

OREGON STATE FIRE MARSHAL

2024

# SUBCOMMITTEE ON RURAL STRUCTURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICTS HOUSE BILL 2522



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PREPARED AUGUST 2024



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# INTRODUCTION

House Bill 2522 (2023) directed the Oregon State Fire Marshal to create a task force to develop recommendations to modernize and improve the structural fire protection operations of rural fire protection districts and to make the operations more efficient, effective, and sustainable.

The task force was made of Oregon fire service experts, including:

- Roger Johnson, Sisters Camp Sherman Fire Chief, task force chair
- Christopher Griffin, Tangent Rural Fire District Chief
- Genoa Ingram, Oregon Fire District Directors Association Executive Director
- Mike Cook, Chiloquin Fire & Rescue Chief
- Irik Rinnert, Oregon State Fire Fighters Council District Vice President
- Brian Stewart, Clackamas Fire District Assistant Chief
- Mike Hussey, Jackson County Fire District #3 Chief
- Ben Stange, Polk County Fire District 1 Fire Chief
- Ty Darby, McMinnville Fire District Assistant Chief Fire Marshal
- Kevin Cameron, Marion County Commissioner
- James Cleavenger, Oakridge City Administrator
- Karl Koenig, Oregon State Fire Fighters Council President
- Travis Medema, Oregon State Fire Marshal Chief Deputy
- Mariah Rawlins, Oregon State Fire Marshal Assistant Chief Deputy

Beginning October 2023, the task force met monthly until August 2024 to perform a comprehensive review of Oregon Revised Statute Chapter 478. The group examined ways to modernize rural fire protection districts. These recommendations and observations will lead to a more robust, modern, and efficient Oregon fire service.

# MESSAGE FROM THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

I am pleased to present this report, a comprehensive evaluation of Oregon's current statutes governing rural fire protection districts. Originally enacted in 1957, these statutes were intended as a temporary measure—a bridge to support the growing needs of fire protection at that time. However, over the decades, these rural fire protection districts have evolved far beyond their original mandate, now playing a vital role in safeguarding the lives and property of Oregonians.

Today, rural fire protection districts make up the majority of fire protection services across our state. Their contributions extend well beyond fighting fires; they are integral to fire protection, emergency response and emergency medical services that protect the well-being of our communities. As our state continues to grow and face new challenges, it is essential that we ensure our legal frameworks reflect the current and future needs of these districts.

This report serves as a guiding document in our efforts to modernize the statutes. It provides an in-depth analysis of the current state of rural fire protection in Oregon, identifies areas for improvement, and outlines recommendations for legislative changes. Our goal is to empower these districts with the tools and authority they need to continue providing exemplary service in the years to come.

We are committed to working closely with our partners in the legislature, the fire service community, and the public to ensure that this modernization effort is both thoughtful and effective. Together, we can build a stronger, safer future for all Oregonians.

State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple







# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

- Create a shared understanding of the current state of rural fire protection districts.
- Define problems, gaps, and challenges.
- Identify and recommend ORS 478 changes within the scope of [House Bill 2522](#) (2023).
- Recommend changes that modernize and improve structural rural fire protection district operations.
- Identify and develop recommendations for relating Oregon Revised Statutes to rural fire protection districts.
- Scope, and where applicable consider, other existing Oregon fire service initiatives or workgroups that improve rural structural fire protection districts.
- Identify opportunities and work needed for creating efficiencies within rural fire protection districts.

[Read the task force charter here.](#)

# RURAL STRUCTURAL FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT HISTORY

House Bill 2522 represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of fire protection in Oregon, reflecting significant changes over the past several decades. Originating from a landscape where rural fire protection districts (RFPDs) served as the primary fire protection in areas beyond city service areas, the legislation acknowledges the shifting paradigm toward a comprehensive and modern approach to firefighting and emergency response.

Dating back more than 50 years, the original statutes governing fire protection were crafted when RFPDs acted as the fallback solution in regions not covered by municipal fire services. Fire districts were designed around Oregon's small- and medium-sized communities, centered on efficiency of consolidation and focused service. The contemporary landscape reveals a stark transformation, with 64 percent of all fire agencies classified as rural fire protection districts. Once functioning as fire response entities, RFPDs have evolved into vital districts to provide all-hazard emergency response.

