available waivers.

How do I apply for a waiver?

Applicants must indicate their interest in a waiver within the FY 2017 SAFER application. Upon receipt of the waiver request in the submitted SAFER application, the applicant will be contacted by the SAFER Program Office with detailed instructions as to how to submit all required supporting documentation. Only submitted applications that select a waiver option will be contacted by the SAFER program office.

Does a department have to retain the SAFER-funded positions after the grant concludes?

No. Awarded recipients have no obligation to retain the SAFER-funded positions after the conclusion of the period of performance for FY 2017 SAFER Awards.

Is an extension to the SAFER period of performance allowable under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity?

No. Extensions to the period of performance are not allowable under the FY 2017 Hiring of Firefighter Activity grants. Therefore, in order to maximize the available federal share of funds, departments should take the necessary steps to ensure all SAFER-funded positions are hired within the 180-day recruitment period or as close to the start of the period of performance as possible. Departments should also take active and timely steps to fill any SAFER positions that become vacated during the grant period of performance.

If you are also applying for a Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grant, please see the question regarding extensions under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity section.

Can grant recipients submit a payment request for pre-award expenditures?

Pre-award expenditures are not reimbursable in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity. Only costs incurred during the grant period of performance are allowable. **Full-time firefighters hired prior to the date of award are not eligible for SAFER Funding.** If you are also applying for a Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grant, please see the question regarding pre-award expenditures under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity section.

The 2017 SAFER Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) states that grant recipients cannot layoff any firefighters during the period of performance. If the department loses positions to retirement or other attrition, must it fill those vacancies?

Yes. During the grant period of performance, recipients of the FY 2017 SAFER Hiring of Firefighters Activity grant are required to maintain their staffing at the level that existed at the time of the award offer, in addition to the SAFER-funded positions.

Once awarded, grant recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity must submit a current (pre-SAFER) roster listing all paid operational/firefighting personnel in support of NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720, who are in full-time positions on the date of the award offer. The program office will work with a grant recipient to establish the correct staffing maintenance number which combines the number of pre-SAFER and SAFER-funded positions. Once this is established, grant recipients must agree to maintain this number throughout the grant period of performance by taking active and timely steps to fill any vacancies.

Grant recipients who are unable to fill firefighting positions (due to documentable economic hardship) that are vacated through attrition (e.g., resignation, retirement) may petition FEMA for a waiver of staffing maintenance requirements. An approved waiver allows a grant recipient to decrease and reestablish the staffing maintenance number agreed to at the time of award by the number of positions that a grant recipient is unable to fill. In order to qualify for this waiver, the economic hardship must affect the entire public safety sector in a grant recipient's jurisdiction, not solely the fire department. **Waivers will not be granted for SAFER-funded positions. Grant recipients who fail to maintain this level of staffing risk losing the federal funds awarded under this grant.**

How much time does a department have to fill an operational position that becomes vacant?

Departments must demonstrate that they are taking active and timely steps to fill any operational positions vacated during the grant period of performance.

Will there be an option for veteran's funding in the FY 2017 SAFER Grant Program?

No. There is no option for veteran's funding in the FY 2017 SAFER Program.

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity

Who is eligible to apply for funding in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Activity?

Combination fire departments, volunteer fire departments, and national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters may apply for funding in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. Career fire departments are not eligible to apply for funding in this activity.

What are examples of eligible costs under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Activity?

Applicants must correlate the activities for which funding is being requested with the identified recruitment or retention problems or issues being addressed. Additionally, FEMA will not fund a budget line item if an applicant does not provide sufficient information detailing how it will enhance recruitment and retention.

For specific examples of eligible costs, please refer to Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in the FY 2017 SAFER NOFO.

What are some ineligible expenses in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Activity?

