

requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. The submission describes the nature of the information collection, the categories of respondents, the estimated burden (*i.e.*, the time, effort and resources used by respondents to respond) and cost, and includes the actual data collection instruments FEMA will use.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before May 20, 2009.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments on the proposed information collection to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget. Comments should be addressed to the Desk Officer for the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, and sent via electronic mail to oir.submission@omb.eop.gov or faxed to (202) 395-6974.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the information collection should be made to Director, Records Management Division, 1800 South Bell Street, Arlington, VA 20598-3005, facsimile number (202) 646-3347, or e-mail address FEMA-Information-Collections@dhs.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Community Disaster Loan (CDL) Program is authorized by Section 417 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, as amended, and provides loans to any local government which has suffered a substantial loss of tax or other revenues as a result of a major disaster or emergency and which demonstrates a need for Federal financial assistance in order to perform its governmental functions. FEMA regulations at 44 CFR 206.360-206.367 contain the procedures and requirements that implement the statutory authority for this program.

The title (Formerly titled Application for Community Disaster Loan (CDL) and the Special Community Disaster Loan (SCDL) Program) previously reported in the 60-Day **Federal Register** Notice (73 FR 76370, Dec. 16, 2008) has been changed because the Special Community Disaster Loan (SCDL) Program was only authorized to provide loans to communities affected by Hurricanes Katrina and/or Rita. The application period for that program closed at the end of fiscal year 2006 (October 1, 2006). Because FEMA is no longer accepting applications for the SCDL Program, it has been removed from this collection.

Collection of Information

Title: Application for Community Disaster Loan (CDL) Program.

Type of information collection: Revision of a currently approved collection.

OMB Number: 1660-0083.

Form Titles and Numbers: FEMA Form 116-0-1, Promissory Note, FEMA Form 085-0-1, Local Government Resolution Collateral Security, FEMA Form 090-0-1, Certification of Eligibility for Community Disaster Loans, and FEMA Form 090-0-2, Application for Community Disaster Loan. These form numbers previously reported in the 60-Day **Federal Register** Notice (73 FR 76370, Dec. 16, 2008) have been changed in accordance with the Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA) numbering system. FEMA Form 090-0-2 (Former FEMA Form 90-7), Application for Community Disaster Loan was inadvertently not included in the 60-Day **Federal Register** Notice mentioned above and has since been added to this collection.

Abstract: The Loan Package for the Community Disaster Loan Program provides States, Local and Tribal governments that have suffered substantial loss of tax or other revenues as a result of a major disaster or emergency, the opportunity to obtain financial assistance in order to perform their governmental functions. Local governments can submit a loan package for the Community Disaster Loan Program. This loan must be justified on the basis of need and actual expenses.

Affected Public: "State, Local, or Tribal Government".

Estimated Number of Respondents: 50.

Frequency of Response: Once.

Estimated Average Hour Burden per Respondent: 19.5 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 975. The estimated total annual burden hours previously reported in the 60-day **Federal Register** Notice (73 FR 76370, Dec. 16, 2008) has been increased.

Estimated Cost: The estimated total annual respondent administrative cost based on wage rate categories is \$44,892.32. The estimated total annual respondent administrative cost based on wage rate categories previously reported in the 60-day **Federal Register** Notice (73 FR 76370, Dec. 16, 2008) has been increased. There are no capital

expenditure costs associated with this collection.

Larry Gray,

Director, Records Management Division, Office of Management, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Department of Homeland Security.

[FR Doc. E9-8996 Filed 4-17-09; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 9111-23-P

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Federal Emergency Management Agency

Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program

AGENCY: Federal Emergency Management Agency, DHS.

ACTION: Notice of guidance.

SUMMARY: This Notice provides guidelines that describe the application process for grants and the criteria for awarding grants in the 2009 Assistance to Firefighters Grant program year, as well as an explanation for any differences with the guidelines recommended by representatives of the Nation's fire service leadership during the annual Criteria Development meeting. The program makes grants directly to fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical services organizations for the purpose of enhancing first-responders' abilities to protect the health and safety of the public as well as that of first-responder personnel facing fire and fire-related hazards. In addition, the authorizing statute requires that a minimum of 5 percent of appropriated funds be expended for fire prevention and safety grants, which are also made directly to local fire departments and to local, regional, State or national entities recognized for their expertise in the field of fire prevention and firefighter safety research and development.

Authority: 15 U.S.C. 2229, 2229a.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Brian Cowan, Director, Assistance to Firefighters Program Office, U.S. Department of Homeland Security/FEMA, Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, TechWorld Building—5th Floor South Tower, 800 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20472-3620.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The purpose of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program is to provide grants directly to fire departments and nonaffiliated Emergency Medical Services (EMS) organizations to enhance their ability to protect the health and safety of the public, as well as that of

first-responder personnel, with respect to fire and fire-related hazards.