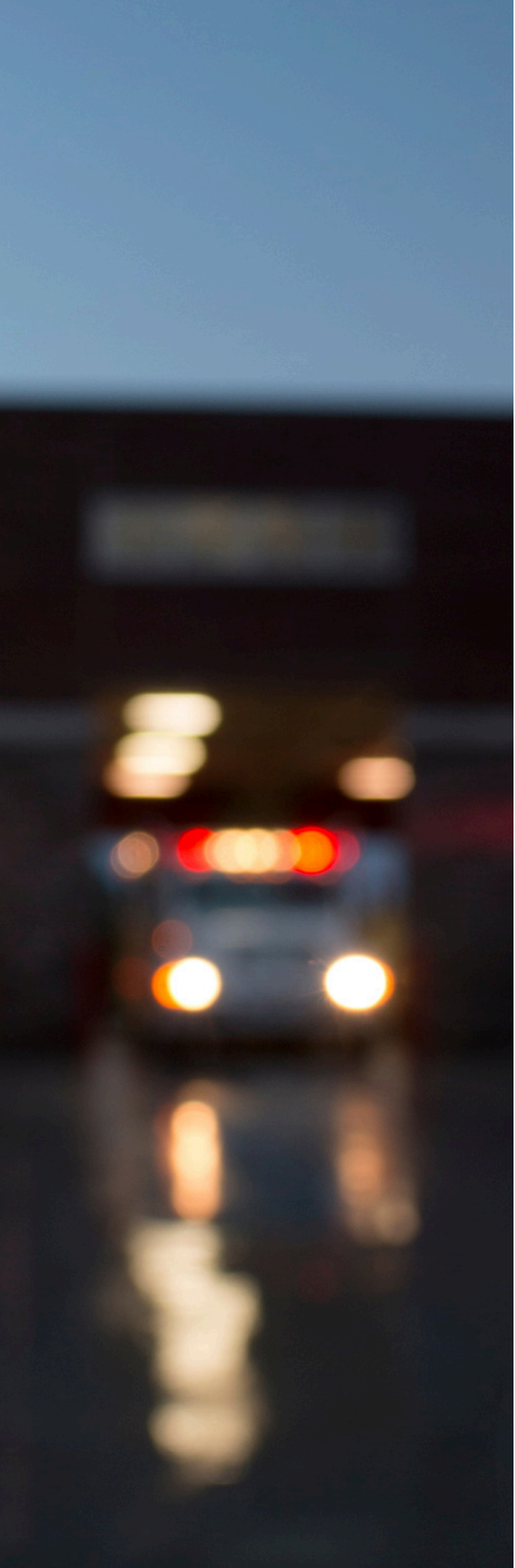
Oregon's 306 fire agencies are organized into four categories.

1. City fire departments
2. Rural fire protection districts (RFPD) or special districts
3. Contract service providers operating on a for-profit basis, including private, fire departments operating on a subscription basis
4. Others:
  - Kingsley Field Air Force Base (federal)
  - Tribal fire departments

*For the purposes of this report, the word 'agency' is used to describe all fire response departments, districts, and agencies.*







The existing statutes fail to adequately reflect this diversification and evolution within rural fire protection districts, necessitating a comprehensive review and update.

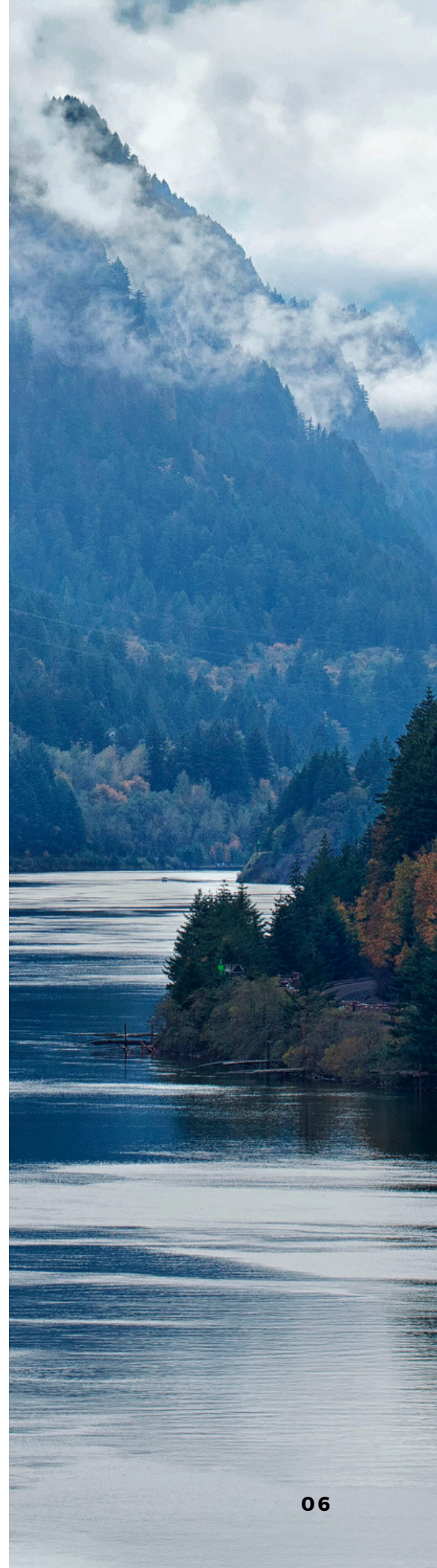
Several challenges prompted the call for review. Population growth, the encroachment of wildfire into urban areas, the increasing demands of emergency medical services, and a rising epidemic around drugs and houselessness show the urgency for modernization. The wildfire crisis reshaped priorities and resources, increasing fire agency workloads, particularly in responding to areas outside jurisdictions such as coastal regions and tourism hotspots like Central Oregon and the Oregon coast.