Examples of ineligible expenses include but are not limited to the following:

- Costs incurred outside of the period of performance except for grant writer fees
- Computers in common areas or individual computers for training/education
- Salary and benefits for firefighters
- Fire suppression equipment
- Vehicles
- Fire simulators, fire evolution, or fire training props (e.g., burn trailers, forcible entry, rescue/smoke maze, flashover simulator, etc.)
- Retroactive payments or recognition for non-operational activities (including payments, gift cards, recruitment bonuses, or stipends for recruiting firefighters)
- Annual medical exams (not including NFPA 1582 physicals for new recruits) for members on the department's membership roster prior to award
- Costs for training currently covered under the department's operating budget, such as tuition or instructor fees for department-mandated, basic-level training
- "Giveaways," such as pencils, pens, t-shirts, cups, mugs, or balloons for recruitment events

For the full list of ineligible costs, please refer Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in the FY 2017 SAFER NOFO.

What is a waiver?

In cases of demonstrated economic hardship, and upon the request of the recipient, the FEMA Administrator may waive or reduce the Minimum Budget Requirement under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity.

How do I apply for a waiver?

Applicants must indicate their interest in a waiver within the FY 2017 SAFER application. Upon receipt of the waiver request in the submitted SAFER application, the applicant will be contacted by the SAFER Program Office with detailed instructions as to how to submit all required supporting documentation. Only submitted applications

that select a waiver option will be contacted by the SAFER program office.

How is “new recruit” defined according to the SAFER Program?

SAFER defines a “new recruit” to be a volunteer firefighter who **joins** the department after the date of the award offer.

Is communications equipment eligible under FY 2017 SAFER?

No. All communications equipment including cell phones, pagers, portable radios, or Computer-Aided Dispatch systems are ineligible under FY 2017 SAFER.

Can Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) be purchased under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity? What are the requirements?

Yes. OSHA-required and NFPA-compliant PPE is eligible only for **new recruits only**, and reimbursement will be limited to the number of new recruits who have successfully passed an NFPA 1582-compliant physical exam and are certified as “fit for duty.” Only actual costs are allowed and will be paid on a reimbursable basis; costs may be limited to reasonable amounts as determined by FEMA based on current market research. Grant recipients will be required to provide documentation of completed NFPA 1582 physicals as well as documentation, including invoices and receipts, to support the purchase of the PPE.

Please refer to Appendix B – Programmatic Information and Priorities in the FY 2017 SAFER NOFO for additional details on eligible PPE expenditures and requirements.

What activities are allowable under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity for new recruits only?

PPE, station duty uniforms, and physicals are only eligible for new recruits.

What types of tuition reimbursement are ineligible?

The FY 2017 SAFER Grant does not limit the type of tuition reimbursement one can apply for, and it does not have to be related to fire science or related fields.

Do Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity grant recipients need to submit training certificates?

While grant recipients are not required to submit these documents, training certificates, as well as any grant-related documents, must be retained by the grant recipient for a minimum of three years after the submission of the final expenditure report. Please note that FEMA can ask to review your grant file.

Can a grant recipient submit a payment request for pre-award expenditures?

Generally, except for grant writer fees, pre-award expenditures are not reimbursable in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. Only costs incurred during the grant period of performance are allowable.

See the Pre-award Cost section in the FY 2017 NOFO for the specific requirements pertaining pre-award costs.

Is there a matching funds requirement for the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

No. There is no matching funds requirement for this activity and no maximum federal share limit.

Is an extension to the SAFER period of performance allowable under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

Extensions to the period of performance may be granted when, due to circumstances beyond the control of the grant recipient, activities associated with the award cannot be completed within the stated performance period. Extensions are not guaranteed and are not automatically approved.

Extensions will only be considered through formal requests, via the eGrants system, and must contain specific and compelling justifications as to why an extension is required.

Are administrative or indirect costs eligible?

Administrative or indirect costs are allowable but are limited to a **combined total** of three percent of the total awarded amount, unless a grant recipient has a previously negotiated and approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.

This indirect cost rate is established by a federal department or agency for the grant recipient's organization that the grant recipient uses to compute the dollar amount they can charge to the grant for indirect costs incurred during the execution of the grant agreement. (Information about Indirect Cost Rate Agreements can be found at <http://rates.psc.gov/>.)

