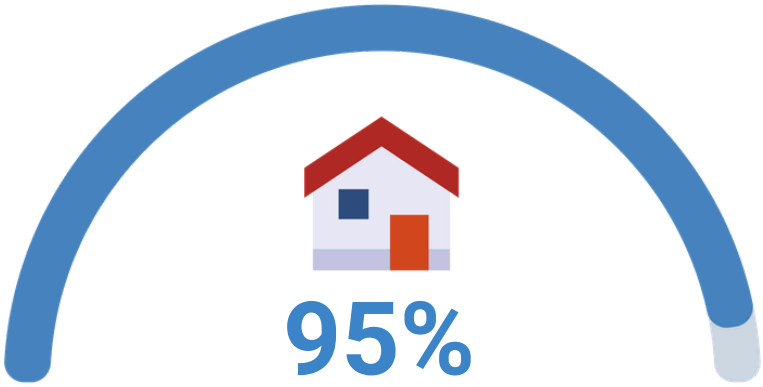
How is Clackamas Fire funded?

Clackamas Fire is a special district funded directly by the residents and businesses within its service boundaries. The predominant revenue source is property taxes.

Total projected revenue for fiscal year 2026-27 is $102.7 million.



95%

the percentage of Clackamas Fire's revenue that comes from property taxes

Clackamas Fire has three sources of property tax revenue:

$2.40/ $1,000

Permanent Tax Rate: Clackamas Fire's standard property tax rate is $2.40 per $1,000 of assessed value, capped by Measure 5. This revenue supports our core operations in the General Fund and also the replacement of capital assets.

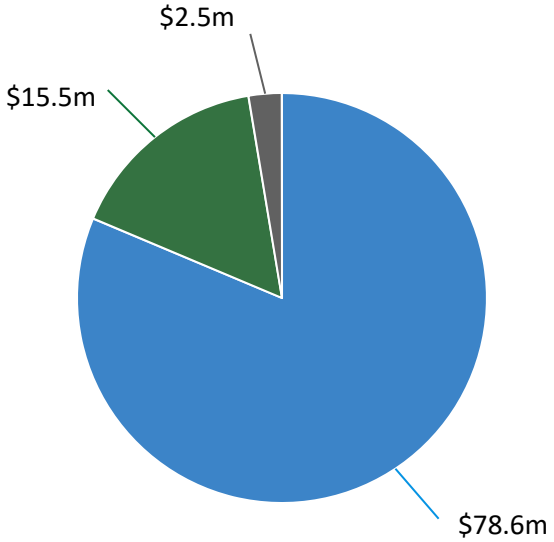
$0.52/ $1,000

Emergency Services Levy: Voters approved an extra $0.52 per $1,000 tax rate in 2023. This revenue supports our core operations in the General Fund. Voter levies must be renewed every 5 years.

$0.08/ $1,000

General Obligation Bond: Voters approved a $29 million general obligation bond in 2015 for capital improvements and apparatus purchases. This tax is dedicated to the debt service on the bonds through 2032 and is not part of the district's General Fund.

Estimated 2026-27 Property Tax Revenue

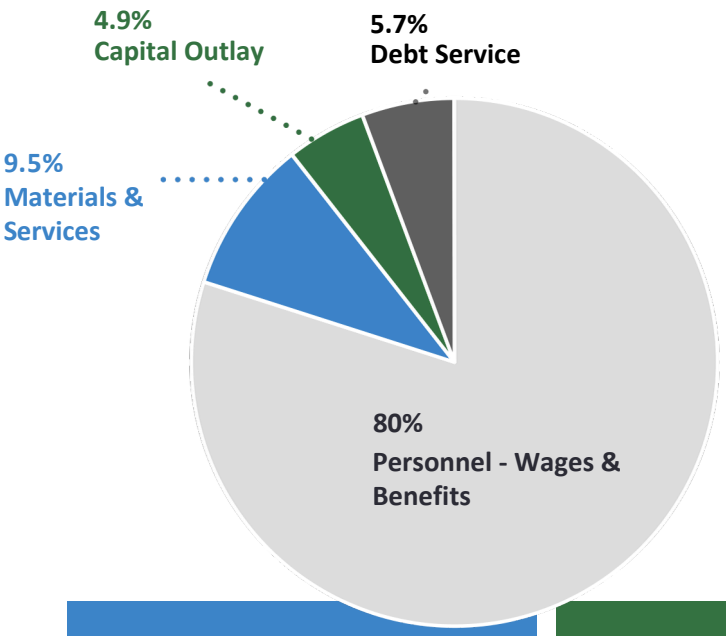


How does Clackamas Fire spend its funds?

