

One Week Remains in 2006 SAFER Grant Application Period

The Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program office is reminding fire departments and state or local organizations that represent the interest of volunteer firefighters that only two weeks now remain in the SAFER application period. The application period for SAFER began on May 30, 2005, at 8:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time and ends 5:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on June 30, 2006. If you have started an application, please be sure to complete it and submit it before the deadline. All applications must be submitted (hit the submit button in the online application) to be considered for a grant award. Once an application is submitted electronically, an automatic notification via e-mail is sent that we have received it.

Through the morning of June 16 a total of 1,621 applications have been started. Fewer than 10% of these have been completed and submitted. This year's application starts compares to 3,462 that had been started to this point in last year's (2005) application period. The AFG program office makes available competitive SAFER grants for the hiring of firefighters, or the recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. SAFER applications are automated and accessible via the AFG web site: www.firegrantsupport.com. The web site contains important information on SAFER, including the FY2006 funding priorities and program guidance, a web based tutorial on preparing a competitive application, a listing of frequently asked questions, and other materials. Fire departments that have questions regarding this grant opportunity should contact the Help Desk at 1-866-274-0960 or at firegrants@dhs.gov.

SAFER is administered by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Grants and Training (G&T) in cooperation with the U.S. Fire Administration. SAFER grants that support the hiring of firefighters must be cost shared. The formula for cost sharing is explained in the guidance materials available at the program's web site. Recruitment and retention grants do not include a cost share requirement.

The AFG program office offers three grant opportunities in each year. AFG "fire grant" funds are used by the nation's firefighters and first responders to increase the effectiveness of firefighting and emergency response operations. The application period for these grants was in March, and decisions on received applications should begin soon. In addition to the SAFER grant opportunity, a third grant opportunity will be in September 2006 when the AFG program office opens an application period for Fire Prevention and Safety grants. These grants support not only fire departments, but also other organizations experienced in fire prevention and in firefighter safety research. Through the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act of 2006, Congress provided \$648 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grants, with \$108 million of the funding specified for SAFER grants and a minimum of \$27 million for the Fire Prevention and Safety grants.



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