Appropriations

For fiscal year 2009, Congress appropriated \$565,000,000 to carry out the activities of the AFG Program. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is authorized to use up to \$28,250,000 for administration of the AFG program (5 percent of the appropriated amount); however, the Executive Branch has limited the funds available for administration to 4 percent of the appropriation (\$2,600,000). In addition, DHS must set aside no less than \$28,250,000 of the funds (5 percent of the appropriation) for the Fire Prevention and Safety Grants (FP&S). However, for fiscal year 2009, DHS will award \$35,000,000 for FP&S. Under FP&S, DHS may make grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with, national, State, local or community organizations or agencies, including fire departments, for the purpose of carrying out fire prevention grants and firefighter safety research and development grants.

The \$507,400,000 will be used for competitive grants to fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations for equipment, training and first responders' safety. Within the portion of funding available for these competitive grants, DHS must assure that no less than 3.5 percent of the appropriation, or \$19,775,000, is awarded for EMS equipment and training. However, awards to nonaffiliated EMS organizations are limited to no more than 2 percent of the appropriation or \$11,300,000. Therefore, at least the balance of the requisite awards for EMS equipment and training must go to fire departments.

Background

DHS awards the grants on a competitive basis to the applicants that best address the AFG program's priorities and provide the most compelling justification. Applicants whose requests best address the program's priorities will be reviewed by a panel composed of fire service personnel. The panel will review the narrative and evaluate the application in four different areas: (1) The clarity of the proposed project description, (2) the organization's financial need, (3) the benefit to be derived from the proposed project relative to the cost, and (4) the extent to which the grant would enhance the applicant's daily operations and/or how the grant would positively impact the applicant's ability to protect life and property.

The AFG program for 2009 generally mirrors previous years' AFG programs. The program will again segregate the FP&S program from the AFG. DHS will have a separate application period devoted solely to FP&S tentatively scheduled to occur in the Fall of 2009. All applications will be accessible from <https://portal.fema.gov>.

Congress has enacted statutory limits to the amount of funding that a grantee may receive from the AFG program in any fiscal year (15 U.S.C. 2229(b)(10)). These limits are based on population served. A grantee that serves a jurisdiction with 500,000 people or less may not receive grant funding in excess of \$1,000,000 in any fiscal year. A grantee that serves a jurisdiction with more than 500,000 but not more than 1,000,000 people may not receive grants in excess of \$1,750,000 in any fiscal year. A grantee that serves a jurisdiction with more than 1,000,000 people may not receive grants in excess of \$2,750,000 in any fiscal year. DHS may waive these established limits to any grantee serving a jurisdiction of 1,000,000 people or less if DHS determines that extraordinary need for assistance warrants the waiver. No grantee, under any circumstance, may receive "more than the lesser of \$2,750,000 or one half of one percent of the funds appropriated under this section for a single fiscal year." (15 U.S.C. 2229(b)(10)(B)).

Grantees must share in the costs of the projects funded under this grant program (15 U.S.C. 2229(b)(6)). Fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations that serve populations of less than 20,000 must match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 5 percent of the total project cost. Fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations serving areas with a population between 20,000 and 50,000, inclusive, must match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 10 percent of the total project cost. Fire departments and nonaffiliated EMS organizations that serve populations of over 50,000 must match the Federal grant funds with an amount of non-Federal funds equal to 20 percent of the total project costs. All non-Federal funds must be in cash, *i.e.*, in-kind contributions are not eligible. The only waiver granted for this requirement will be for applicants located in Insular Areas as provided for in 48 U.S.C. 1469a.

The authorizing statute imposes additional requirements on ensuring a distribution of grant funds among career, volunteer, and combination (volunteer and career personnel) fire departments, and among urban,

suburban and rural communities. More specifically with respect to department types, DHS must ensure that all-volunteer or combination fire departments receive a portion of the total grant funding that is not less than the proportion of the United States population that those departments protect (15 U.S.C. 2229(b)(11)). There is no corresponding minimum for career departments. Therefore, subject to the other statutory limitations on DHS ability to award funds, DHS will ensure that, for the 2009 program year, no less than 34 percent of the funding available for grants will be awarded to combination departments, and no less than 21 percent will be awarded to all-volunteer departments. These figures were obtained from the National Fire Protection Association report entitled *U.S. Department Profile Through 2007*, issued October 2008. If, and only if, other statutory limitations inhibit DHS ability to ensure this distribution of funding, DHS will ensure that the aggregate combined total percent of funding provided to both combination and volunteer departments is no less than 55 percent.

DHS generally makes funding decisions using rank order resulting from the panel evaluation. However, DHS may deviate from rank order and make funding decisions based on the type of department (career, combination, or volunteer) and/or the size and character of the community the applicant serves (urban, suburban, or rural) to the extent it is required to satisfy statutory provisions.

