SAFER Hiring Grant User Guide

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to help you effectively manage your Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) hiring grant. This guide explains how to complete required grant reports, request reimbursement, and comply with grant requirements. Anyone involved in administering this grant should read this guide.

If you have not already done so, please review the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) and the Frequently Asked Questions for your grant award. These documents are available at http://www.fema.gov/staffing-adequate-fire-emergency-responsE-grants-documents.

If you still have questions after reading the FOA and this guide, you should first contact the Help Desk at 866-274-0960 or send an email to firegrants@dhs.gov. If the Help Desk cannot answer your question, you will then be referred to a SAFER Program Office Point of Contact (POC). Please be ready to provide your grant number if you contact either the Help Desk or your SAFER POC.

This guide is arranged in chronological order. Please use the Table of Contents to find a topic.

Grant File

Your department is required to maintain a file, notebook, or binder for this SAFER grant. The following documents should be kept in the file:

- Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) and FAQs;
- grant application;
- award document;
- advertisements for SAFER-funded positions;
- documentation of hiring practices or procedures;
- payroll records used to request reimbursement;
- documentation that medical physicals were given or certifications achieved; and
- paper copies of important communications regarding the grant.

As stated in the FOA, your department must retain grant files and supporting documentation for three years after receipt of the official notification that the grant has been closed.

Please note that FEMA can ask to review your grant file.

E-grant Application Portal Access

You may access your SAFER grant through the E-grant application portal link at http://www.fema.gov/E-grant-application-access. At the bottom of the webpage, select "Continue to the E-grant Application Portal."

Use your department's user ID and password to log into the E-grant system. Each department should have one user ID and password to access all Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) awards and applications. The user ID and password may need to be made available to several people at your department, including the Primary POC and designated alternates.

If you forgot your user ID and/or password, please follow the directions at:
https://edit.fema.gov/assistance-firefighters-grant-program-most-frequently-asked-questions

Please note that the E-grant system only supports Internet Explorer browsers 6.0 or higher. You will not be able to access the system using any other browser. To prevent issues, you should not have multiple windows open when accessing the E-grant system.

If at any time you experience an issue with the E-grant system or it does not appear to work as explained in this guide, please contact the Help Desk.

Award Package

Follow these steps to access your SAFER grant award package:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, scroll down until you find your SAFER grant.
- Select “View Award Packages” from the drop-down menu in the “Action” column, and click “Go.”
- You will arrive at the “Award Status” page, which provides links to “View Award Package” and “Print Award Package”. The “Award Status” page also contains your SAFER grant number, award amount, and award notification date.
- Be sure to carefully read your entire Award Package as it contains valuable information pertaining to proper management of your grant.

Points of Contact

Profile POC

There is only one Profile Point of Contact (POC) for your department in the E-grants system. Updating the Profile POC on one grant will cause the Profile POC to be changed on all other department grants submitted under the same user ID. If you do not wish to do this, consider changing the Primary POC or one of the Alternate Contacts instead (see below). The Profile POC will receive automated e-mail messages from AFG, so this individual should be able to check and respond to messages frequently.

Follow these steps to update the information for the Profile POC:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, select the "Edit Profile" link at the top right side of the screen.
- Update any of the following fields:
    - Personal Information (Title, First Name, Last Name)
    - Address (Street, City, State, Zip code)
    - Additional Address (Street, City, State, Zip code)
    - Contact (Organization, Business Phone, Home phone, Mobile Phone, Email)
    - Identity Confirmation Information (Date of Birth, Mother's Maiden Name)
- Click "Submit.”
- You will receive a confirmation screen that your profile has been updated.
- If you would like to update the password associated with the user Id, you can click on “password” on the left side of the screen. After updating the password, click “Submit.”
- To update the system with your changes, click on the “Authorized Applications” link on the upper left-hand side of the "Thank You" page, and then click on “Firefighter's Grants.”

Primary POC and Alternate Contacts

While there is only one Profile POC for your department, you can assign different contacts to different AFG grants. In the SAFER application, your department was required to list a Primary POC and two Alternate Contacts. The Primary POC should be an officer, member, or employee of your department that has the authority to make decisions on and to act upon this grant. Alternate Contacts must be familiar with the grant and must be able to answer any questions relative to the grant in the event that Primary Point of Contact is unavailable.

Follow these steps to change or update the Primary POC or Alternate Contacts:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, scroll down until you find your SAFER grant.
- Select “Manage Grant” from the drop-down menu in the “Action” column, and click “Go.”
- Click on “Update Alternate Contacts” on the menu bar on the left side of the screen.
- Click on “Create New Request.”
- Use the text box to explain which contact you would like to replace or what contact information you would like to update. Be sure to follow the instructions listed on the screen and provide the name, title, primary and secondary phone numbers as well as the email address for the new contact person.
- At the bottom of the page, enter your password, check the box, and select “Save and Continue.”
- Review your information and select “Submit Request.”
- Once submitted, this request can take several weeks to process because it must be entered manually into the application by grants management staff. You can check to see if the change is made by looking at the application. To access the application, select “View Application” from the pull down menu in the “Action” column of the grant status page.

Please note that you will not be able to submit any payment requests, performance reports, or amendments while this revision request is pending.

Payment Request POC

You can list a unique POC in connection with each Payment Request (refer to that section below). This POC will not receive automated e-mails from E-grants.

Quarterly Performance Report POC

You can list a unique POC in connection with each Quarterly Performance Report (refer to that section below). This POC will not receive automated emails from E-grants.