CLACKAMAS FIRE

Clackamas Fire's total fiscal year 2025-26 expenditures were $103.6 million. The majority of the district's spending is for its people.

2025-26 District Expenditures



Personnel - Wages & Benefits
$82.9 million

Clackamas Fire's largest expense is for the salaries, overtime, and benefits for employees.

The largest category of employees (81%) are firefighters responding to fire and medical emergencies 24/7 from the district's fire stations.

The district also has 40-hour administrative and support employees including chiefs, emergency medical services, human resources, training, wellness and safety, fire prevention and investigations, public education and community services, strategic services, finance, logistics, fleet, communications, and facility services.

Materials and Services
$9.8 million

Goods and services purchased from vendors for district operations, from uniforms to auditing services.
Significant expenditures include:

- County services for 9-1-1 dispatch
- EMS supplies
- IT vendors and software
- Property and liability insurance
- Utilities
- Fuel
- Vehicle parts
- Facility maintenance

Capital Outlay
$5.1 million

Investments in replacing and maintaining physical assets, such as fire apparatus, stations and building systems, personal protective equipment, firefighting equipment, radios, and IT infrastructure.

Major expenditures in FY 2025- 26 included several replacements:

- Fire engine ($1 million)
- Protective turnouts ($300,000)
- Radios ($400,000)

Debt Service
$5.9 million

The district makes principal and interest payments on three outstanding debts:

- A general obligation bond passed by voters to finance new fire stations and fire apparatus.
- A 2018 financing agreement to fund facility improvements.
- A pension bond to pay down the district's PERS liability.

Why did Clackamas Fire ask voters to approve an emergency services levy in 2023?

CLACKAMAS FIRE

With population growth, increasing emergency call volume, and growing wildfire risk, the district's existing property tax revenues were not keeping up with the community's need for services.

Budget Cuts

In 2021-22, fire district leadership recognized that Clackamas Fire had been providing a higher level of service than its revenue could support. This led to service and staffing reductions over 2022 and 2023 in order to balance the district's budget.

-$3.6 million

Projected budget deficit in 2021-22 if the district did not take action to reduce expenses

59 to 54

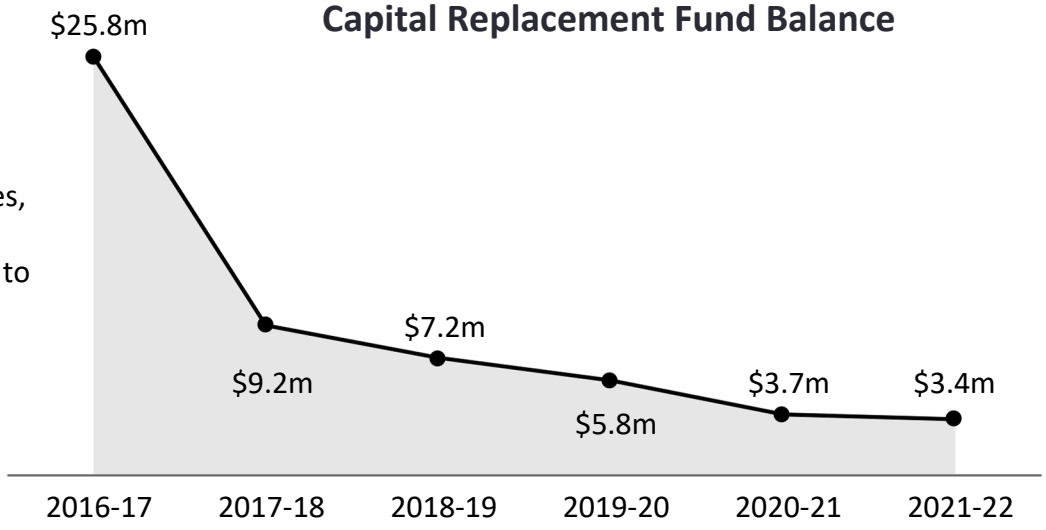
Reduction in daily on-duty firefighter staffing in 2022 to balance the district's budget