Fire Prevention and Safety Grant Program

In addition to the grants available to fire departments in fiscal year 2009 through the competitive grant program, DHS will set aside \$35,000,000 of the funds available under the AFG program to make grants to, or enter into contracts or cooperative agreements with, national, State, local or community organizations or agencies, including fire departments, for the purpose of carrying out fire prevention and injury prevention projects, and for research and development grants that address firefighter safety.

In accordance with the statutory requirement to fund fire prevention activities, support to Fire Prevention and Safety Grant activities concentrates on organizations that focus on the prevention of injuries to children from fire. In addition to this priority, DHS places an emphasis on funding innovative projects that focus on protecting children under 14, seniors over 65, and firefighters. Because the

victims of burns experience both short- and long-term physical and psychological effects, DHS places a priority on programs that focus on reducing the immediate and long-range effects of fire and burn injuries.

DHS will issue an announcement regarding pertinent details of the Fire Prevention and Safety Grant portion of this program prior to the application period.

Application Process

Prior to the start of the application period, DHS will conduct applicant workshops across the country to inform potential applicants about the AFG program for 2009. In addition, DHS will provide applicants an online Web-based tutorial and other information to use in preparing a quality application. Applicants are advised to access the application electronically at <https://portal.fema.gov>. New applicants will have to register and establish a username and password for secure access to their application. Applicants that have applied to any AFG funding opportunities in the past will have to use their established username and passwords. In completing the application, applicants will provide relevant information on the applicant's characteristics, call volume, and existing capacities. Applicants will answer questions regarding their assistance request that reflects the funding priorities (iterated below). In addition, each applicant will complete a narrative addressing statutory competitive factors: financial need, benefits/costs, and improvement to the organization's daily operations. During the application period, applicants will be encouraged to contact DHS via a toll free number or online help desk with any questions. The electronic application process will permit the applicant to enter data and save the application for further use, and will not permit the submission of incomplete applications. Except for the narrative, the application uses a "point-and-click" selection process, or requires the entry of information (e.g., name and address, call volume numbers, etc.).

The application period for the AFG grants will open on or about April 16, 2009, and close on or about May 15, 2009. Interested applicants are encouraged to read the Program Guidance for more details. During the approaching application season, the program office expects to receive between 20,000 and 25,000 applications.

Application Review Process

DHS evaluates all applications in the preliminary screening process to determine which applications best address the program's announced funding priorities. This preliminary screening evaluates and scores the applicants' answers to the activity specific questions. Applications containing multiple activities will be given prorated scores based on the amount of funding requested for each activity. The best applications as determined in the preliminary step are deemed to be in the "competitive range."

Once the competitive range is established DHS will review the list of applicants that are not included in the competitive range to determine if any of those applicants are responsible for protecting DHS-specified critical infrastructure or key resources. If it is determined that an applicant has responsibility for protecting one or more critical infrastructure or key resources but is not included in the competitive range, DHS will determine whether it is appropriate to place that application before the peer review panel due to the importance of its mission to protect these critical resources. Adding additional applications to peer review will not affect the number of applications that would have been reviewed by the peer reviewers or otherwise undermine the process used to determine the competitive range. Peer review panelists will not be aware of which applications may have been added to the universe of applications at panel as a result of this initiative. All applications will be peer reviewed against the criteria described in this document.

All applications in the competitive range are subject to a second level review by a technical evaluation panel made up of individuals from the fire service including, but not limited to, firefighters, fire marshals, and fire training instructors. The panelists will assess the application's merits with respect to the clarity and detail provided about the project, the applicant's financial need, the project's purported benefit to be derived from the cost, and the effectiveness of the project to enhance the health and safety of the public and fire service personnel.

Using the evaluation criteria included here, the panelists will independently score each application before them and then discuss the merits and shortcomings of the application in an effort to reconcile any major discrepancies. A consensus on the score is not required. The panelists will assign

a score to each of the elements detailed above. DHS will then consider the highest scoring applications resulting from this second level of review for awards. Applications that involve interoperable communications projects will undergo a separate review by the State Administrative Agency to assure that the communications project is consistent with the Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan (SCIP). If the State determines that the project is inconsistent with the State SCIP, the project will not be funded.

After the completion of the reviews, DHS will select a sufficient number of awardees from this application period to obligate all of the available grant funding. DHS will announce the awards over several months and will notify non-successful applicants as soon as feasible. DHS will not make awards in any specified order, *i.e.*, not by State, program, nor any other characteristic.

Modification to facility projects (including renovations associated with equipment installations) are subject to all applicable environmental and historic preservation requirements. Applicants seeking assistance to modify their facilities or to install equipment requiring renovations may undergo additional screening. Specifically, DHS is required to ascertain to what degree the proposed modifications and renovations might affect an applicant's facility relative to the National Environmental Policy Act, National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, National Flood Insurance Program regulations, and any other applicable laws and Executive Orders. No project that involves a modification to facility can proceed—except for project planning—prior to formal written approval from DHS. If your award includes a modification to a facility, you are responsible for contacting the Program Office so you can be given direction on how to proceed. Noncompliance with these provisions may jeopardize an applicant's award and subsequent funding.