E-grants Mail Center

The Profile POC will receive automated e-mails from the E-grants system. All system-generated e-mails are stored in the E-grants Mail Center. If you receive an e-mail directly from your SAFER Program Office POC, that e-mail will not be stored in the E-grants Mail Center.

After you log into E-grants, select “Mail Center” in the upper right corner of the "Status" page. You will arrive at the “New Messages” page. This page shows messages that have not yet been read. You can access messages that have been read by selecting “Old Messages” on the top left side of the screen. Next to the “Old Messages” link, you will find a “Sent Messages” link. The “Sent Messages” screen

contains a record of all the e-mails that your department has sent to AFG staff through the E-grants system.

All three pages in the Mail Center contain a "Compose Message" link. You may use this feature to send the SAFER Program Office staff a message about your grant. If you do so, please make sure you specify the number of your SAFER grant in the message. Your message will be forwarded to your SAFER Program Office POC. You may also contact your POC directly by telephone or e-mail, if you already have their contact information.

If you are the Profile POC and you are not receiving automated e-mails from the E-grants system, please follow the instructions at: http://www.fema.gov/assistance-firefighters-grant-program-most-frequently-asked-questions. To prevent blocked e-mails, you can update your computer's browser security settings to receive email from firegrants@dhs.gov, afg@dhs.gov, and EOPS@dhs.gov. Please note, however, that email addresses with a ".ci" extension may not accept system-generated emails.

SAM.gov Registration

System for Award Management (SAM) is an official government registration system that is required for all recipients of federal funding Registration with SAM is free and active for one year.

FEMA will not process any payment requests, revision requests, or amendments if you do not have an active SAM registration or if there is a mismatch between the information in SAM, the information in your application, and the information on your 1199A Direct Deposit Form. The following information must match:

- Organization's name
- Address
- DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number
- EIN (Employer Identification Number)
- Banking information (type of account, routing number, and account number)

If the above information changes during the course of this grant, you will need to:

- Update your SAM registration at www.sam.gov
- Update your 1199A Direct Deposit Form (see instructions below)
- Update your application
    - To update your application please contact 866-927-5646 to be directed to a Grant Management Specialist.

If you need assistance with SAM:

- Visit the AFG System for Award Management Resource Page at: http://www.fema.gov/rules-tools/system-award-management
- Visit www.sam.gov and click on the "Help" link
- Contact the Federal Support Desk at https://www.fsd.gov
- Call (866) 606-8220 (toll-free) to speak with a representative

If you need assistance with DUNs, call 1-866-705-5711 or visit http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform. Your organization should use one DUNs number for all FEMA applications and grants.

1199A Direct Deposit Form

In order to receive grant funds, you must complete an 1199A Direct Deposit Form. There is one form for all AFG grants and you may list only one bank account on the form. The form is stored in E-grants. You may need to consult with your department's financial office or treasurer to complete the form.

Please remember that the information you provide on the form *must* match the information you entered in SAM.gov (see above).

Follow these steps to *submit your first* 1199A Direct Deposit Form:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your first AFG grant, select "Update SF-1199a" from the drop-down menu in the "Action" column, and click "Go."
- After completing the form, click "Save and Continue" and then select "Submit."
- Select "Print SF-1199a," and bring a copy of the form to your department's bank.
- The "Person Entitled to Payment" will need to sign the form and your bank will need to complete Section 3 (bottom portion).
- Once the form is complete, please fax it to Cathy Clarke at 301-998-8699 or send it by e-mail attachment to Cathy.Clarke@associates.fema.dhs.gov. You should keep the original form in your grant file.
- Please allow 7 business days for the form to be processed. If you have any questions, you can contact Cathy Clarke, the Help Desk, or your SAFER Program Office POC.

Follow these steps to *view* the department's 1199A Direct Deposit Form (after it has been submitted):

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your department's *first* AFG grant award.
- Select "View 1199A" from the drop-down menu in the "Action" column, and click "Go."
- You will arrive at the "Direct Deposit Sign-up Form" page. This page will show a list of all the AFG grants associated with your 1199A Direct Deposit Form. You will also see the 1199A Direct Deposit form in the "read only" view.

Follow these steps to *update* the form1199A Direct Deposit Form:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your recently-awarded SAFER grant, select "Update SF-1199a" from the drop-down menu in the "Action" column, and click "Go."
    - If that feature is not available, check the drop-down menu to your *first* award from AFG. If you do not find an "Update SF-1199a" link there, please contact Cathy Clarke and request that the form be released to you for correction. She may be reached at Cathy.Clarke@associates.fema.dhs.gov or 301 998-8648.
- Update the 1199A Direct Deposit Form in E-grants once you are able to access it through the "Update SF-1199a" feature.
- After completing the form, click "Save and Continue" and then select "Submit."
- If you receive a confirmation message, no further action required. However, if you are directed to "Print SF-1199a," you will need to print a copy of the form and bring it to your department's bank. The "Person Entitled to Payment" will need to sign the form and your bank will need to complete Section 3 (bottom portion). Once the form is complete, please fax it to Cathy Clarke at 301-998-8699 or send it by e-mail attachment to Cathy.Clarke@associates.fema.dhs.gov. You should keep the original form in your grant file.

- Please allow 7 business days for the form to be processed. If you have any questions, you can contact Cathy Clarke, the Help Desk, or your SAFER Program Office POC.

