



May 23, 2012

Honorable Mayor
Common Council

Dear Honorable Mayor and Common Council:

Communication from the Fire Chief requesting permission to accept, if awarded, the 2011 FEMA SAFER Fire Act Grant to restore three firefighter positions eliminated in the 2012 Fire Department budget. Grant Control Number 2012-001 / FEMA Grant Number EMW-2011-FH-00540.

Currently, FEMA has started the process to award the 2011 FEMA SAFER Grants. Typically what happens is the fire department will receive notice via email that we have been selected to receive the SAFER grant. As of this Legistar Communication we have NOT received that communication yet. If we do receive a communication from FEMA that we are the successful recipient of the SAFER grant, the reply period is very short given there are numerous awards to be made.

The purpose of this Legistar communication is to highlight Eligible and Ineligible expenses associated with the grant. Additionally, if the City accepts the grant, the fire department staffing level would be fixed at 144 members for a period of two years from the date of the award (141 members plus the rehiring of 3 positions cut in the 2012 budget).

From the FEMA SAFER AFG website:

Restriction on Use of Award Funds - Eligible Expenses

The only eligible costs under the Hiring of Firefighters for new or rehired firefighter's activity are:

- Salary
- Associated benefits (actual payroll expenses) SAFER funding will pay 100 percent of the salary and benefit costs for each funded position (see Appendix 1 for SAFER Grant Definitions)
- Firefighters that are employees at time of and/or hired prior to the award date, except if applying under the retention activity, are not eligible under the Hiring of Firefighters category.
- Overtime costs are not eligible. However, costs for overtime fire departments routinely pay as a part of the base salary or the firefighter's regularly scheduled and contracted shift hours are eligible in order to comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act.
- Federal employees are prohibited from serving in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted for this grant opportunity. Federal employees may not receive funds under this award.
- Only full-time positions will be funded. A full-time position is one position that is funded for at least 2,080 hours per year, i.e., 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year. However, recognizing many departments have shifts exceeding a 40-hour workweek, FEMA also will consider funding the job-sharing of a full-time position if the grantee has sufficient justification. A job-share position is a full-time position occupied by more than one person.



Ineligible Expenses

- Pre-application costs, such as grant writer fees, administrative costs, and indirect costs associated with hiring of firefighters
- Costs for training and equipping firefighters (however, the salaries and benefits of firefighters hired under the SAFER grants while they are engaged in training are eligible.)
- Costs for uniforms and physicals
- Funds to support additional hired positions or funds received from federal, state, or local sources cannot be used to supplant normal operating budgets unless a waiver has been granted. Volunteer and mostly volunteer fire departments may hire individuals to fill officer-level positions such as chief, fire inspector, training officer, safety officer, etc. However, since the purpose of SAFER grants is to enhance incident scene safety, all applicants must certify the primary assignment of all SAFER-funded firefighters will be an operational assignment (e.g., fire suppression) regardless of collateral duties.

Estimated hiring costs for three firefighter positions not eligible for reimbursement under the SAFER Grant include the following:

- Pre-employment physicals - estimated cost \$1,500
- Fire fighting protective equipment in compliance with Wis Stats Comm 14 - estimated cost \$5,000
- Four weeks of fire department orientation and qualification - Estimated cost \$3,000

In all, the estimated non-reimbursable costs are \$9,500. This would need to come out of the existing fire department budget and I anticipate being able to cover these costs.

Other financial impact on future Fire Department budgets in years 2013 and 2014.

The future Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Racine and Racine Fire Fighters Local 321, IAFF calls for a 1% increase in wages for the year 2013. The estimated cost of this wage increase including salary, pension and FICA costs are \$121,758 based on 2012 wages. This figure does not include any other operational cost increases associated with the 2013 budget and assumes health insurance costs remain flat at \$15,145/year for a family plan.

For the year 2014, the collective bargaining agreement calls for a 2% increase in salaries and the corresponding increase in pension and FICA costs for the City. The estimated increase in cost is approximately \$240,425 based on 2012 wages for the year 2014. This figure does not include any other operational cost increases associated with the 2014 budget and assumes health insurance costs remain flat at \$15,145/year for a family plan.

Should the City accept the 2011 FEMA SAFER Grant, the City is making a commitment to maintain staffing at 144 members for two years after the award and will be committing to financially covering the increase in wages, pension, FICA and health insurance costs for those two years.

The fire department needs to maintain staffing levels to not only provide Fire and Emergency Medical Services to the City of Racine, but to provide the same service levels to our contracted areas including Wind Point, North Bay, and Elmwood Park. We also must maintain staffing levels to accommodate the multitude of State and Federal mandates on guaranteed leave in addition to covering firefighters who are injured on the job.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) has a definite impact on fire department staffing. Military Leave also has a significant impact on staffing levels. Short and long-term duty incurred injuries all impact staffing levels. This leads to mandatory overtime to insure we do not brown out or eliminate critical Fire and Emergency Service levels for Racine, Wind Point, North Bay and Elmwood Park. Nobody wants to see Paramedic or Fire companies put out of service due to FMLA, Military Leave and duty-incurred injuries. Our citizens insist that when they have a Medical or Fire emergency the fire department arrives in a timely fashion with adequate personnel to deal with their emergency. Currently we arrive at 84% of our calls in 8 minutes or less. The national standard is 90% of the calls in 8 minutes or less.



It is my earnest recommendation as your Fire and EMS professional, that we accept the 2011 FEMA SAFER Grant, if awarded, to guarantee our emergency services are responsive to the needs of the community and that time delays for emergencies do not continue to grow due to increasing call volume, or the reduction and closing of fire stations in Racine.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Hansen,
 Fire Chief

2002-2011 Emergency Response Time Summary

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Call Volume	8,243	8,265	8,125	8,399	8,474	8,526	9,322	8,966	8,982	9,192

<i>Calls Answered 8 Minutes or less</i>	94.53%	94.23%	94.46%	91.62%	91.05%	88.24%	85.59%	87.00%	86.24%	84.247%
<i>Calls Answered 8 minutes or more</i>	5.47%	5.77%	5.54%	8.38%	8.95%	11.76%	14.41%	13.00%	13.76%	15.752%