Criteria Development Process

Each year, DHS 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 leadership of the nine major fire service organizations:

- Congressional Fire Service Institute (CFSI),
- International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI),
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC),

- International Association of Firefighters (IAFF),
- International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI),
- National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM),
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA),
- National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), and
- North American Fire Training Directors (NAFTD).

The criteria development panel is charged with making recommendations to the grants program office regarding the creation and/or modification of program priorities as well as development of criteria and definitions as necessary.

The governing statute requires that DHS publish each year in the **Federal Register** the guidelines that describe the application process and the criteria for grant awards. DHS must also include an explanation of any differences between the published guidelines and the recommendations made by the criteria development panel. The guidelines and the statement regarding the differences between the guidelines and the criteria development panel recommendations must be published in the **Federal Register** prior to making any grants under the program. 15 U.S.C. 2229(b)(14).

The Fiscal year 2009 criteria development panel meeting occurred July 9–10, 2008. For the 2009 program year, DHS implemented all recommendations presented by the criteria development panel. However, DHS implemented additional program changes that were not considered during the criteria development panel's deliberations. Those changes are as follows:

- In determining when to allow applicants to request funding for video conferencing systems, the criteria development group recommended that DHS limit eligibility of the systems to organizations that planned to use said systems for asynchronous training *only*. Asynchronous training enables students to increase knowledge and skills through self-paced and self-directed modules when convenient for the student versus systems that support synchronous training. They recommended that video conferencing systems not be eligible for synchronous training as synchronous training is too inflexible. In considering this recommendation, DHS determined that the delivery of asynchronous training does not need elaborate video conferencing systems; rather, asynchronous training only requires a computer. Since computers are already

eligible and asynchronous training delivery does not require video conferencing systems, DHS expanded the criteria development panel's recommendation to deem video conferencing systems ineligible in their entirety.

- In review of the priorities under vehicle acquisition, the criteria development panel recommended adjusting the emphasis placed on call volume. The panel's recommendation was based on the belief that any emphasis on call volume is a disadvantage for small departments (e.g., volunteer departments). However, the AFG authorizing legislation requires DHS to take into account the benefit to be derived from the costs of the grant activity when considering each application for award. Previous criteria development panels have recommended, and DHS has agreed, that a risk-based focus achieves this cost/benefit consideration and that the frequency of use is a legitimate measure of risk as well as indicator of the benefit that could be derived from an award. Also, there is no empirical data to show that small departments are disadvantaged by the consideration of call volume. Statistically, volunteer departments have received 87 percent of all AFG vehicle awards. Finally, criteria for all grant activities include consideration for call volume for reasons cited above but the panel only recommended changing the consideration for the vehicle category. This is inconsistent. Due to the legislative requirement to take cost/benefit into consideration; the realization that call volume is a measure of cost/benefit; the lack of data that shows any group is disadvantaged by the measure; and for the sake of consistent implementation of the program, DHS elected to leave the level of consideration call volume unchanged from that in previous years.

- Also under the vehicle acquisition activity, the criteria development panel recommended that DHS provide extra consideration for vehicles that do not have seatbelts and that cannot be economically retrofitted with seatbelts under the belief that such vehicles are inherently unsafe. The criteria development panel did not provide any guidance to assess what was meant by the term "economical," but it is the opinion that any retrofitting effort would be far more economical than the purchase of a new vehicle. For this reason DHS has elected not to implement this recommendation.

- In their deliberations on firefighting equipment, the criteria development panel recommended that DHS highlight

the eligibility of, and place more emphasis on, "alternative" fuel firefighting foam and equipment (over the consideration provided for "conventional" fuel firefighting foam and equipment). DHS believes this to be a difference without a distinction. Foam firefighting equipment and supplies have always been eligible, thus DHS saw no need to differentiate between the various uses of foam and foam firefighting equipment.

- Across all activities, the criteria development panel recommended that all applicants base their pricing on formal bids. DHS believed that this would be too onerous a task for an application and too onerous to enforce, thus DHS did not implement the recommendation. However, DHS provides more instruction and guidance regarding Federal procurement requirements in the 2009 program guidance.

- The criteria development panel recommended that DHS require applicants to request vehicle mounted exhaust control devices under the firefighting equipment acquisition activity rather than under modifications to facility activity. DHS agrees that, by definition, the devices are more "equipment" than they are part of a "facility." However, the function of the devices is absolutely relative to the affect that the devices will have on the facility. Therefore, DHS will continue to require applicants to apply for the devices under modifications to facilities and to answer the questions regarding their facility in order to qualify.