Remember, if you made any corrections to your 1199A Direct Deposit Form, you will have to make the corresponding changes to your SAM.gov registration.

Staffing Maintenance Number

During the grant period of performance, your department is required to fill SAFER-funded positions and maintain operational staffing at the level that existed on the date of award as well as the number of awarded SAFER positions. This requirement is referred to as the "staffing maintenance number." The staffing maintenance number must be maintained for the entire period of performance, regardless of when all grant funds are depleted.

Pre-SAFER Roster

In order to determine your department's staffing maintenance number, your SAFER Program Office POC will request that you complete and submit a "Pre-SAFER Roster." The Pre-SAFER Roster must include the name and rank of all paid operational/firefighting personnel, in support of the department's NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720 compliance, who were in full-time or job-share positions on the date of award. The date of award can be found on the award notification e-mail in the E-grants Mail Center. You may also list administrative personnel on the roster, but they will not be included in the staffing maintenance number. Volunteer personnel, administrative civilian, and paid-on-call/stipend personnel do not need to be included on the list.

A position is considered operational if it supports NFPA 1710 or NFPA 1720 compliance more than 50% of the time. For example, your department may employ an inspector that is qualified as a firefighter but his or her primary assignment is to conduct inspections. The inspector could respond to a large fire if called upon but that is not their primary duty. If that is the case, that position is considered administrative and not operational.

The pre-SAFER roster also requests information about vacancies that occurred after the date of grant award. Using the appropriate columns, please report the date an individual left the department and the reason for their departure. If the department was awarded a retention grant, please mark "yes" next to their name in the last column. If the department was not awarded a retention grant, leave the last column blank.

After you submit the Pre-SAFER roster, your SAFER Program Office POC will review it and confirm the staffing maintenance number with you. You will not be able to request payment or complete quarterly performance reports until your staffing maintenance number is established.

Vacancies

Once the staffing maintenance number is established, you are required to maintain that staffing level throughout the period of performance by taking active and timely steps to fill any positions vacated through attrition, resignation, or termination. The SAFER Program Office considers 6 months to be a reasonable timeframe for filing vacancies. You should contact your SAFE R Program Office POC if you are not able to fill the vacant positions in that amount of time, or if you are experiencing lengthy hiring delays.

Waiver of the Staffing Maintenance Number

If you are unable (due to documentable economic hardship) to fill firefighting positions that are vacated through attrition (e.g., resignation, retirement), you may submit a waiver. An approved waiver would decrease the staffing maintenance number by the number of positions that you are not able to fill. You would be required to maintain the revised staffing maintenance number for the duration of the grant. In order to qualify for this waiver, the economic hardship must affect the *entire public safety sector* in your jurisdiction, not solely the fire department. Waivers will not be granted for SAFER-funded positions.

Contact your SAFER Program Office POC to discuss the waiver and receive the complete waiver instructions. Be prepared to include, at minimum, the following information in the waiver request:

- The number of positions that have been vacated since being awarded the SAFER grant;
- The circumstances under which the position(s) were vacated and the date the vacancies occurred;
- A description of why the department is unable to fill the vacancies;
- An explanation of how the change in staffing will affect your department's ability to meet NFPA 1710 or 1720; and
- A statement, on letterhead, from the local governing body affirming that the inability to fill vacant positions extends to the entire public safety sector in the jurisdiction, not just the fire department.

Important: If you fail to maintain the required staffing level, your grant may be placed in a default status and terminated. You may lose remaining federal funds awarded under this grant or be asked to pay back funds that have been drawn down. Lay-offs during the period of performance are not permitted.

If you have questions about completing the Pre-SAFER Roster, the waiver, or about the staffing maintenance number in general, please contact your SAFER Program Office POC.

Period of Performance

Your department has a period of 180 days after the date your application was approved for award to fill the awarded SAFER positions. This is known as the "recruitment period." Your grant period of performance (POP) starts after the recruitment period ends and lasts a total of two years. You can find your grant POP in a number of places in the E-grant system, including in the Award Package and on the SAFER Payment Request(s) screen.

If your department hired the SAFER positions before the end of the 180 day recruitment period (or if you were awarded retention positions), you can start the POP early. Contact your SAFER Program Office POC to discuss this option. Your contact will direct you to submit an amendment request in E-grants to change the start date (refer to the amendment section). Starting the performance period early will allow you to submit a payment request in the E-grants system before the 180-day recruitment period ends. Salary and benefit costs incurred during the 180-day recruitment period are eligible for reimbursement, even if you do not submit an amendment to start your POP early.

If your department did not hire the firefighters within the 180-day recruitment period, there will be no change to the POP start date. You cannot submit a request to delay the start of the period of performance, regardless of when the SAFER positions are hired.

In some cases, you may be allowed to extend your period of performance. Extensions to the period of performance are not guaranteed and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Extensions to the period

of performance will only be granted when, due to circumstances beyond your department's control, you cannot complete the grant activities within the original performance period. POP extensions are not automatic if you have excess grant funds. A POP extension request must address the following:

- Grant program, fiscal year, and award number;
- Reason for delay – this must include details of the legal, policy, or operational challenges being experienced that prevent the final outlay of awarded funds by the applicable deadline;
- Current status of the activity/activities;
- Approved period of performance termination date and new project completion date;
- Amount of funds drawn down to date;
- Remaining available funds, both federal and non-federal;
- Budget outlining how remaining federal and non-federal funds will be expended;
- Plan for completion including milestones and timeframes for achieving each milestone and the position/person responsible for implementing the plan for completion;
- Certification that the activity/activities will be completed within the extended period of performance without any modification to the original Statement of Work approved by FEMA; and
- Potential impacts if FEMA does not approve the extension request or approves the request for a shorter period of time than requested.