Prior to submitting any claims for reimbursement of indirect costs, applicants must first submit a copy of their negotiated and approved Indirect Cost Rate Agreement to FEMA for review and approval. The indirect cost rate is applicable as long as it is consistent with the established terms of the agreement.

What is a “nominal stipend?”

Nominal stipends are eligible for firefighters where the primary duty is an operational assignment (fire suppression), regardless of collateral duties. A stipend is nominal if it does not exceed 20 percent of what the fire department would otherwise pay to hire a full-time firefighter to perform the services for which the stipend is provided. The nominal stipend may include reimbursements to volunteer firefighters for approximate out-of-pocket expenses they incur. Whether a stipend falls above or below the 20 percent threshold may be determined in one of two ways. Departments that maintain paid full time firefighters on their payrolls may compare the stipend to the salary they pay a full time firefighter who performs similar services to determine whether the stipend is more or less than 20 percent of that salary. Departments that do not maintain full time firefighters on their payrolls may make the determination based on a comparison to the salary paid to a full time firefighter in a neighboring jurisdiction, elsewhere in the state, or ultimately the nation. They may also utilize data from the Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics.

If a stipend paid exceeds 20 percent of the prevailing wage, then the firefighter receiving compensation would not qualify as a volunteer and is considered an employee who may be covered by the FLSA minimum wage and overtime provisions. Therefore they would not be eligible to receive a stipend under the grant.

How do you define a paid-on-call firefighter?

Paid-on-call firefighters are paid a stipend for each event to which they respond. Paid-on-call firefighters may be considered paid firefighters or volunteer firefighters, depending on whether the stipend they receive is nominal.

A department whose membership is comprised of all volunteer firefighters, including any paid-on-call firefighters who receive only a nominal stipend, will be considered a volunteer fire department for purposes of this SAFER Program. A department whose membership is comprised of any paid-on-call firefighters who receive more than a nominal stipend will be considered a combination fire department for the purposes of this SAFER Program.

Eligibility

Who is eligible for SAFER Funding?

Eligible departments or organizations are limited to one application for Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity and/or one application for Hiring of Firefighters Activity per application period. Your organization type determines your eligibility for SAFER application categories.

Entity	Volunteer Fire Departments	Combination Fire Departments	Career Fire Departments	National, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations
Hiring of Firefighters Activity	✓	✓	✓	
Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity	✓	✓		✓

Can a career fire department apply under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity?

No. Career fire departments are not eligible for funds in the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity. They are only eligible for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

I represent a volunteer firefighter interest organization that received a Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) Grant. Are we eligible for a SAFER Grant also?

Yes. National, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations that represent the interests of volunteer firefighters are eligible to receive funding under the Recruitment and Retention of Volunteer Firefighters Activity regardless of whether they received a FP&S Grant. However, these organizations are not eligible for funding in the Hiring of Firefighters Activity.

If my fire department was recently awarded an AFG Grant, can we still apply for SAFER?

Yes. While the SAFER Grants and the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) are administered by the same office, there are no restrictions with respect to having concurrent awards. However, the SAFER award should supplement the AFG award and cannot be for the same activities for the same members.

Is an independent rescue squad or emergency medical services unit eligible for SAFER Funding?

No. Independent rescue squads or emergency medical services unit are not eligible for SAFER Funding. Only fire departments and national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organizations are eligible for SAFER Grants.

If my department was awarded a prior-year SAFER Grant that still has an active performance period, is it eligible to apply for a SAFER Grant this year?

Yes. Applicants are eligible to receive more than one SAFER Award. Applicants wishing to apply for additional grants are subject to the same guidelines and requirements as discussed in the FY 2017 SAFER NOFO and must indicate if the activities they are requesting are new initiatives or if they are building upon the previously awarded program. The grant activities requested in the new application should supplement the current award and cannot be for the same activities for the same members as the currently awarded SAFER Grant.

Definition of Applicant Types

How do I determine whether I represent a volunteer, combination, or career fire department?