- Finally, the criteria development group recommended that DHS add a question to the application whereby the applicant could declare that they have temporary, transient population in their first-due over and above their permanent resident population. DHS did not believe this to be necessary as there are very few jurisdictions in this Nation that do not have fluctuations in their populations and because the applicants are free to discuss their fluctuating population in their narrative.

Review Considerations

Fire Department Priorities

Specific rating criteria for each of the eligible programs and activities are discussed below. The funding priorities described in this Notice have been recommended by a panel of representatives from the Nation's fire service leadership and have been accepted by DHS for the purposes of implementing the AFG. These rating criteria provide an understanding of the grant program's priorities and the

expected cost-effectiveness of any proposed project(s). The activities listed below are in no particular order of priority. Within each activity, DHS will consider the population served by the applicant with higher populations afforded a higher consideration than applicants with lower populations. DHS will further explain program priorities in program guidance to be published separately.

(1) Operations and Firefighter Safety Program

(i) *Training Activities.* In implementing the fire service's recommendations, DHS has determined that the most benefit will be derived from instructor-led, hands-on training that leads to a nationally sanctioned or State certification. Training requests that include Web-based home study or distance learning or 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 (1) involves instructors, (2) requires the students to demonstrate their grasp of knowledge of the training material via testing, and (3) is integral to a certification will receive a high competitive rating. Instructor-led training that does not lead to a certification, and any self-taught courses, are of lower benefit, and therefore will not receive a high priority.

DHS will give higher priority, within the limitations imposed by statute, to training proposals which improve coordination capabilities across disciplines (Fire, EMS, and Police), and jurisdictions (local, State, and Federal). Training related to coordinated incident response (*i.e.*, bomb threat or Improvised Explosive Device response), tactical emergency communications procedures, or similar types of inter-disciplinary, inter-jurisdictional training will receive the highest competitive rating.

Due to the inherent differences between urban, suburban, and rural firefighting characteristics, DHS has accepted the recommendations of the criteria development panel for different priorities in the training activities of departments that service these different types of communities. CBRNE awareness training has a high benefit, however, and will receive the highest consideration regardless of the type of community served and regardless of the absence of any national standard.

For fire departments serving rural communities, DHS has determined that

funding basic, operational-level firefighting, operational-level rescue, driver training, and first-responder EMS, Emergency Medical Technician-Basic (EMT-B), and Emergency Medical Technician—Intermediate (EMT-I) training (*i.e.*, training in basic firefighting, EMS, and rescue duties) has greater benefit than funding officer training, safety officer training, or incident-command training. In rural communities, after basic training, there is a greater cost-benefit ratio for officer training than for other specialized types of training such as mass casualty, hazardous materials (HAZMAT), advanced rescue and Emergency Medical Technician—Paramedic (EMT-P), or inspector training.

Conversely, for departments that are serving urban or suburban communities, DHS has determined that, due to the number of firefighters and the relatively high percentage of the population protected, any training requests will receive a high priority rating regardless of the level of training requested. As such, when considering applications for training from departments serving urban and suburban communities, DHS will give higher priority to training proposals which improve coordination capabilities across first-responder disciplines (fire, EMS, and law enforcement), and jurisdictions (local, State, and Federal). Training related to coordinated incident response (*e.g.*, weapons of mass destruction awareness and incident operations, chemical or biological operations, or bomb threats), tactical emergency communications procedures, or similar types of inter-disciplinary, inter-jurisdictional training will receive the highest competitive rating.

(ii) *Wellness and Fitness Activities.* In implementing the criteria panel's recommendations, DHS has determined that fire departments must offer periodic health screenings, entry physical examinations, and an immunization program to have an effective wellness/fitness program. Accordingly, applicants for grants in this category must currently offer or plan to offer with grant funds *all three benefits* to receive funding for any other initiatives in this activity. After the provision of the three requisite benefits, the criteria development panel recommended providing the highest consideration to candidate physical agility evaluations. DHS will give a lower priority to formal fitness and injury prevention programs. DHS will give the lowest priority to stress management, injury/illness rehabilitation, and employee assistance.

DHS has determined the greatest relative benefit will be realized by

supporting new wellness and fitness programs. Therefore, applicants for new wellness/fitness programs will receive higher competitive ratings when compared with applicants whose wellness/fitness programs lack one or more of the three top priority items cited above, and applicants that already employ the requisite three activities of a wellness/fitness program. Finally, because participation is critical to achieving any benefits from a wellness or fitness program, applications that mandate participation and are open to all personnel or provide incentives for participation will receive higher competitive ratings.

(iii) *Equipment Acquisition.* As stated in the AFG statute, DHS administers this grant program to protect the health and safety of firefighters and the public from fire and fire-related hazards. As such, equipment that has a direct effect on the health and safety of either firefighters or the public will receive a higher competitive rating than equipment that has no such effect. Equipment that promotes interoperability with neighboring jurisdictions (especially for communications equipment interoperable with a regional shared system) will receive additional consideration in the cost-benefit assessment if the application makes it into the competitive range.