You should contact your SAFER Program Office POC to discuss the POP extension (also refer to the "amendment" section of this guide). Extension requests should be submitted as close to the end of the POP as possible (but no more than 60 days prior to the end of the POP). Prior to submitting the extension request the grant must be current on payment requests and required reporting (refer to applicable sections of this guide).

Note that you do not have to request an extension if you only need to complete reports or request payment after your end date. You will have an automatic 90-day window after the end of your grant to request reimbursement for salary and benefit expenses incurred during the POP.

SAFER Personnel Roster

The SAFER Personnel Roster is a list of the individuals hired to fill the awarded SAFER positions. The list is stored in E-grants and can be updated after the period of performance starts. Only the personnel hired, rehired, and/or retained under the SAFER grant should be listed. Do not enter employees hired prior to award, hired under another SAFER grant, hired using department funding, or hired using local grants.

Follow these steps to complete the SAFER Personnel Roster:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your SAFER grant.
- Select "Manage Grant" from the drop-down menu in the "Action" column, and click "Go."
- You will arrive at the SAFER Payment Request(s) screen.
- Scroll to the bottom of the page and select the "SAFER Personnel Roster" button.
- You will arrive at the "SAFER Personnel Roster" screen. Select the "Add New Employee" to begin the process of completing the Roster. Complete the information requested. Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required.
    - The "Employee ID" field may be the badge number or some other unique identifier used by your department. Do not provide the Social Security Number.

  - In the “Annual Salary” and “Annual Benefits” fields, please enter the actual amounts, regardless of the amounts used in the application or award. If the annual salary or benefit amounts differ from the awarded amount, please use the comments section of the first payment request to explain why. Include certification pay or incentive pay in the annual salary amount. The annual salary number is the amount paid directly to the firefighter. The annual benefit number is the amount paid by the department on the firefighter’s behalf (such as workers compensation, retirement, and insurance).
- After you complete the required fields for the first position, select the “Save and Continue” button at the bottom of the screen.
- You will arrive back at the “SAFER Personnel Roster” screen.
- If you need to edit the information you just entered, select “Update” in the Action column. Or, you can select the “Add New Employee” button.
- Once you are finished, select the “Return to Payment Request(s)” button.

Removing or Replacing SAFER Positions

If a SAFER-funded position leaves the department or is moved to the department’s local payroll, you must first "remove" the employee from the SAFER Personnel Roster before adding their replacement to the roster.

Please **do not** remove a firefighter from the SAFER Personnel Roster until you are ready to immediately replace them with another firefighter (one that is hired after the date of grant award). You will not be able to request reimbursement for any time that a SAFER position is vacant. Vacancies generate unused grant funds. Unless your department has a valid explanation for SAFER vacancies, you will not be permitted to use remaining grant funds through a period of performance extension. Remember that extensions are reviewed on a case by case basis and not guaranteed.

To remove an employee from the SAFER Personnel Roster, follow the steps below:

- From the main SAFER Personnel Roster screen, note the system-generated SAFER position number (far left column of the main SAFER roster screen) for the employee you wish to remove; you will need it in when entering the replacement firefighter. Click on “Update” in the Action column on the far right of the screen.
- On the update screen, indicate "Yes" to the question "Has the employee left the department (or been moved to the department’s budget)?" Enter the date the employee either left the department, or was transferred to the department’s budget and provide an explanatory comment in the box provided.
- Fill in the remaining information requested
- Click on “Save and Continue” at the bottom of the screen. This employee will now appear in red on the screen.
- Then add the replacement firefighter. From the main SAFER roster screen, click the "Add New Employee" button.
- The first question will ask if this is a replacement employee - indicate "Yes."
- The next question will ask what position number this new firefighter is replacing. From the drop-down menu, select the position number noted in step 1 above.
- Complete the rest of the required information - name, annual salary, benefits, etc.
- Click on “Save and Continue” at the bottom of the screen.
- This procedure will allow you to request reimbursement for both the vacating firefighter and the replacement firefighter if they were both employed during the applicable time period, provided their employment periods do not overlap.

- When you are finished, click "Return to Payment Request(s)."

The SAFER Personnel Roster should be updated any time there are changes to annual salary and benefit amounts, or when a firefighter is removed or replaced from the SAFER grant.

Job-shared Positions
If your SAFER grant includes job-shared positions, you should complete the "Full Name" field in the SAFER Personnel Roster with the "position number." Then, in the comments section of the payment request, please list all the individuals that filled that position, the number of hours they worked, and their payroll amounts during the timeframe of the request.

Payment Requests

You will need to submit a payment request through the E-grants system in order to receive SAFER grant funds.

When can you submit a payment request?
You may submit a payment request after the POP has started (refer to the Period of Performance section above).

You will not be able to submit a payment request if:

- You have a pending amendment, payment request, or revision request in the E-grants system;
- You do not have an established staffing maintenance number;
- You have SF-425 Federal Financial Report(s) that have not been submitted;
- You have Quarterly Performance Report(s) that have not been submitted;
- You do not have an approved 1199A Direct Deposit Form (see 1199A Direct Deposit Form section);
- Your banking information has changed (see 1199A Direct Deposit Form section); or
- You have one or more overdue AFG closeout reports (see Closeout section).