- A **volunteer fire department** has an all-volunteer force of firefighting personnel. For a fire department to have an all-volunteer force, no member may receive financial compensation (in the form of salary or wages) for their services other than life and health insurance, workers' compensation insurance, and/or a nominal stipend per call. FEMA considers a department to be majority volunteer if more than 50 percent of its membership is made up of personnel who do not receive financial compensation for services.
- A **career department** has an all-paid force of firefighting personnel other than paid-on-call firefighters (fire departments that provide reimbursement on a paid-on-call basis are considered to be a combination fire department for the purposes of this program).
- A **combination department** has paid firefighting personnel and volunteer firefighting personnel. At a minimum, a combination fire department must have at least one active firefighter who receives financial compensation for services (including paid-on-call) and at least one active firefighter who does not receive financial compensation for services other than life, health, and workers' compensation insurance. Additionally, a department whose membership is comprised of paid-on-call firefighters is considered a combination fire department for the purposes of this program.

How do you define a national, state, local, or federally recognized tribal volunteer firefighter interest organization?

These are defined as organizations that support or represent the interests of firefighters in front of legislative bodies at the local, state, federally recognized tribal, and federal level. Such organizations include, but are not limited to, state or local firefighter and/or fire chiefs' associations, volunteer firefighter relief organizations, and associations. FEMA shall make the final determination as to whether an applicant is an appropriate volunteer firefighter interest group.

The SAFER Grants prohibit "for-profit" organizations from applying for grant funding. How do I determine if my department is for-profit?

If you are a municipally-based organization, (i.e., an organization providing services on behalf of a governmental entity), or if you are registered with the IRS as a 501(c)(3) corporation, you are NOT a for-profit organization and are therefore eligible to receive SAFER Funding.

Completing the Application

When can I apply?

Applications will be accepted only from 8:00 a.m. **Monday, March 26, 2018** until 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time (ET) on **Friday, April 27, 2018**.

When is the grant application due?

The application deadline is **Friday, April 27, 2018**. Applications must be received by 5:00 p.m. ET. Applications received after the close of the application period will not be accepted.

How do I access the FY 2017 SAFER eGrant application?

Applications under the FY 2017 SAFER will only be accessible at <https://portal.fema.gov>. The application will also be linked via the US Fire Administration's (USFA) Website <http://www.usfa.fema.gov> and the Grants.gov Website <http://www.grants.gov>.

Can I apply for the FY 2017 SAFER Grant Program using a paper application process?

No. All FY 2017 SAFER applications must be completed online through the eGrants system.

Regional Applications

Who may apply for a regional grant?

Eligible volunteer and combination fire departments may apply for regional grants in the Recruitment and Retention Activity if their request will have a direct regional impact or local benefit beyond the immediate boundaries of the applicant's first-due area. An eligible applicant will serve as the "host applicant" and apply on behalf of the other fire departments benefitting from the grant.

Direct benefit means that other fire departments/organizations will receive a portion of the grant awarded funds or the department will receive items purchased with the grant funds.

Note: The Hiring of Firefighters activity is not eligible as a regional project.

I'm planning to submit an application as the host department for a regional project. How do I answer the questions in the Applicant Characteristics sections of the online application?

When completing the Request Details and Narrative Statement sections of the application, the applicant must include a list of participating third-party organizations, including point of contact information that will directly benefit if awarded. In completing the Applicant Characteristics sections of the application, the regional applicant must include data that approximates the characteristics of all fire departments affected by the grant.

I'm applying as the host for a regional project, but I also have needs in my own department. Can I include my own department needs in the application?

Yes. An eligible applicant may act as a "host applicant" and apply for support of both a regional initiative and its own department's internal needs on one application.

A regional host must include a list of all the participating organizations, including point of contact information, benefitting from a proposed regional project, and provide clear and detailed information on which activities are regional specific versus those that are host specific.

If awarded, the host applicant must agree to be responsible for all aspects of the grant. This includes, but is not limited to, accountability for the assets and all reporting requirements. Regional host applicants and participating partner agencies must execute a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or equivalent document, signed by all parties participating in the award, prior to submitting an application under the Regional Program activities.