The criteria development panel concluded that this grant program will achieve the greatest benefits if the grant program provides funds to purchase firefighting equipment (including rescue, EMS, and/or CBRNE preparedness) that the applicant has not owned prior to the grant, or to replace used or obsolete equipment.

According to the panel, a department takes on a "new mission" when it expands its services into areas not previously offered, such as a fire department seeking funding to provide emergency medical services for the first time. A "new risk" presents itself when a department must address risks that have materialized in the department's area of responsibility, *e.g.*, the construction of a plant that uses significant levels of certain chemicals could constitute a "new risk." An organization taking on "new risks" should be afforded higher consideration than departments taking on a "new mission." New missions receive a lower priority due to the potential that an applicant will not be able to financially support and sustain the new mission beyond the period of the grant.

Departments responding to high call volumes will be afforded a higher competitive rating than departments

responding to lower call volumes. In other words, those departments that are required to respond more frequently will receive a higher competitive rating than those that respond less frequently.

The purchase of equipment that brings the department into statutory or regulatory 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 not as high as for the purchase of equipment that brings a department into statutory compliance. The purchase of equipment that does not affect statutory compliance or voluntary compliance with a national standard will receive a lower competitive rating.

(iv) *Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Acquisition.* The primary purpose 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 FY 2009 AFG will give higher priority to funding applicants needing to purchase PPE for the first time (*i.e.*, for new firefighters) than departments replacing old and obsolete or substandard equipment (*e.g.*, equipment not meeting current NFPA and Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards). In applications that request funding to replace equipment, the age and

condition of the PPE that is to be replaced will be the primary consideration with the replacement of older or worn-out equipment receiving higher consideration than requests for replacement of newer equipment.

For departments replacing equipment such as “turnout gear,” 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 receive the highest priority, and departments with the newest equipment will receive a low priority.

Finally, DHS takes into account the number of fire response calls that a department makes in a year with the higher priority going to departments with higher call volumes, while applications from departments with low call volumes are afforded lower competitive ratings.

(v) *Modifications to Fire Stations and Facilities.* DHS believes that more benefit is derived from modifying fire stations than by modifying fire-training facilities or other fire-related facilities. The highest priority has been assigned to sprinkler systems, exhaust evacuation systems, and fire/smoke alarm systems. Lower priority has been assigned to generators, vehicle mounted exhaust filtration systems and air-quality

systems. The frequency of use for any structure has a bearing on the benefits derived from grant funds. As such, DHS will afford facilities occupied 24-hours-per-day/7-days-a-week the highest consideration when contrasted with facilities used on a part-time or irregular basis. Fire stations with sleeping quarters will receive higher consideration than stations where there are no sleeping quarters for firefighters. Facilities open for broad usage and have a high occupancy capacity receive a higher competitive rating than facilities that have limited use and/or low occupancy capacity. The frequency and duration of a facility’s occupancy have a direct relationship to the benefits realized from funding in this activity.

(2) Firefighting Vehicle Acquisition Program

Due to the inherent differences between urban, suburban, and rural firefighting conventions, DHS has developed different priorities in the vehicle program for departments that service different types of communities. The following chart delineates the priorities in this program area for each type of community. Due to the competitive nature of this program and the imposed limits of funding available for this program, it is unlikely that DHS will fund many vehicles not listed as a Priority One during the 2009 program year.

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’)	Pumper Brush/Attack Tanker/Tender Quint (Aerial > 76’)
Priority Two	Command HAZMAT Light/Air Rehab Foam Truck	Command HAZMAT Rescue Tanker/Tender Brush/Attack Foam Truck	HAZMAT Rescue Aerial (Aerial > 76’)
Priority Three	ARFFV ¹ Brush/Attack Tanker/Tender Ambulance Fire Boat	ARFFV ¹ Rehab Light/Air Ambulance Fire Boat	ARFFV ¹ Rehab Command Ambulance Fire Boat Light/Air

¹ Airport Rescue and Firefighting Vehicle.

DHS will evaluate the marginal value derived from an additional vehicle of any given type on the basis of call volume. As a result, departments with fewer vehicles of a given type than other departments who service comparable call volumes are more likely to score

competitively than departments with more vehicles of that type and comparable call volume unless the need for an additional vehicle of such type is made apparent in the application.

Applicants from urban and suburban communities may submit requests for

more than one vehicle. Applicants must supply sufficient justification for each vehicle contained in the request. For those applications with multiple vehicles, the panelists will be instructed to evaluate the marginal benefit to be derived from funding the additional

vehicle(s) given the potential use and the population protected. DHS anticipates that the panels will only recommend an award for a multiple-vehicles application when the cost-benefit justification is adequately compelling.