In the 1990s, state voters passed measures 5 and 50. Measure 5 introduced taxation limits that can result in “compression” and Measure 50 established permanent tax rates, rolled back tax levies to previous levels, and limited tax growth to three percent per year on existing structures. This is why so many local governments, including fire districts, rely on voter-approved local option levies or bond levies to fund operations and equipment purchases. Fire districts were funded for firefighting but now face a much greater and varied demand for service, especially with underfunded medical responses.

A shift within fire service personnel composition has been observed with volunteer firefighters on the decline and fewer applications from people seeking a career in the fire service. This trend exacerbates staffing and workload challenges while straining the capacity of smaller agencies facing substantial demand for services.

Considering these developments, the time has come to revise ORS Chapter 478 to align with the contemporary realities of fire protection in Oregon. While certain areas and topics, such as regulations pertaining to the Oregon Department of Forestry, burning practices, smoke rules, and forest land classification, are excluded from the scope of this review, this task force and report has the goal of addressing the pressing needs and priorities identified by partners across the state.

Other groups are running in parallel to the efforts of this 2522 task force, including a wildfire funding workgroup established by a Senate Bill 4133 budget note (2024), an emergency medical services (EMS) modernization workgroup established by House Bill 4081 (2023), the Senate Bill 762 (2021) Wildfire Programs Advisory Council (WPAC), and the Governor's Fire Service Policy Council Convening of the Oregon Fire Service (2024).





# FINDINGS & CHALLENGES

Oregon Revised Statute 478 was the focus of this task force and report. The group acknowledges the long journey throughout the past 50 years and identified the following challenges that need to be addressed. The task force explored related challenges that may not appear in statutes.

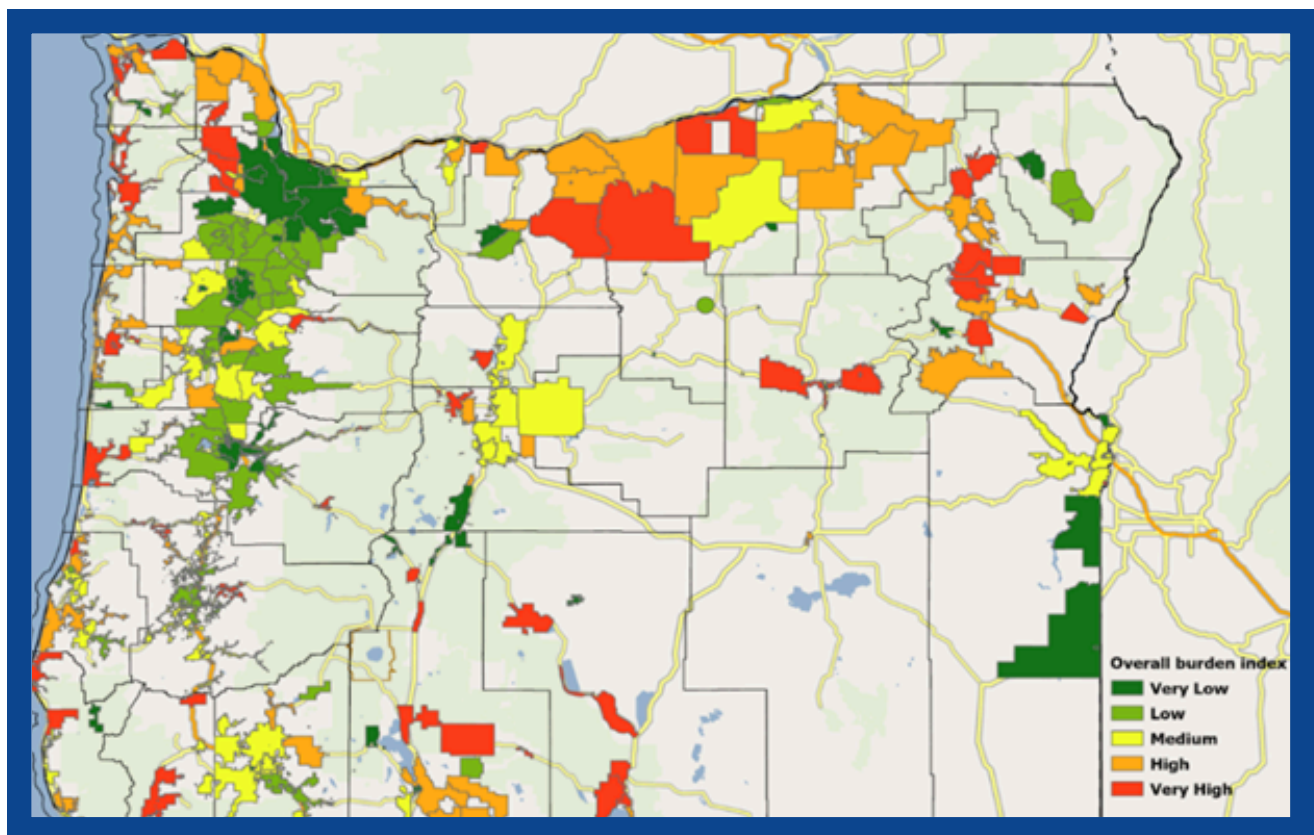
While small changes were made throughout the years to ORS 478, this is the first time a group comprehensively reviewed the statutes to modernize it. Below are the issues the group discussed, including challenges, successes, and barriers.