If you have any outstanding reports due, you will see red text on the "SAFER Payment Request(s)" screen directing you to submit the reports. The payment request module will be available immediately after the overdue reports are submitted.

How frequently should you submit a payment request?
You may submit for reimbursement of eligible expenses as often as needed but at least quarterly. Failure to request funds in a timely manner creates the appearance that there is no immediate need for funds.

You should request funds for immediate needs, or for salary and benefit costs that have already been paid or incurred. You may also submit a payment request for funds up to 30 days in advance (but not beyond the end of the POP). If you do this, you will need to use the comments section of the request to explain how the amounts were determined. If you receive payment in advance, you may not keep it in your bank more than 30 days.

As noted above, you can only submit one payment request at a time. You will need to wait for one payment to be approved before you can submit the next request.

What period of time should be covered by the payment request?
You must submit reimbursement for full payroll periods rather than attempt to calculate the number of days worked in the period. This will reduce the number of calculations and the possibility of error. The amount of grant funds requested should be consistent with your department's payroll records during the dates covered by the payment request.

If for some reason your department elects to draw less than the actual pay for the firefighters over the timeframe of the request, you will need to notify your SAFER Program Office POC. You should use the comments section of the payment request to explain why you are not requesting actual amounts. You should also note the actual pay and benefit amounts in the comment section for each firefighter.

What expenses are eligible for reimbursement?
You can request payment for actual payroll expenses, including salary and benefits. Only full-time firefighter positions will be funded. Full-time positions are those funded for at least 2,080 hours per year (e.g., 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year).

Only firefighters hired after the grant was awarded are eligible for SAFER reimbursement, unless you were awarded a grant to retain firefighters. Your department may also seek reimbursement for salary and benefits while new SAFER firefighters are in training, if they are employed full-time.

Compensation for a firefighter's normal work schedule is reimbursable but overtime costs are not eligible under this grant (including overtime for holdovers, extra shifts, to attend training, etc.). Only costs for overtime that fire department routinely pay as a part of the base salary or a firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) are eligible. If a SAFER firefighter is out on leave for any reason and you use another SAFER firefighter to fill their position, you will not be able to request reimbursement for that overtime cost.

If your department pays all firefighters extra for working on holidays or for achieving certain certifications or education levels, that pay is reimbursable.

If firefighters are paid a higher rate of pay from time to time by working at a higher rank (i.e. a firefighter works as a driver for several shifts), that cost is reimbursable.

Costs for uniform allowances are also reimbursable if your department has contractually obligated to provide them. If the firefighters are required to produce receipts for purchasing the uniforms to receive the allowance, the cost is not reimbursable but if the firefighters receive the funds regardless of whether they purchase uniforms, it is reimbursable.

If one of your SAFER employees is injured and your department's policy for all firefighters is to pay the difference between the disability pay and the firefighter's normal salary, that amount is reimbursable. The same principle applies to firefighters who may be deployed on military assignment. If your department pays a part of the deployed firefighter's salary while he or she is deployed, and it is your department's policy to do this for all firefighters, that pay is reimbursable. If either one of these situations occur, please provide an explanation in the comment section of the payment request. You may be asked to submit a copy of your department's policy or Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) as documentation.

Anytime firefighters receive additional pay not included in their annual salary or benefits, an explanation must be provided in the comment section of the payment request.

How does SAFER define salary and benefits?

Amounts paid directly to firefighters should be classified as salary. Benefits are costs incurred on behalf of the firefighters. Benefits are defined as follows in the program guidance:

- *Regular compensation paid to employees during periods of authorized absences from the job, such as vacation leave, sick leave, military leave, etc. These costs are absorbed by all organization activities in proportion to the relative amount of time or effort actually devoted to each. Employer contributions or expenses for social security, employee insurance, workmen's compensation, pension plan costs, and the like, whether treated as indirect costs or as direct costs, shall be distributed to particular awards and other activities in a manner consistent with the pattern of benefits accruing to the individuals or group of employees whose salaries and wages are chargeable. Overtime expenses, other than those meeting FLSA requirements, are not eligible as benefits costs.*

If your department does not use actual costs to report benefits, you should provide your SAFER Program Office POC with the method of calculation to be included in the permanent grant file.

Follow these steps to submit a payment request:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your SAFER grant.
- Select "Manage Grant" from the drop-down menu in the "Action" column, and click "Go."
- You will arrive at the SAFER Payment Request(s) screen. You can also arrive at this page by selecting the "Payment Request(s)" link on the left side of the screen.
- Complete the SAFER Personnel Roster (refer to that section above).
- Select the "Create New Payment Request" at the bottom of the page.
- You will arrive at the "SAFER Request for Funds" screen.
- Note that you cannot change the beginning date of the request. If this is your first request, the date will be auto-populated with the first day of the POP. In all future requests, it will be auto-populated with the day that follows the previous payment request.
- Enter the end date of the request. This must be the last day worked by the SAFER firefighters during the last payroll period for which you are seeking reimbursement. This field must be completed with a date after the beginning date and before the end of the period of performance.
- Scroll down until you see the "Create/Modify" button next to the Point of Contact (POC) section. Select the link, complete the fields marked with an asterisk (*), and click "Save and Continue."
    - Enter information for the individual responsible for submitting payment requests at your department or entity. FEMA will contact this individual if there are questions regarding the payment request. No system generated email is sent to this address. This section of the Payment Request must be saved each time before the payment request can be submitted.
- You will be redirected to the "SAFER Request for Funds" page. Notice that the status column next to the Point of Contact field now reads "Complete."
- Next, select "Create/Modify" next to the "SAFER Personnel Roster" section. You will land on the "SAFER Personnel Roster" page. Review the information on the roster. If you need to make a change, select the "Update" link in the "Action" column. You can also select the "Add a New Employee" button. When you are done, select "Save and Continue."
- You will be redirected to the "SAFER Request for Funds" page. Notice that the status column next to both the "Point of Contact" field and the "SAFER Personnel Roster" field now reads "Complete."

