



## Legislation Text

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### **Fire and Emergency Services Staffing and Deployment and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant (B)**

**This item recommends the Commission hear a presentation on the staffing and deployment of Gainesville Fire Rescue (GFR) resources and the FY2017 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant.**

On April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018, the Commission authorized the Manager to submit and accept if awarded an application for funding of firefighter positions to staff a four-person aerial apparatus through the FY2017 Federal SAFER Grant. On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2018 the Department of Homeland Security notified Gainesville Fire Rescue (GFR) that the City has been awarded \$1.9 million in SAFER funding for a three-year period of performance.

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, the Fire Services Assistance Agreement (FSAA) between the City of Gainesville and Alachua County expired. The short-term Automatic Aid Agreement (AAA) became effective June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and will expire September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The FSAA provided many years of automatic aid for nearly all types of calls for service within the city limits and a limited area of Alachua County surrounding the City. The AAA increased GFR's responses and limited the responses into each other's jurisdictions to a specific group of high-risk, high-consequence incident types. It also addressed Alachua County Fire Rescue (ACFR) Station 80, formerly known as Station 19, at 2000 SW 43<sup>rd</sup> Street. It has been inside the city limits since a June 2009 annexation and the AAA assured the relocation of the apparatus from this station into the County jurisdiction by the end of Fiscal Year 2019 which will increase the response demand on GFR resources. Responses by city and county units primarily serving the southwest area from September 2017 through August 2018 totaled more than 4,600 which exceeds the sustainable annual response capacity for a single unit of 3,000 by 53%.

GFR is an all-hazards department providing fire suppression, medical response, hazardous materials mitigation, technical rescue, and other services. Demand has experienced a steady period of growth through annexation and increased population density for many years which not only increases the need for depth in resources to meet daily call loads, but also the need for additional locations to distribute the available resources effectively.

The guidelines for deployment of resources to effectively respond to emergencies are provided by several nationally recognized entities. Of foremost consideration for these standards is the element of time: The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines for engaging in structural firefighting and providing advanced life support measures call for a four-minute travel benchmark. The Department of Labor Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) guidelines include the expectation that a minimum of four personnel are required to initiate firefighting tasks with one team of two firefighters attacking the fire and a second team of two firefighters to support and rescue the first team while awaiting the arrival of additional personnel (known as "two-in/two-out"). The Insurance Services Office (ISO) evaluates the City's ability to engage in effective firefighting by considering the relationship in distance between available engine and aerial apparatus and the multi-story building stock requiring protection (known as "needed fire flow"), and the number of firefighters that can be assembled.

The primary factor affecting positive outcomes for emergency responses is rapid intervention. This requires the immediate availability of appropriately trained personnel on adequately staffed and properly equipped apparatus. Staffing apparatus with four personnel rather than three has been proven to improve the functional capability of the unit to immediately and safely engage in structural firefighting and to also accomplish the many tasks required for advanced cardiac life support and achieve increasingly successful return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC) rates. The data support that adequate staffing saves more lives.

For fire suppression response the City of Gainesville staffs six (6) engines and three (3) aerials; the third aerial is staffed with overtime funding which would be offset by the SAFER grant personnel. One commercial or multi-family structure fire requires a minimum of three engines and two aerials as well as a squad and two district chiefs. There is also a significant amount of time commitment before any fire company can return to service after engaging in firefighting. Two structure fires within overlapping or close time periods could effectively deplete the entire on-duty GFR resources. Without adequate resources and without an automatic aid agreement, the City would experience lower availability and significant time delays attempting to secure additional resources through mutual aid requests.

The City has 30 days after the notice of award to accept the grant. SAFER funding must be accepted by September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018 and the hiring process should begin as soon as possible to meet the target of February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2019 to comply with the grant requirements.

The total estimated additional personnel cost for FY19 is \$1.1 million. The grant will provide funding at 75% of the personnel costs for FY19 and FY20. It will drop to 35% in FY21. The City will need to bear the full costs of the program starting in FY22. The matching portion of the grant for FY19, estimated to be \$277,000, will be covered within the FY18-19 available budgets. The costs related to the balance of the grant term will need to be appropriated as part of future budgets.

The City Commission: 1) hear the presentation; and 2) provide any additional guidance prior to formal acceptance of the grant.