-9 FTE

Reduction in support and administrative positions through layoffs and attrition across 2022 and 2023 to balance the district's budget

Capital Funding

Capital reserves had also been depleted, limiting the district's ability to add wildfire-capable apparatus; to replace fire engines, personal protective equipment, and firefighting equipment; and to maintain district facilities.



Voter approval of the 2023 levy has stabilized the district's finances, enabled the district to increase staffing and service levels, and restored the district's capital funding.

What has Clackamas Fire accomplished since the approval of the 2023 emergency services levy?

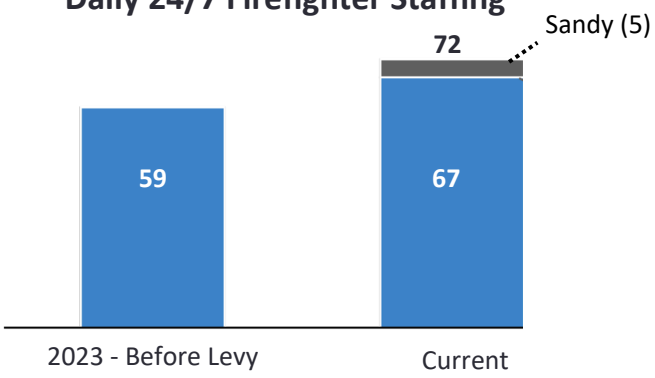
CLACKAMAS FIRE

Levy funding focused on increasing firefighter staffing and enhancing wildland response capability. The district has also strengthened its capital investments, support capacity, and overall financial health.

Added firefighters and fire stations

- Hired and trained 76 new firefighters
- Increased number of firefighters on duty each day from 59 to 72
- Opened Station 12 and Station 13
- Added a Quick Response Vehicle

Daily 24/7 Firefighter Staffing

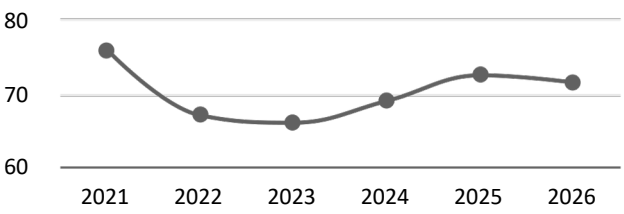


Financial resiliency

In a challenging fiscal environment of inflation, slowing property tax growth, and declining ambulance revenue, Clackamas Fire:

- Had a balanced budget the last 4 years
- Avoided service reductions & restored many support positions

40 hour support & admin positions



Improved wildland response capability

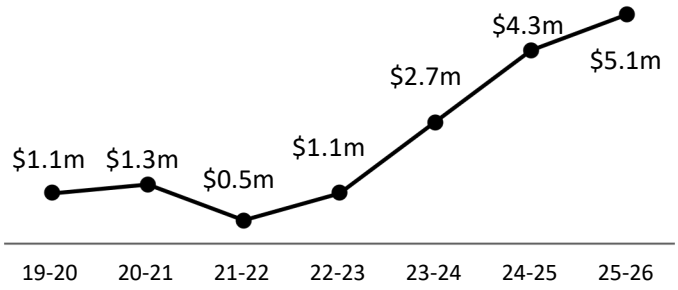
- Opened Stations 12 and 13 to provide extra resources in wildland-urban interface
- Nearly tripled the district's wildland-capable apparatus from 7 to 19
- Continued to staff the district's seasonal wildland handcrew
- Implemented a helicopter response pilot program

Critical capital improvements

Corrected under-investment in critical district assets:

- Modernized training center & classrooms
- Ordered 5 replacement fire engines & fully refurbished 2 fire engines
- Replaced expired personal protective equipment
- Replaced aging and failing building systems in fire stations including HVAC and roofs

Capital Expenditures



www.clackamasfire.com

How essential is the emergency services levy to Clackamas Fire's operations?

