



## **NVFC Procedures for AFG/SAFER/FP&S Peer Review**

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is one of nine national organizations that appoint representatives to serve as peer reviewers for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG), Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) and Fire Prevention and Safety (FP&S) grant programs through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

### **How to become an NVFC AFG/SAFER FP&S Peer Reviewer:**

The NVFC maintains a database of pre-approved peer reviewers for each of these programs. Anyone who is interested in representing the NVFC as a peer reviewer may do so via the following steps:

- Possess some sort of volunteer background (could be a retired volunteer, career chief of a combo department, member of an auxiliary, someone who does a lot of work with volunteers, etc.)
- Become a member of the NVFC
- Fill out and submit this [application](#) .
- Have your application approved by one of the NVFC directors representing your state.

### **Annual FEMA Peer Reviewer Process Selection Process**

Once an individual meets the criteria above, they are entered into the NVFC's database of pre-approved reviewers and are notified about peer review panels as they arise. Once the NVFC receives request for peer reviewers from FEMA we e-mail it out to everyone in the approved reviewer database. The number of reviewers that FEMA asks us for varies depending on the program and how many applications were received but it is generally around 30, including in-person, virtual, and alternate reviewers. FEMA often asks the NVFC for additional reviewers because there is frequently a shortage of volunteer peer reviewers. Anyone who responds indicating that they are available for peer review gets added to a list that is eventually submitted to FEMA. FEMA then reaches out to each of the peer reviewers they select via email. FEMA usually selects all volunteer peer reviewers we submit, but this isn't a guarantee.

FEMA requested that peer reviewers possess the following qualifications:

- 1) Advanced understanding of "all hazards" capabilities of fire department (i.e., fire suppression, EMS, Hazmat, rescue, hostile events).
- 2) Possess broad knowledge in a variety of areas within fire and emergency medical services, since they will be reviewing applications from fire departments located throughout the United States.
- 3) Basic knowledge of the AFG/SAFER/FP&S grant programs and their funding priorities.

### **What Happens After FEMA Select Peer Reviewers**

In-person peer reviews take place at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Emmitsburg, MD. Travel to EMI is on a Sunday, work runs through Friday, and return home is on the following Saturday. Just shy of a full week in total. FEMA provides training before the peer review event. Reviewers should be prepared to read and score applications for 8-10 hours per day.

All virtual peer reviewers must have access to a computer or laptop. All in-person reviewers must have a laptop. These computers or laptops must have a current browser version installed. FEMA will conduct login test before the event to ensure reviewers laptops are compatible with the FEMA GO system.

Virtual reviewers are expected to be available the same amount of time as in-person reviewers, however FEMA is aware that emergencies can happen and that virtual reviewers may be in different time zones. FEMA can make accommodation for these instances, but the reviewer must communicate with FEMA ahead of time.

For in-person reviewers, FEMA pays for lodging at EMI and travel. In person peer reviewers are required to purchase a meal ticket prior to arriving at EMI however a FEMA per diem Meals & Incidental Expense line is included on their travel voucher as an offset for the expense.