



Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General

Actions Taken by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in Response to an Allegation Concerning the Application for a Station Construction Grant Submitted by the University City, Missouri, Fire Department



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

Background

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General, reviewed actions taken by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to address allegations that the application for a Station Construction Grant (SCG) submitted by the University City, Missouri, Fire Department contained unsupported and inaccurate information. The principal allegation was that the fire department's representation of the fire station as structurally unsound was not supported.

The *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (Recovery Act) appropriated \$210 million to FEMA for competitive grants for "modifying, upgrading, or constructing non-Federal fire stations." In determining awards, FEMA guidance says that the highest priority will be assigned to projects to replace unsafe or uninhabitable structures and to expand fire protection coverage to meet increased service demand. FEMA received and ranked approximately 6,000 grant applications, performed peer reviews of about 1,200 applications that it determined were in the competitive range, and awarded 119 grants totaling \$207 million.

FEMA granted \$2.6 million to the University City Fire Department for construction of a new fire station. The fire department's grant application said that its station "is damaged from years of water intrusion in the basement, foundation, and roof," has "extensive mold and mildew," and is unsafe and uninhabitable because it is structurally unsound.

Results of Review

FEMA took appropriate actions to evaluate the allegations concerning the University City application for an SCG. Specifically, FEMA suspended the grant, reviewed the issues with its technical subject matter experts and University City officials, obtained additional documentation from the city in support of the statements made in the grant application, and hired an engineer to inspect the fire station.

The engineer inspected the fire station on December 15, 2010. According to the engineer's report, the purpose of the site visit was to:

1. Compare onsite firehouse conditions with the list of conditions identified in the grant application to ascertain whether the grantee had misrepresented facts in applying for the grant; and
2. Compare the allegations with the onsite firehouse conditions in order to confirm or refute each claim.

The engineer's report said that "each material statement found in the application and complainant allegation was individually investigated and judged on its own merits relative to SCG Program Guidance and observed site conditions." Also, the engineer reported that "where visual observation alone could not corroborate or refute a statement, professional judgment and elicited response from the grantee was used in forming my opinion." In forming his recommendation, the engineer said that "while I did find minor

mistakes in the application . . . none of the applicant's answers could be seen as egregious, evasive or purposefully misleading." Finally, the engineer recommended that "the Station Construction Grant awarded to the City of University City, Missouri Fire Department remain intact."

Based on actions that FEMA took to examine the allegations, we consider this matter closed, and a response to this report is not required.

Appendix A

Purpose, Scope, and Methodology

We conducted this review to determine whether FEMA took appropriate actions in response to an allegation that the University City, Missouri, Fire Department's application for a Station Construction Grant contained unsupported and misleading information.

To accomplish our objective, we—

- Interviewed the complainant to obtain a better understanding of the allegation,
- Obtained supporting documentation from the complainant,
- Interviewed FEMA officials to obtain an understanding of their work related to the allegations and acquired and analyzed relative supporting documentation,
- Accompanied the engineer hired by FEMA on the site inspection of the University City fire station and on the inspection of the proposed location for the new fire station, and
- Reviewed engineer's report on the results of the inspection.

We performed this review between September 2010 and January 2011 in Washington, DC, and University City, Missouri. We conducted our review in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspections* issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, currently known as the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

We appreciate the assistance provided to us during our review by officials from FEMA and from University City.

Appendix B
Major Contributors to This Report

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