CLACKAMAS FIRE

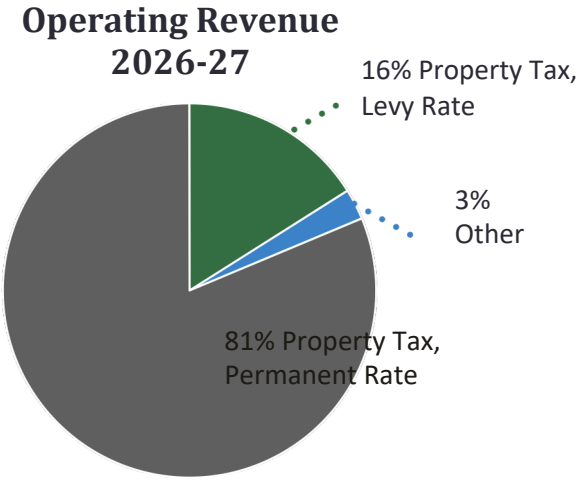
The voter-approved emergency services levy provides about $15.5 million in annual revenue allowing Clackamas Fire to provide a higher level of service. Clackamas Fire would look much different without it.

Revenue from Clackamas Fire's 2023 emergency services levy has enabled Clackamas Fire to:

- **Add 8 firefighters to each daily shift**
- **Reopen and fully staff Stations 12 and 13 with career firefighters**
- **Increase wildland mitigation and response**
- **Achieve a balanced budget for 4 straight years**
- **Absorb unprecedented cost increases without service reductions**
- **Fund investments in critical capital assets**

The levy provides 16% of Clackamas Fire's total operating revenue, or $15.5 million.

Without these funds, Clackamas Fire would be forced to make substantial service reductions.



What does $15.5 million look like?



77 full-time firefighter positions
The average annual salary and benefits for a suppression firefighter is $200,000.



Over 5 fire stations
The annual cost of operating a single fire station staffed 24/7 with 3 firefighters, including labor, equipment, and utilities is about $2.9 million.



The total annual salaries and benefits for the district's 72.5 General Fund administrative and support personnel: $14.2 million. These positions provide essential district services including fleet & facility maintenance, fire investigations, community services, wellness, human resources, and leadership.



The entire materials & services budget for the General Fund: $10.3 million. This is the total amount the district spends on all the goods and services necessary to run the district from uniforms to software to vehicle parts.

What is Clackamas Fire's current financial condition?

