



COVID-19 federal relief & assistance programs: What's available to EMS?

April 21, 2020

Webinar – Question & Answer Recap

How will in- and out-of-network patients, under the Public Health Fund, be billed?

- That billing is attached to the Administration's guidance related to SMB for COVID-related cases. Unfortunately, at this point, it is unclear, because there have been two different sets of guidance, which overlap and don't agree. We understand that the general assumption among providers is that this was unintentional; it was supposed to apply to patients impacted by COVID, and all other patients' billing would carry on as normal. However, CMS needs to issue more guidance to clarify.

Can funds from the Paycheck Protection Program be used for federal taxes?

- No; can be used for the employer share of state taxes, but not federal.

If we accept Medicare funds from HHS, can we accept funding from FEMA grants?

- Will depend on the specifics of the case. From what is understood, there is no restriction on applying for one but not the other. However, the grant dollars *cannot* apply to the same expense.

Will the Assistance for Firefighters Grants process reopen, or accept amendments to pending applications?

- We encourage you to visit the [AFG website](#), where the most up-to-date information will be available.
- Updated guidance should come out as it relates to COVID-19, but they would take the \$100 million allocated by Congress to the AFG and pour it into the FY2020 application process. There are no indications to reopen it.
- The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program website states: "fire department personnel who have questions about the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program of FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) can reach the AFG Program staff by telephone at 1-866-274-0960, or by e-mail at firegrants@dhs.gov. Sign up to receive the [AFG E-Mail Alert](#) for the most current news releases and updates about the AFG."
- The Federal Register notice of FY 2019 AFG Grant Process, which describes eligibility requirements, is available [here](#).

Is there a billing code for the 20% hazard add-on?

- Yes, there is. It is attached to specific DRGs. An explanation document from CMS can be found [here](#).

If your organization is a small volunteer EMS ambulance agency, is the competitive Assistance to Firefighters Grant the only opportunity you are eligible for?

- If you're a 501(c)(3), you can also apply for PPP loan. If you're a 501(c)(6) or 501(c)(3), you can apply for an EIDL loan.

Can we use PPP loans to pay hazard pay to our employees?

- You would need to confirm with your lender **before** using your PPP funds for that purpose. According to the SBA's definition and [guidance](#): "Payroll costs consist of compensation to employees (whose principal place of residence is the United States) in the form of salary, wages, commissions, or similar compensation; cash tips or the equivalent (based on employer records of past tips or, in the absence of such records, a reasonable, good-faith employer estimate of such tips); payment for vacation, parental, family, medical, or sick leave; allowance for separation or dismissal; payment for the provision of employee benefits consisting of group health care coverage, including insurance premiums, and retirement; payment of state and local taxes assessed on compensation of employees; and for an independent contractor or sole proprietor, wage, commissions, income, or net earnings from self-employment or similar compensation."

Are there any telehealth resources or grants available?

- Yes, there are three programs available. Two new programs through the FCC (COVID-19 Telehealth Program and CONNECTED Care) and one through US Department of Agriculture's Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT). [This report](#) includes details on all three programs.

Does the \$100 million for PPE for FEMA apply for the 2020 application, and will 2019 applications receive higher preference than for other equipment?

- We encourage you to visit the [AFG website](#), where the most up-to-date information will be available
- As noted, the \$100 million for the AFG will be rolled into the FY2020 process.
- The Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program website states: fire department personnel who have questions about the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program of FEMA's Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) can reach the AFG Program staff by telephone at 1-866-274-0960, or by e-mail at firegrants@dhs.gov. Sign up to receive the [AFG E-Mail Alert](#) for the most current news releases and updates about the AFG.
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Under the charitable giving provisions of the CARES Act, can county EMS agencies accept charitable contributions under the program?

- Unfortunately, it's very unlikely, because localities don't typically qualify.

Are local governments eligible for the Employee Retention Tax Credit or the Federal Payroll Tax Deferral?

- Local governments are NOT eligible for the Employee Retention Tax Credit. However, we understand that local governments ARE eligible for the Federal Payroll Tax Deferral.

For the EMPG grants, do states handle through the GEMA agencies?

- Reach out to local, county, and state agencies for additional guidance.
- [EMPG Fact Sheet](#)
- FEMA will award funding to support planning and operational readiness for COVID-19 preparedness and response, development of tools and strategies for prevention, preparedness, and response, and ongoing communication and coordination among federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial partners throughout the response.
- [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#)

Do private LLC ambulance companies qualify for the Disaster Relief Fund Public Assistance Grant for emergency hazard pay?

- There is private nonprofit eligibility, but do not believe so for LLCs. Important to get as broad of an application as possible.
- For eligibility requirements please refer to pages 9-14 of FEMA's Public Assistance [Program and Policy Guide](#).

Can any of these grants apply to education and training?

- Yes; specifically, it will be spread across different programs, but most will be through the FEMA grants. While some for the medically specific can fall under the Provider Fund, it remains to be seen what the strings are for that additional funding. The Assistance for Firefighter Grants could also qualify.
- [FEMA Public Assistance Policy and Program Guide](#) outlines eligible use of the grant funds. Please visit
- [Assistance for Firefighters Grants Frequently asked Questions](#)
- The FEMA website states to receive the biweekly AFG Email Alert, go to the [AFG E-Mail Alert signup page](#) and enter your e-mail address or send an e-mail request to firegrants@fema.dhs.gov.

Can you provide a list of FEMA and CDC offices?

- [FEMA regional and state offices](#)
- [CDC State and Territorial Public Health offices](#)