- Next, select “Create/Modify” next to the “Hiring” section. You will land on the “Request for Funds – Hiring” page. To request funds for an employee click on the “Update” link for that employee. You will land on the “Funds Request for Employee” page. Complete the fields marked with an asterisk (*) and select “Save and Continue.”
    - Notice that the first six boxes are auto-populated with the information you provided in the SAFER Personnel Roster.
    - Enter the actual salary and benefit amounts requested. If the amounts being requested include special pay such as FLSA allowed overtime, certification pay, holiday pay, etc., that is not already included in the annual salary and/or annual benefits shown in the SAFER Personnel Roster, you must indicate that information in the comments section for each applicable employee. Please be sure to provide details such as number of hours, the additional amounts requested, etc.
    - In general, the actual pay and benefits requested should be proportionate to the time period of the request (the time worked) and the annual salary and benefit amounts.
- You will land on the “Request for Funds – Hiring” screen. Select the “Update” link for another employee, or select “Save and Continue.”
- You will be redirected to the “SAFER Request for Funds” page. The status column next to the “Point of Contact” field, the “SAFER Personnel Roster” field, and the “Hiring” field should not show “Complete.” The amount requested should be auto-populated.
- Scroll up to make sure that the end date is still entered. If not, enter the end date of the request.
- Scroll back down the page and select the “Reimbursement” or the “Advance Drawdown” radio-button.
- Use the comments section of the request to explain any issues with the request. You should also use this section to state the number of pay periods and types of costs included in the request.
- Enter your password, check the box, and select “Save and Continue.”
- Verify that the information you entered is correct. If you need to make changes, select the “Go Back” button. Otherwise, select the “Submit Payment Request” button at the bottom of the page. Once you do so, you will see: “Congratulations, you have successfully submitted your funds request to FEMA.” If you like, you can select the “Print Request for Funds” button. Then, select the “Return to Payments” button at the bottom of the page.
- You will land on the “SAFER Payment Request(s)” page. The status of the payment should now read “pending.”
- You will receive notifications in the Mail Center if your payment has been released for correction, approved, or denied.
    - If the payment is “released,” the request has been reviewed and returned to you for correction. The Primary POC and/or the payment request POC will be contacted by email with instructions for how to correct and resubmit the request.

Quarterly Performance Reports

Quarterly Performance Reports are a monitoring tool used by the SAFER Program Office to ensure you are meeting the staffing maintenance level requirement. The report provides the SAFER Program Office with a snap shot of how the SAFER-funded positions are helping your department meet the applicable NFPA standards.

Since the period of performance is 2 years, you will need to submit 8 performance reports. The quarter begins on the first day of the period of performance (or 180 days after the date of award). Each quarter

lasts 90 days and the report is due within 30 days of the end of the quarter. The Primary POC will receive an e-mail notification from E-grants if you have overdue performance reports. Please note that you will not be able to request payment until you have submitted outstanding performance reports.

Follow these steps to submit a performance reports:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your SAFER grant.
- Select “Manage Grant” from the drop-down menu in the “Action” column, and click “Go.”
- You will arrive at the SAFER Payment Request(s) screen.
- Click on the “Report(s)” link on the left side of the screen.
- You will arrive at the “SAFER SF-425 Semi-Annual Reports & Quarterly Performance Reports” screen.
- Click on the “Quarterly Performance Report(s)” link.
- You will arrive at the “Quarterly Performance Report(s)” screen. If you have a report that is due, you will see it listed on the page, along with a record of the reports you have previously submitted.
- To complete a report, click on the “Update” link in the “Action” column.
- You will arrive at the “Point of Contact” screen. Complete the required fields (those marked with an asterisk). Click “Save and Continue.” If you have previously provided this information, you can simply check it for accuracy and select “Save and Continue.” This section must be reviewed for accuracy and saved each time you submit a quarterly performance report.
- You will arrive at the “Hiring Performance Report” screen. Complete the required fields (those marked with an asterisk). Your answers to the questions should be accurate as of the end date of the quarter. Please refer to the table below for help with specific report questions. Check the “Completed” box and click “Save and Continue.” Do not mark the completed box until you are ready to submit the report.
- You will arrive back at the ““Quarterly Performance Report(s)” landing page. Notice that the “Status” column of the report is now “SUBMITTED.” The “Action” column now allows you to “View” the report you submitted, but you will not be able to edit the information. If you made a mistake and would like to edit the report, you can contact your SAFER Program Office POC and request that the report be released back to you for correction.

