

Important Changes for SAFER FY 2016

The SAFER application period opening on the 9th of January is for FY 2016 money. The calendar year has no bearing on the funding, nor does the calendar year when awarded money is received.

Important Changes for 2016 Funding

1. Cost Sharing

This year a cost share is required and the performance period is 36 months, up from 24 months for FY 2015. Additionally, funding is tied to the first year salary of a fire fighters. FEMA will no longer pay for

<i>Performance Year</i>	<i>Applicant</i>	<i>FEMA</i>
First Year	25%	75%
Second Year	25%	75%
Third year	65%	35%

wage increases. The break down is as follows:

Cost shares are non-federal cash only, no in kind or other forms of soft sharing. If a cost sharing weaver is awarded the end result will be that FEMA will still award no more than 75% of the cost of the position.

2. Minimum Budget Requirements

At the time of application, applicants are required to certify that their annual budget for fire-related programs and emergency response has not been reduced below 80% of the average funding level in the three years prior to November 24, 2003. Grant recipients can apply to waive this requirement.

3. New Fire Fighters

The Hiring of Firefighters Activity is no longer sub-divided into "Rehire," "Retention," "Attrition," and "New" positions. Funding may not be used to supplant other funds. Grant recipients can apply for a waiver for this requirement.

Waivers of Cost Share or Minimum Budget Requirement

In cases of demonstrated economic hardship, and upon the request of the recipient, the Administrator may waive or reduce the Cost Share requirement, the Minimum Budget Requirement, and/or the restriction on supplanting. SAFER Hiring of Firefighter Activity grant recipients may apply for one, two, or all three of the available waivers.

Funding Priorities

The funding priority continues to be bringing non-compliant department into NFPA 1710/1720 compliance in the most cost effective manner.

To receive the highest priority for funding, a department must be:

1. Meet NFPA 1710/1720 less than 19% of the time. If a department is meeting these standards above 20%.
2. Meeting the standards between 20% and 59% is classified as a medium priority. Above 60% is a low priority.
3. To be considered high priority after funding, compliance has to be above 80% of the time.
4. Less than 20% is a low priority.

Additionally, call volume and population are factors in the evaluation. Larger department and busier departments are the higher priority. Candidates documented as receiving NFPA 1582 medical evaluations and receiving minimum EMS certification will also be given a higher funding priority.

SAFER grant funds will only pay for operational positions whose primary assignment (more than 50 percent of duties) is fire suppression, which includes staffing a fire suppression vehicle, regardless of collateral duties.

Miscellaneous

Recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity must agree to maintain operational staffing at the level that existed at the time of award and must also retain all SAFER- funded positions throughout the grant's full three year period of performance unless the grant recipient has been afforded a waiver of this requirement.

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

Recipients under the Hiring of Firefighters Activity who lay off any operational personnel during the three- year period of performance will be considered in default of their grant and the award will be terminated. Recipients may be required to return the federal funds disbursed under the grant award.

Since the goal of the SAFER grant program is to enhance incident scene safety, the primary assignment (more than 50 percent of duties) of all SAFER-funded firefighters must be an operational assignment (fire suppression) regardless of collateral duties, which includes staffing a fire suppression vehicle.