DHS believes that a greater benefit will be derived from funding an additional vehicle(s) to departments that own fewer or no vehicles of the type requested. As such, DHS assigns a higher competitive rating in the apparatus category to fire departments that own fewer firefighting vehicles relative to other departments serving similar types of communities (*i.e.*, urban, suburban, and rural). DHS assesses all vehicles with similar functions when assessing the number of vehicles a department possesses within a particular type. For example, the "pumper" category includes: pumpers, engines, pumper/tankers (apparatus that carries a minimum of 300 gallons of water and has a pump with a capacity to pump a minimum of 750 gallons per minute), rescue-pumpers, quints (with aerials less than 76 feet in length), and urban interface vehicles (Type I). Apparatus that has water capacity in excess of 1,000 gallons and a pump with pumping capacity of less than 750 gallons per minute are considered to be a tanker/tender.

DHS assigns a higher competitive rating to departments possessing an aged fleet of firefighting vehicles. In evaluating the age of an applicant's fleet, DHS will take into account the oldest vehicle in the class requested as well as the youngest vehicle in the class requested. DHS will also take into account the average age of the applicants' fleet. In each of these instances, older vehicles will receive higher consideration. DHS will also assign a higher competitive rating to departments that respond to a high volume of incidents.

DHS will give lower priority to funding departments seeking apparatus with the goal to expand into new mission areas unless the applicant demonstrates that they will be able to support and sustain the new mission or service area beyond the grant program.

DHS will assign no competitive advantage to the purchase of standard model commercial vehicles relative to custom vehicles, or the purchase of used vehicles relative to new vehicles in the preliminary evaluation of applications. DHS has noted that, depending on the type and size of department, the peer review panelists often prefer low-cost vehicles when evaluating the cost-benefit section of the project narratives. DHS also reserves the right to consider

current vehicle costs within the fire service vehicle manufacturing industry when determining the level of funding that will be offered to the potential grantee, particularly if those current costs indicate that the applicant's proposed purchase costs are excessive.

DHS will allow departments serving urban or suburban communities to apply for more than one vehicle. DHS, however, will only allow departments serving rural communities to apply for one vehicle. DHS will limit applications from suburban or urban departments to one vehicle per station as well as per statutory funding limits. DHS will not limit 2009 applications because of a vehicle award from previous AFG program years.

(3) Administrative Costs

Panelists will assess the reasonableness of the administrative costs requested in any application and determine if the request is reasonable and in the best interest of the program.

Nonaffiliated EMS Organization Priorities

DHS may make grants for the purpose of enhancing the provision of emergency medical services by nonaffiliated EMS organizations. The authorizing statute limits funding for these organizations to no more than 2 percent of the appropriated amount. DHS has determined that it is more cost-effective to enhance or expand an existing emergency medical service organization by providing training and/or equipment than to create a new service. Communities that do not currently offer emergency medical services but are turning to this grant program to initiate such a service received the lowest competitive rating. DHS does not believe creating a nonaffiliated EMS program is a substantial and sufficient benefit under the program.

Specific rating criteria and priorities for each of the grant categories are provided below following the descriptions of this year's eligible programs. The rating criteria, in conjunction with the program description, provide an understanding of the evaluation standards. In each activity, the amount of the population served by the applicant will be taken into consideration with higher populations afforded more consideration than low populations served. DHS will further explain program priorities in the Program Guidance upon publication thereof.

(1) EMS Operations and Safety Program

Five different activities may be funded under this program area: EMS training, EMS equipment, EMS personal protective equipment, wellness and fitness, and modifications to facilities. Requests for equipment and training to prepare for response to incidents involving CBRNE were available under the applicable equipment and training activities.

(i) *Training Activities.* DHS believes that EMS training is a prerequisite to the effective use of EMS equipment, organizations whose requests are more focused on training activities will receive a higher competitive rating than organizations whose requests are more focused on equipment. A higher competitive rating will be given to nonaffiliated EMS organizations that are planning to upgrade services to Advanced Life Support (ALS) level of response. Specifically, organizations that are seeking to elevate their response level from EMT-B to EMT-I will receive the highest priority and organizations that are seeking to elevate their response level from EMT-I to EMT-P will receive a high priority. Our second priority is to elevate emergency responders' capabilities from first-responder to a Basic Life Support (BLS) level of response (*i.e.* EMT-B). Due to the time and cost, upgrading an organization's response level from EMT-B to EMT-P is a lower priority. Organizations seeking training in rescue or HAZMAT or rescue operations will receive lower consideration than organizations seeking training for medical services. Our lowest priority is to fund first responder training. Organizations that are seeking to train a high percentage of their active first responders will receive additional consideration when applying under the training activity.

(ii) *EMS Equipment Acquisition.* As noted above, training received a higher competitive rating than equipment. DHS believes that equipment is of no use if the operator is not trained to use it. As such, applicants must demonstrate that users of equipment purchased with the grant either are or will be sufficiently trained to use the equipment. Inability to demonstrate and fulfill this training requirement will result in ineligibility for equipment funding.