Performance Report Question	**Helpful Tips**
Number of SAFER-funded positions from grant	This field is pre-completed with the number of positions you were awarded. You do not have to answer this question.
*1. How many of the SAFER-funded positions awarded under this grant are being filled with career (full-time or job-share) firefighters at the end of the quarter being covered in this report? (Note: For positions that are being job-shared, count "one" for each full-time position, regardless of how many firefighters are filling it [i.e., . do not count the number of personnel filling each job-share position individually]).	Your answer to this question should not exceed the number of positions awarded under this SAFER grant. If your positions are job-shared, answer this question in terms of *full-time positions*, not people. If a SAFER position is vacant as of the end of the quarter, decrease your answer accordingly. This number should not include firefighters hired with other SAFER grants.
*2. Are any of the SAFER-funded positions reported above veterans?	Answer “Yes” or “No” and indicate the number of veterans hired to date under this grant.

If yes, please	
*3. What was the TOTAL operational staffing level at the end of the quarter being covered in this report? (Note: this is the number all paid, full-time or job-share operational positions as well as the number of SAFER- funded positions hired as of the end of this quarter)	Your answer should include all operational positions, including SAFER positions. When answering this question, you may want to refer back to the pre-SAFER roster you submitted at the start of the grant. Add any operational positions that were added since the start of the grant. Job-shared positions count only as one regardless the number of personnel filling the position.
* 4. Of the total operational staffing level indicated in the question above, how many paid, full-time or job-share operational/frontline positions are assigned to field or response apparatus that directly support the department's NFPA 1710 or 1720 compliance as indicated in the grant application? (Note: this information should include the SAFER-funded positions hired to date)	Your answer to this question will be compared to your established Staffing Maintenance Number. Your answer should include the SAFER personnel, even if they are still in a training academy.
* 5. Please describe any changes such as vacancies, military deployments, reductions in staffing levels, etc., in the SAFER-funded or non-SAFER (pre-SAFER) staffing levels during this reporting period. If the department has not filled all the SAFER-funded positions awarded under this grant, please provide details on the steps being taken and a timeline to fill the position(s). If the department is experiencing vacancies (both SAFER and non-SAFER) please provide details on the progress in filling any vacancies previously reported and the additional vacancies currently being reported.	If all the SAFER firefighters have not been hired, explain when that will occur. If operational personnel left the department during the quarter, provide the vacancy dates, the reason they left, and a timeline for filling the vacancies. Please also provide a brief explanation if your department has hired additional, non-SAFER operational personnel.
* I certify that no lay-offs have occurred during the period covered by this request	Answer either "No lay-offs have occurred" or "Lay-offs have occurred"
* How many actual structure fires, as reported to NFIRS, did the department respond to during the quarter being covered in this report?	Answer the number you reported to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS)
*Of the structure fires indicated above, how many did the department respond to in compliance with NFPA 1710 or 1720 standards?	Your answer should correspond to the response time and assembly standards outlined in NFPA 1710 Section 5.2.4.2 and NFPA 1720 Section 4.3
* Has the SAFER program improved the department's compliance with the assembly and deployment standards in NFPA 1710, Section 5.2.4.2 or 1720, Section 4.3?	Answer "Yes" or "No".
*Please explain (click on Help Link for specific information to be addressed in this narrative)	In answer to this question, you should discuss: • How the SAFER firefighters are being utilized by your department to improve NFPA standard compliance (this should be discussed in the first quarter in which the SAFER firefighters were hired,

	and in any subsequent quarters during which their responsibilities or assignment was changed); • What improvements you have seen in your department's operational capabilities, e.g., what is your average response time now as compared to before SAFER; how many firefighters are you able to assemble on a structure fire now as compared to before SAFER? How does this compare to your goals for the SAFER grant? • Obstacles you are facing in your attempts to improve NFPA compliance, including the steps you are taking to overcome them. • Also, if you have experienced any success stories that you feel can be attributed to the increased staffing provided by SAFER, please feel free to include those, too.
* Does the department foresee any obstacles in executing the grant within the period of performance? *If yes, please explain:	Answer "Yes" or "No". Examples of obstacles include, but are not limited to: • Inability to fill some or all SAFER-funded positions within the first two quarters of the period of performance; • Inability to retain SAFER-funded positions and/or minimum pre-SAFER staffing levels due to attrition; • The local governing body's decision that they will not help retain the SAFER funded position(s). You can use this text box to communicate any issue that you are experiencing with this grant.

NFPA 1710 and 1720

SAFER addresses the staffing and deployment sections of:

- NFPA 1710, Section 5.2.4.2 (Initial Full Alarm Assignment Capability), which primarily applies to all-career fire departments and at the combination department's election; and
- NFPA 1720 Section 4.3 (Staffing and Deployment), which primarily applies to all volunteer fire departments and combination departments that do not elect to comply with NFPA 1710.

You may reference these NFPA standards at www.nfpa.org/SAFERActGrant.

SF-425 Federal Financial Report

The SF-425 Federal Financial Report is required of all recipients of federal funding. The report covers a semi-annual period based on the calendar year beginning with the period after the award is made. Grant recipients are required to submit an SF-425 throughout the entire period of performance of

the grant. You must complete all due SF-425 reports before you can submit a request for funds (a payment request).