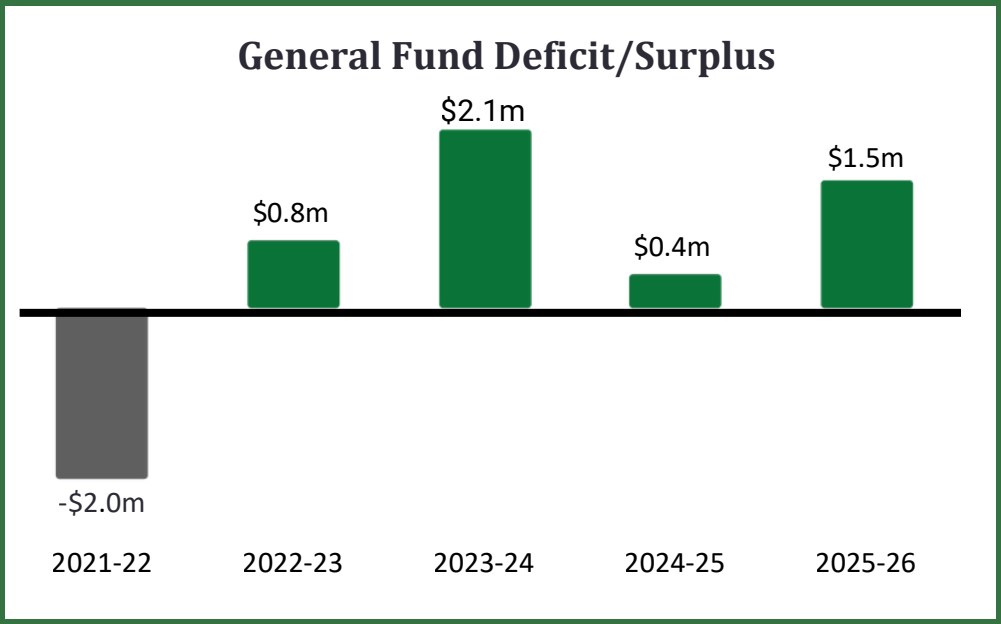
CLACKAMAS FIRE

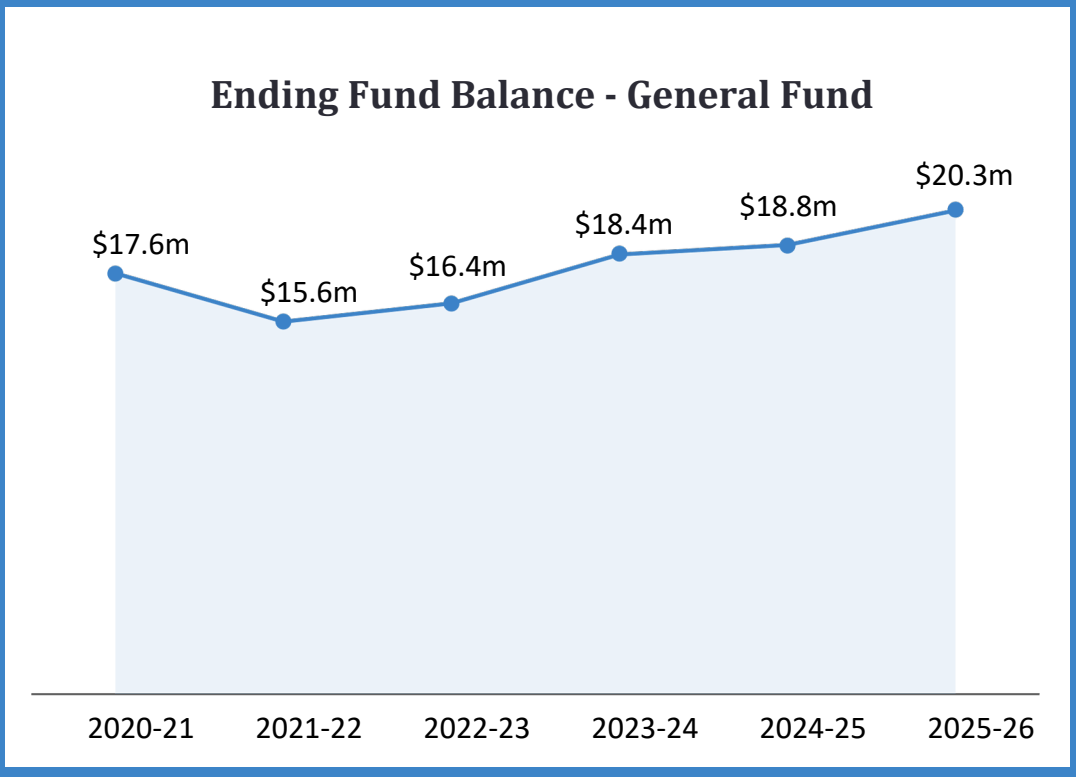
Clackamas Fire has a balanced budget with healthy reserves. The district's financial condition is stable due to the 2023 voter-approved emergency services levy, a lean operations model, and sound financial practices.

A Balanced Budget

The district recovered from a structural budget imbalance in 2022. Since then, we have achieveved modest budget surpluses the last four fiscal years.

Keeping expenditures aligned with revenues is a priority for maintaining Clackamas Fire's financial health.





Healthy Reserves

A standard measure of a government agency's financial health is its fund balance, which Clackamas Fire has been rebuilding.

