STATEMENT

OF

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BEFORE
THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

"REAUTHORIZATION OF THE FIRE GRANT PROGRAMS"

WEDNESDAY, JULY 8, 2009

Chairman Wu, Ranking Member Smith, members of the Subcommittee, I am Timothy Manning and I serve as Deputy Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). On behalf of Administrator Fugate, it is a privilege to appear before you today to offer this Administration's support for the reauthorization of the Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) and Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Programs.

Mr. Chairman, all of us at FEMA share your continued support of the Nation's fire service and the men and women who serve in it. We understand the value of these programs to firefighters across the country and to the citizens they serve. Having been raised in a fire service family and serving as a volunteer firefighter myself, I have a first hand appreciation of the service these men and women provide to communities throughout the country. As a former state emergency manager, I have a great appreciation of the value these grant programs can add to the fire and emergency services through improved response capability, increased responder safety and ultimately greater public safety.

Our door is always open to these first responders. Within his first weeks at FEMA, Administrator Fugate has met with representatives of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Association of Fire Fighters and the Metropolitan Fire Chiefs. During my tenure, I have also met with many of these organizations.

Our partnership with the fire service is also demonstrated through the process by which each year's AFG and SAFER Programs are developed. Each year FEMA convenes a panel of fire service professionals to assist in the development of funding priorities for the coming year. This

also provides an opportunity to discuss any changes in program requirements. There are nine major fire service organizations represented on these yearly panels. They are:

- The Congressional Fire Services Institute;
- The National Volunteer Fire Council;
- The International Association of Arson Investigators;
- The International Association of Fire Fighters;
- The National Fire Protection Association;
- The National Association of State Fire Marshalls;
- The International Association of Fire Chiefs;
- The International Society of Fire Service Instructors, and
- The North American Fire Training Directors.

Our collaboration and outreach extends throughout the grant award process. All awards under these programs are competitive and are based on funding priorities recommended by the fire service and on peer reviews by panels comprised of representatives of the fire service. It is also important to note that these programs represent the collaboration of two FEMA components. The first is the Grant Programs Directorate's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program Office. The other is the United States Fire Administration. Both these FEMA components are staffed by dedicated public employees, many who began their careers as firefighters.

Mr. Chairman, reducing the loss of life and property caused by fire remains a significant challenge. Death and injury rates by fire in the United States are still unacceptably high. Each year fires injure and kill more Americans than the combined losses of all other natural disasters. In 2007, fires in the United States resulted in 3,430 civilian deaths, 17,675 civilian injuries, and

$14.6 billion in direct property losses. During that year 118 firefighters also lost their lives due to fire. We believe that the AFG and SAFER Programs can help reduce these numbers.

In Fiscal Year 2000, Congress amended the landmark Federal Fire Protections and Control Act of 1974 – the same act that created the United States Fire Administration – and created the AFG Program. Subsequent amendments in Fiscal Year 2004 created the SAFER Program. In the few short years since their creation these programs have provided the fire service with resources and capabilities which have without question saved lives and property.

The AFG Program provides competitive grants to address the training, safety, apparatus, personal protective gear, firefighting equipment, and firefighter wellness and fitness needs of fire departments large and small, career and volunteer. Through its component grants for Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S), the AFG Program provides resources to fire departments and non-profit organizations to address fire prevention issues, including public education programs, school based programs, and smoke alarm distribution projects for households. FP&S also provides funding for research and development projects aimed at improvements to firefighter health and safety. The SAFER Program has addressed staffing needs by enhancing these fire departments' ability to hire career firefighters and to recruit and retain volunteer firefighters. In doing so, SAFER funding allows fire departments to increase the number of trained, front-line firefighters available in their communities which in turn reduces response times, increases deployment capabilities, and enhances overall public safety.

From Fiscal Year 2002* through Fiscal Year 2009, the AFG program has received applications from 160,798 eligible applicants and made 48,822 grants totaling $3,731,619,486 in financial assistance. Under its component FP&S Program 17,406 applications have been received resulting in $172,983,355 being awarded to 1,829 organizations to enhance fire safety and prevention efforts. Similarly, since its inception in Fiscal Year 2005 the SAFER Program has received 7,531 applications and has provided 974 fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations with $406,428,090 in direct financial assistance. Further, since its inception, the SAFER Program has resulted in the hiring of 3,705 firefighters.

Over that same period (Fiscal Year 2002 through Fiscal year 2009) applications under the AFG Program were distributed as follows:

- 59.17 percent of AFG applications were for "Fire Operations and Fire Fighter Safety" programs;
- 30.37 percent of AFG applications were for "Firefighting Vehicles"; and
- 10.45 percent were under "Fire Prevention."

Of those AFG Program applications:

- 63.62 percent came from "All Volunteer" fire departments;
- 20.81 percent came from combination fire departments;
- 10.54 percent came from "All Paid" or "Career" fire departments; and
- 5.03 percent came from "Paid On Call/Stipend" departments.

* In Fiscal Year 2001, AFG was paper based, but since Fiscal Year 2002 it has been electronically based and operated.

Over that same period (Fiscal Year 2002 through Fiscal Year 2009) applications under the SAFER Program were distributed as follows:

- 58.12 percent of SAFER applications were for "Fire Fighter Hiring"; and
- 41.88 percent of SAFER applications were for "Fire Fighter Recruitment and retention"

Of those SAFER Program applications:

- 29.83 percent were received from "All Volunteer" fire departments;
- 48.89 percent were received from combination fire departments;
- 19.94 percent were received from "All Paid" or "Career" fire departments; and
- 1.79 percent were received from "Interest Organizations", i.e., regional, state or local entities with an interest in the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

In Fiscal Year 2009, $565,000,000 has been appropriated for the AFG Program. By statute a minimum of 5 percent of those funds, or $28,250,000, must be set aside for the FP&S grants. Further for Fiscal Year 2009, $210,000,000 has been appropriated for the SAFER Program. In Fiscal Year 2009, the AFG Grant Program opened on April 15, 2009 and closed on May 20, 2009. A total of 19,786 applications have been received. The Fiscal Year 2009 SAFER and FP&S Grant application periods have not yet opened and the grant guidance is still being developed.

Mr. Chairman, I will conclude my statement by again emphasizing the support and respect that we at the Department of Homeland Security - from Secretary Napolitano, to Administrator Fugate, to myself - have for the men and women of the nation's fire service. A commitment to the fire service also represents an ongoing commitment to the public safety in our communities

and the people who reside within them. We look forward to working with you, this Committee and the Congress on the re-authorization of the AFG and SAFER Programs. Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Smith and members of the Subcommittee, for allowing me to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.