The reporting period and due dates are:

- January 1 – June 30; due by July 31
- July 1 – December 31; due by January 31

Follow these steps to submit the SF-425:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your SAFER grant.
- Select "Manage Grant" from the drop-down menu in the "Action" column, and click "Go."
- You will arrive at the SAFER Payment Request(s) screen.
- Click on the "Report(s)" link on the left side of the screen.
- You will arrive at the "SAFER SF-425 Semi-Annual Reports & Quarterly Performance Reports" screen.
- Click on the link to "SF-425 Semi-annual Report(s)."
- You will arrive at a page with a link to the SF-425 reports that are due. Click on the date of the report to begin working on the form. Start with the report that is due first.
- Complete the required fields (those marked with an asterisk). Click "Save and Continue."
- You will arrive at a page showing your completed SF-425 in "read-only" view. Review the answers you just entered.
    - If you need to make a correction, you can click the browser return button, or click the "Report(s)" link on the left side of the screen.
    - Once the report is submitted, it cannot be returned to you for correction. If you inadvertently submitted an incorrect report, please contact 866-927-5646 to be directed to a Grant Management Specialist.
- Enter your password, check the box, and select "Save and Continue."
- You will be re-directed to the "SAFER SF-425 Semi-Annual Reports & Quarterly Performance Reports" landing page. If you would like to print the report you just submitted or submit additional federal financial reports, click the "SF-425 Semi-annual Report(s)" link. Then, click on the report you are interested in printing or submitting.

For instructions on how to complete the SF-425, please visit: http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/28389?id=6314 or call 866-927-5646 to be directed to a Grant Management Specialist.

Below are some additional tips that may help you complete the SF-425:

- The report is cumulative and based on the total Federal grant funds received as of June 30 or December 31 of the applicable period.
- Question 7: Select the department's basis of accounting (cash or accrual). You may need to consult with your jurisdiction's finance department, treasurer, bookkeeper or accountant to answer this question.
- Question 10(b): Enter the amount of SAFER grant funds that you *spent* from the amount that you drew down during the period covered by the report. You may have withdrawn funds from your SAFER grant, but you did not spend the entire amount. If you have drawn funds as they were expended, the answer to this question will be the amount of grant funds drawn down. If you submitted a payment request before June 30 or December 31 but did not receive the funds in your bank until after one of those dates, do not include those funds in the total.

- Question 10(e): Since there is no cost share or match required by this grant, the answer to this question should be the same amount that you entered in 10(b).
- Question 10(f): Subtract the number in 10(e) from the number in 10(d) and put the result in 10(f).
- Questions 10(i) and 10(j): Since there is no cost share or match required by this grant, the answer should be 0 for both of these questions.
- Questions 10(l), (m), and (n): Since there is no program income under this grant, you can leave these fields completed with $0.
- Question 12: If you have any additional information, enter it here.
- Note: If this is your first federal financial report due for this grant and you have not drawn down any grant funds, enter 0 in response to questions 10(b), 10(e), 10(i) and 10(j). In Box 10(f) enter the same number as is displayed in 10(d) (total amount awarded).

Amendments

You will need to submit an amendment in E-grants in order to:

- Request to start the period of performance early;
- Request to extend the period of performance; or
- Request a waiver of the staffing maintenance number.

If you are interested in any of the above amendments, contact your SAFER Program Office POC by e-mail to receive instructions. Remember that you can contact your SAFER Program Office POC through the E-grants Mail Center. Your SAFER Program Office POC will respond with the criteria that you need to include in your amendment request and may ask that you send a draft of the request to them by e-mail for review. After your draft request is reviewed by the SAFER Program Office POC, you can submit the amendment request formally through E-grants.

Follow these steps to submit an amendment in E-grants:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your SAFER grant.
- Select “Manage Grant” from the drop-down menu in the “Action” column, and click “Go.”
- Click the “Grant Amendment(s)” link on the left side of the screen.
- Click “Create New Request.”
- When the text box opens, type in your request, following the instructions you received from your SAFER Program Office POC.
    - Remember to provide an exact date if you are requesting to change the period of performance (an exact new start date or exact new end date).
- At the bottom of the page, enter your password, check the box, and select “Save and Continue.”
- Review your amendment request and select “Submit Amendment Request.”
- You can monitor the status of your amendment request on the “Grant Amendment(s)” page.

Closeout

You have 90 days after the period of performance ends to closeout your grant. You cannot incur additional expenses during this period of time, but you can submit outstanding reports and request final payment.

You are also required to submit a closeout report. The SAFER closeout report is submitted and processed through E-grants. When the closeout module becomes available, the Primary POC will receive an e-mail notification through E-grants, so please make sure to keep the contact information for that person up to date. You can also sign up to receive e-mail alerts from AFG at http://www.fema.gov/e-mail-alert-archive.

Follow these steps to access the closeout module in E-grants:

- Log into the E-grant application portal.
- On the "Status" screen, find your SAFER grant.
- Select “Grant Closeout” from the drop-down menu in the “Action” column, and click “Go.”
- If the “Grant Closeout” option is not available, the closeout report for that grant is not available.

After you close your grant, you will receive a formal closeout letter. Since FEMA processes thousands of closeout reports, it may take some time for you to receive the letter.

If you drew down FEMA funds and you need to return them at the end of the grant, you will need to complete the “FEMA Return of Funds Form.” The form and instructions are available at: http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/31261?id=7080

As mentioned above, your SAFER payment request will not be processed until you submit all available AFG closeout reports.

If you have questions about the closeout report, please visit the AFG Closeout Report Tutorial at: http://www.fema.gov/rules-tools/closeout-report-tutorial-closeout-report-sections. You can also contact the Help Desk at 866-274-0960 or send an email to firegrants@dhs.gov.