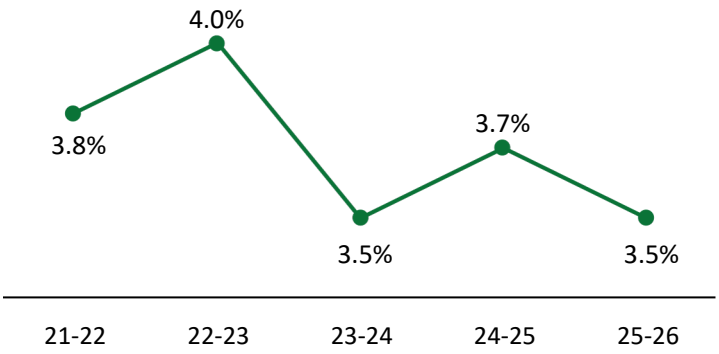
A modest fund balance reduces costly borrowing and provides a cushion for emergencies and economic downturns.

What are the main budgetary constraints Clackamas Fire is operating under?

CLACKAMAS FIRE

A major financial challenge in recent years has been that expenses are growing faster than property tax revenue. With voter approval of the emergency services levy and sound financial management, Clackamas Fire has still been able to increase firefighter staffing and services during a challenging economic environment.

Annual Change in Assessed Value



Revenue Limitations

95% of our revenue comes from local property taxes. The State Constitution limits annual growth in residents' assessed value (the value that property taxes are based on) to 3%, even if the real property value grows by more. In periods when new residential and commercial property construction are low, Clackamas Fire's revenue does not grow as much.

As shown in the figure to the left, annual assessed value growth has been between 3.5% and 4% over the last 5 years.

Higher Expenses

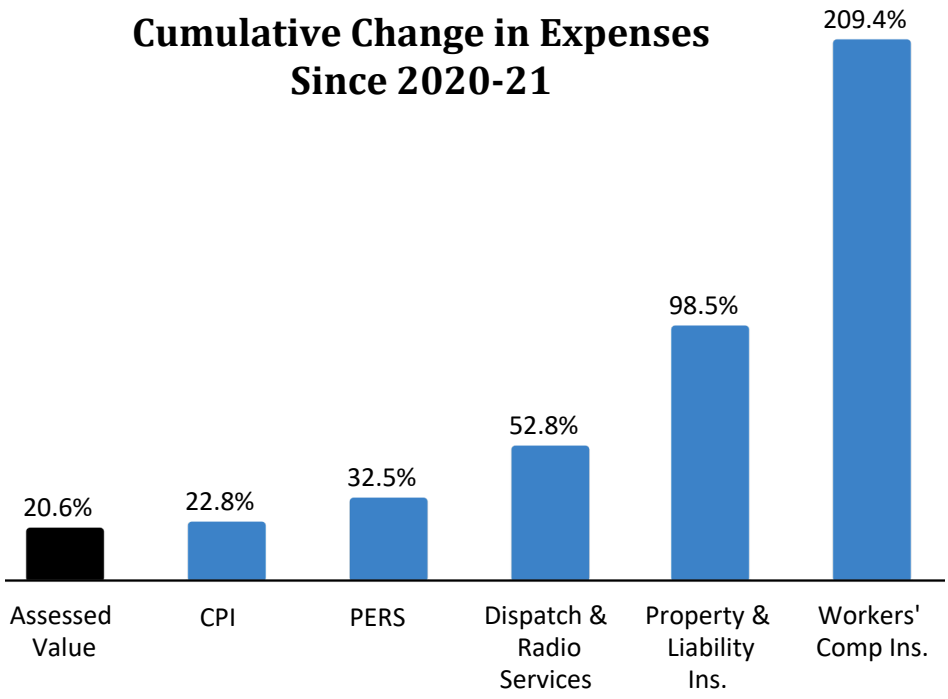
Expenses have outpaced Clackamas Fire's assessed value growth in recent years.

CPI, a standard measure of inflation, has been higher than the district's assessed value growth, but several specific expenses have grown even more.

Capital expenses have also increased. A new fire engine cost $1.1 million in 2026, up from $538,000 in 2017 (a 113% increase).

It is challenging to absorb cost increases within the district's budget and maintain services.

