

Washington, DC -- In an effort to ensure local firefighters and emergency responders have access to the safety gear and equipment they need to protect the public and themselves, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today urged fire and EMS organizations to apply for a new round of federal grants through the Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) program. This year's deadline for filing an AFG application is July 6.

"I strongly encourage all local fire departments and EMS providers to consider applying for federal funding through the Assistance to Firefighters Grants program," Hinchey said. "My office is available to help any applicants with questions or problems they may have with the application process. These grants play a critical role in paying for much-needed new equipment and training that enables our local firefighters and EMS providers to protect the public as well as themselves. These federal grants also relieve local departments of the financial burden associated with purchasing what can often be expensive, but necessary equipment."

The primary goal of the AFG program is to meet the firefighting and emergency response needs of fire departments and nonaffiliated emergency medical services organizations. Since 2001, AFG has helped firefighters and other first responders to obtain critically needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, training, and other resources needed to protect the public and emergency personnel from fire and related hazards.

Hinchey has helped fund the AFG program each year since its inception. To date, nearly \$20 million in federal grants have been awarded to fire and emergency departments in Hinchey's congressional district. The congressman has sponsored a number of workshops across his congressional district to help fire departments successfully navigate the grant application process. Hinchey is also the author of the SERVE (Supporting Emergency Responders' Volunteer Efforts) Act, which would provide a \$1,000 federal tax credit to individuals who are active members of volunteer firefighting and EMS organizations.

Those interested in applying for federal grants this year through the AFG program can get more information on FEMA's website at: www.fema.gov/firegrants. Additionally, grant applicants with questions can contact one of Hinchey's New York offices for assistance.

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