Organizations that request training to the ALS level of response, along with basic support equipment, will receive a higher priority. Requests seeking assistance to purchase equipment to support BLS level of response are a secondary priority. Organizations seeking equipment for rescue or HAZMAT operations will receive lower

consideration than organizations seeking equipment used to provide medical services. Our lowest priority is to fund first responder training.

As discussed previously, organizations taking on “new risks” will be afforded much higher consideration than an organization taking on a “new mission.”

(iii) *EMS Personal Protective Equipment.* DHS gives the same priorities for EMS PPE as it did for fire department PPE discussed above.

Acquisition of Personal Alert Safety Systems or any firefighting PPE is not eligible, however, for funding for EMS organizations.

(iv) *Wellness and Fitness Activities.* DHS believes that to have an effective wellness/fitness program, nonaffiliated EMS organizations must offer periodic health screenings, entry physical examinations, and an immunization

program similar to the programs for fire departments discussed previously. Accordingly, applicants for grants in this category must currently offer or plan to offer with grant funds *all three benefits* (periodic health screenings, entry physical examinations, and an immunization program) to receive funding for any other initiatives in this activity. The priorities for EMS wellness/fitness programs are the same as for fire departments as discussed above.

(v) *Modification to EMS Stations and Facilities.* DHS believes that the competitive rankings and priorities applied to modification of fire stations and facilities, discussed above, apply equally to EMS stations and facilities.

(2) EMS Vehicle Acquisition Program

DHS gives the highest funding priority to acquisition of ambulances

and transport vehicles due to the inherent benefits to the community and EMS service provider. Due to the costs associated with obtaining and outfitting non-transport rescue vehicles relative to the benefits derived from such vehicles, DHS will give non-transport rescue vehicles a lower competitive rating than transport vehicles. DHS anticipates that the EMS vehicle awards will be very competitive due to very limited available funding. Accordingly, DHS will likely only fund vehicles that are listed as a “Priority One” in the 2009 program year.

The following chart delineates the priorities in this program area for EMS vehicle program. The priorities are the same regardless of the type of community served.

EMS VEHICLE PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Priority one	Priority two	Priority three
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ambulance or transport unit to support EMS functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First responder non-transport vehicles Special operations vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Command vehicles Hovercraft Other special access vehicles

Along with the priorities illustrated above, DHS has accepted the fire service recommendation that emerged from the criteria development process that funding applicants that own few or no vehicles of the type sought will be more beneficial than funding applicants that own numerous vehicles of that same type. DHS assesses the number of vehicles an applicant owns by including all vehicles of the same type. For example, transport vehicles will be considered the same as ambulances. DHS will give a higher competitive rating to applicants that have an aged fleet of emergency vehicles, and to applicants with old, high-mileage vehicles. DHS will give a higher competitive rating to applicants that respond to a significant number of incidents relative to applicants responding less often. Finally, DHS will afford applicants with transport vehicles with high mileage more consideration than applicants with vehicles that are not driven extensively.

(3) Administrative Costs

Panelists assess the reasonableness of the administrative costs requested in each application and determined whether the request will be reasonable and in the best interest of the program.

Dated: April 14, 2009.

David Garratt,
Acting Deputy Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency.
 [FR Doc. E9-9024 Filed 4-17-09; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 9111-64-P

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Coast Guard

[Docket No. USCG 2009-0257]

National Maritime Security Advisory Committee; Meeting

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DHS.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The National Maritime Security Advisory Committee (NMSAC), established as a discretionary committee in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App. (Pub. L. 92-463), will meet in Washington, DC to discuss various issues relating to national maritime security. This meeting will be open to the public in the morning and will be closed to the public in the afternoon.

DATES: The Committee will meet on Monday, May 4, 2009 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This meeting may close early if all business is finished. Written material and requests to make oral presentations

should reach the Coast Guard on or before April 24, 2009. Requests to have a copy of your material distributed to each member of the committee should reach the Coast Guard on or before April 15, 2008.

ADDRESSES: The Committee will meet at Coast Guard Headquarters, Room 4202, 2100 2nd Street SW., Washington, DC 20593. A government-issued photo identification (for example, driver’s license) will be required for entrance to the building. Additionally, this meeting will be broadcast via a Web enabled interactive online format. Send written material and requests to make oral presentations to Mr. Ryan Owens, Deputy Designated Federal Officer (DFO) of the National Maritime Security Advisory Committee, 2100 2nd Street SW., Room 6228, Washington, DC 20593. You may also e-mail material to ryan.f.owens@uscg.mil. This notice may be viewed in our online docket, USCG-2009-0257, at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Ryan Owens, Deputy DFO of NMSAC, telephone 202-372-1108 or ryan.f.owens@uscg.mil.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Notice of this meeting is given under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App. (Pub. L. 92-463).