Cumulative Change in Expenses Since 2020-21

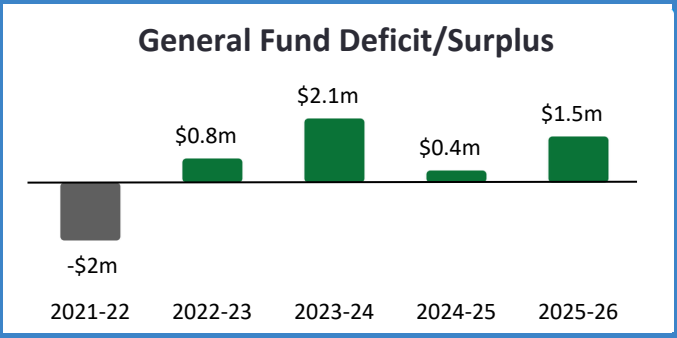


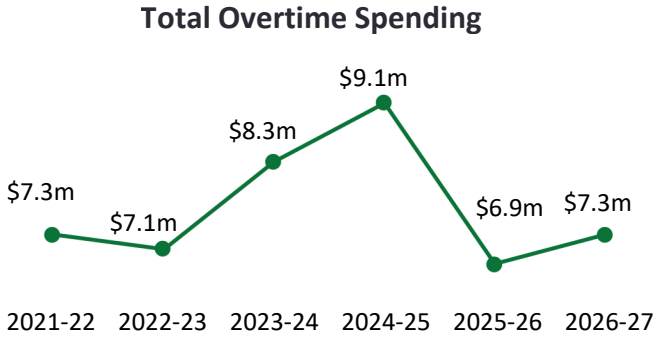
How is Clackamas Fire planning for a sustainable future?

A key organizational priority is our long-term financial health and being good stewards of taxpayer funds. We practice sound financial management to ensure Clackamas Fire can provide consistent and reliable service for years to come.

Grow Responsibly

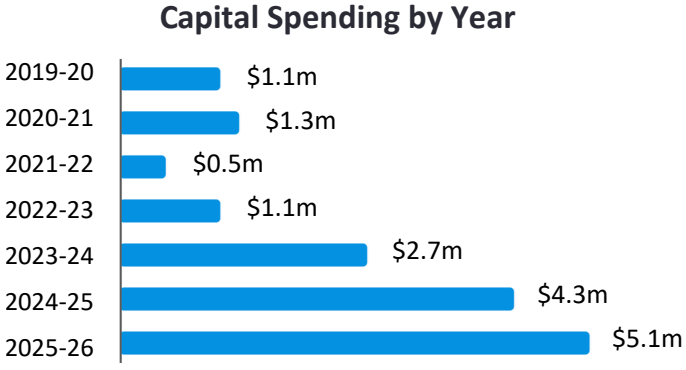
Clackamas Fire must (and does) live within our means. The district's goal to increase service levels will only happen when such growth is supported by adequate revenue. We avoid "boom and bust" cycles by evaluating any spending against revenue forecasts, ensuring spending is in alignment with our resources.





Control Spending

We are a lean organization focused on identifying efficiencies, and have controlled spending, including overtime. Clackamas Fire also has fewer support staff than comparable agencies by leveraging technology and outside vendors.

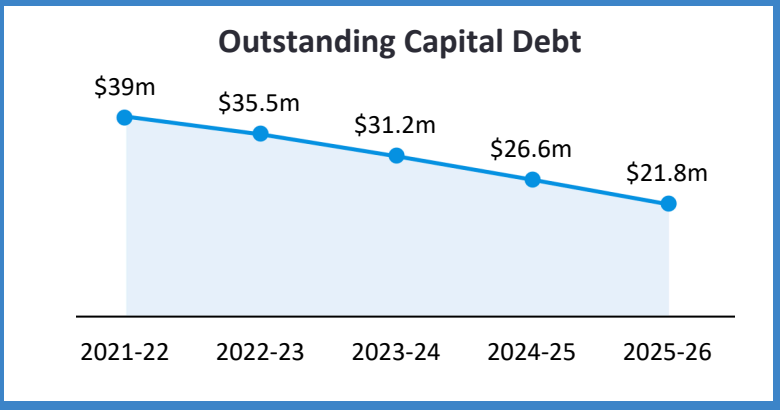


Adequately Invest in Capital Assets

After years of "kicking the can down the road," the district recognized that we needed to rebuild our capacity to replace critical assets. Allocating funds to replace fire engines, personal protective equipment, and fire stations is critical for community and firefighter safety, and a key aspect of planning for a sustainable financial future.