Technical Assistance to Applicants

Where can I obtain technical assistance in filling out the application?

The SAFER Program Help Desk at 866-274-0960 will be available to provide technical assistance with completing your SAFER Application.

Normal business hours for the Help Desk are Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time. During the application period, **Monday, March 26 – Friday, April 27, 2018** the Help Desk will be staffed between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday; and until 5:00 p.m. ET on **Friday, April 27, 2018**. However, these hours may change as the application period progresses. The toll-free number also accepts voicemail messages after hours or if the line is busy. In addition, questions may be faxed to 866-274-0942 or e-mailed to FireGrants@fema.dhs.gov.

What is the "Request Details" section of the application?

The Request Details section is where applicants answer activity specific questions and enter the budget details of their grant proposal.

Do I need to register in SAM.gov?

Yes. Per 2 CFR § 25.205, SAM registration is required to receive a SAFER Grant Award. SAM registration is only active for one year and must be renewed annually; therefore, please ensure that your entity has a valid and active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting your application.

Payments and amendments are also contingent on the information provided in SAM, so it is imperative that the information in the application is correct, current, and matches the information in SAM.gov. Please ensure that your organization's name, address, DUNS number, and EIN are up to date in SAM, and that the DUNS number used in SAM is the same one used to apply for all other FEMA awards.

More information on SAM can be found on the AFGP Website at <https://www.fema.gov/rules-tools>.

National Standards for SAFER

What standards does SAFER involve?

The industry minimum standards to be addressed by SAFER are the staffing and deployment sections of: **NFPA 1710, Section 5.2.4.1 (Single Family Dwelling Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability)**, which primarily applies to all-career fire departments and at the combination department's election; and **NFPA 1720 Section 4.3 (Staffing and Deployment)**, which primarily applies to all-volunteer fire departments and combination departments that do not elect to comply with NFPA 1710. The NFPA established a link providing information regarding these standards is available at <http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess>

NFPA 1001

Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications (FFI and II)

This standard identifies the minimum job performance requirements for career and volunteer firefighters whose duties are primarily structural in nature. The purpose of this standard is to specify the minimum job performance requirements for firefighters. It is not the intent of the standard to restrict any jurisdiction from exceeding these requirements.

NFPA 1582

Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments

To help fire departments ensure that personnel are medically capable of performing their required duties, the 2013 NFPA 1582 incorporates current research and knowledge to present the latest provisions for a comprehensive occupational medical program. The Standard provides separate chapters for the medical evaluation of candidates/prospective employees and for the occupational medical and fitness evaluations for fire department members. Requirements are equated against the essential job tasks based on several NFPA Professional Qualification Standards and apply to career, volunteer, private, industrial, governmental, and military fire departments. For specific physical requirements, Recruitment and Retention applicants should refer to **NFPA 1582 Chapter 6, Medical Evaluations of Candidates 6.1** and **Chapter 9, Essential Job Tasks — Specific Evaluation of Medical Conditions in Members** (<http://www.nfpa.org/freeaccess>).

Additional information on implementing NFPA 1582 physicals can also be found at <https://fstaresearch.org/roadmap>

National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)

Do applicants who apply for a SAFER Grant have to report to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)?

No. FEMA does not require FY 2017 SAFER Applicants to report to NFIRS.

National Incident Management Systems (NIMS)

Do fire departments that receive SAFER Grants have to comply with the requirements of the National Incident Management System (NIMS)?

Yes. Any applicant who receives an FY 2017 SAFER Award must achieve the level of NIMS compliance required by the authority having command and control jurisdiction over the applicant's emergency service operations, prior to the end of the grant's period of performance. SAFER applicants are not required to be in compliance with the National Incident Management System (NIMS), either to apply for SAFER Funding or to receive a SAFER Award.

For Regional applications, are all of the benefiting fire departments required to be NIMS compliant or just the host applicant?

All departments receiving equipment or services from a regional SAFER Grant must be compliant with all local edicts regarding NIMS.