Manage Liabilities & Debts

Sustainable growth requires a long-term outlook. Clackamas Fire's largest liabilities are PERS and capital debt. We leveraged state funds to make a $2 million prepayment on our PERS liabilities in 2025-26, and also continue to consistently reduce outstanding debt.



Staffing at Clackamas Fire: Hiring vs. Overtime

CLACKAMAS FIRE

Clackamas Fire must have enough firefighters to staff stations 24 hours a day. A common question is whether it makes more sense to hire additional firefighters or to staff stations with firefighters working overtime.

Clackamas Fire's emergency response model has a minimum of 72 suppression firefighters on duty each day. Maintaining this minimum staffing at fire stations 24 hours a day, 365 days per year means the fire district must have methods to fill shifts when an employee is absent because of vacation, sick, or injury leave.

Option 1: Hire more firefighters

The first option is to have extra firefighters on shift each day at regular pay to fill vacancies. If there are not many vacancies, then the district is able to have more firefighters on duty. This option requires the fire district to hire a larger workforce.

Option 2: Firefighter overtime

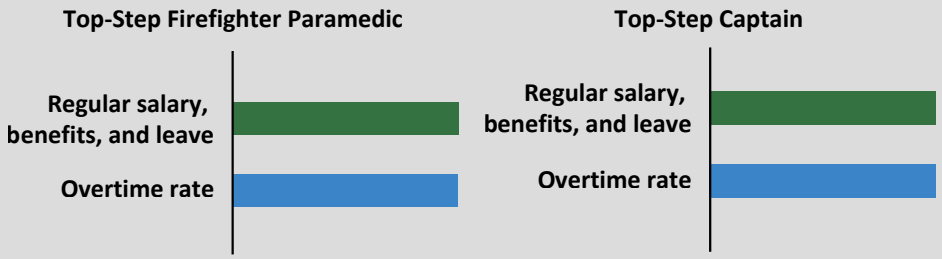
The second option is to bring in off-duty firefighters at overtime rates to fill the leave vacancies each day. This reduces the overhead costs of hiring additional firefighters, such as medical benefits, but overtime rates are 1.5 times regular pay.

Clackamas Fire utilizes both of the above options, staffing extra firefighters each day while also maintaining a leave replacement overtime budget of more than $6 million.

Financial considerations

There is not much financial difference between hiring a firefighter versus filling shifts with existing firefighters working overtime. Costs vary by rank and certification, but, in general, the 24-hour cost of a permanent full-time firefighter taking into account their benefits and leaves is very close to the cost of 24 hours of overtime.

Cost of a 24 hour shift



Other Considerations

Health & Wellness: Researchers have identified many health concerns with firefighting schedules including sleep disruption, adverse cardiovascular effects, mental health challenges, and increased cancer risks. Excessive overtime increases the number of hours, including consecutive shifts, that firefighters are on duty.

Redundancy & Emergency Preparedness: Hiring more firefighters increases the pool of available personnel for callback to major emergencies or disasters.

Work-Life Balance: Additional overtime shifts can disrupt firefighters' families and social lives.

What are Clackamas Fire's personnel costs?

CLACKAMAS FIRE

Clackamas Fire's total personnel budget for fiscal year 2025-26 is $82.9 million. It is our largest expense. Employee costs include wages, taxes, retirement, and benefits.

Personnel expenses make up 80% of our total expenses, and 89% of operating expenses (excluding capital outlay and debt service).

Most personnel are suppression firefighters working in fire stations responding to emergencies. A smaller share of personnel are administrative and support personnel including fleet mechanics, public educators, fire inspectors, and office staff. Volunteer firefighters also respond to emergencies.

395 active employees

320 fire suppression

75 admin & support*

32 volunteers

*Includes 17 fire suppression personnel in administrative and support positions.

In addition to paying employee wages, personnel costs also include taxes and benefits. For the average employee, wages make up about 59% of the total cost of the employee:

Cost distribution for average employee