## COST RECOVERY FOR SERVICES PERFORMED AND RESPONSE

### Insufficient tax base

Most fire agencies do not have the tax base to cover current response costs. The level of tax or income of communities does not cover the cost of emergency response needs in a district.

## VISITOR INFLUX INDEX



$$\text{VisitorInfluxIndex} = 0.2 * \text{FVisitPop} + 0.6 * \text{FTraffic} + 0.2 * \text{FStaffperArea}$$

### **Visitors bring extra needs but not revenue**

Transportation corridors, public lands (parks), and public buildings (government offices and schools) do not pay into base emergency funding.

'Fees for service' models do not adequately cover fire district response costs. Rural fire protection districts, especially those with parks, universities, or many visitors, have an even greater burden. Visitors to public tax-exempt buildings can pose a challenge to capacity. Visitors bring additional response needs. Data and collections from insurance companies and uninsured motorists can be hard to obtain.

How do we connect the people benefitting from the service to the fee structure? On public lands, how can districts get funds from visitors to benefit local response? One idea to increase funding is to issue permits or recreational passes to fund emergency response.

### **Classification of service providers creates challenges**

Fire district-supplied emergency medical services are categorically recognized as suppliers rather than providers, like hospitals. This allows hospitals to be paid greater rates for performing the exact same services.

Emergency medical services performed on site rather than transporting patients to hospitals are more efficient and free up medical resources.

### **Cost recovery models are burdensome and ineffective**

The cost recovery schedule is written for longer responses, not a one-hour or similar response time. Fire agencies often lack the resources and experience to pursue cost recovery and receive fractions of actual costs. A standardized cost schedule is in the [Oregon State Fire Marshal's mobilization plan](#).







### **Cost recovery laws**

When responding to unprotected lands outside a special district or service area, ORS 478.310 says the responding agency “shall be paid the contract or reasonable value for use, including repairs and depreciation, of the apparatus and equipment so used and other expenses reasonably incurred.”

Senate Bill 1582 (2022) modified cost recovery laws for people living within seven miles of a "recognized" fire station. People living in these areas, and outside of fire district boundaries, may be billed up to three times the cost of services received.

### **System development charges limitation**

Fire districts and departments cannot bill for already-built, or yet-to-be-built, infrastructure (system development charges) needed to support the increasing demand for service as communities grow. Post-incident cost recovery models do not support standing, base-level system needs. As discussed in the next section, urban renewal districts and enterprise zones can also limit revenues for system infrastructure and development.

The goal for cost recovery is to get impacted agencies the needed funding and resources to protect and respond to incidents in their service area.

## **TAXING AUTHORITY, ENTERPRISE ZONES**

### **Demand for emergency services is higher than ever**

Community demographics have changed, and many calls relate to social issues that are new to fire agencies. Fire agencies respond to home medical needs, car crashes, drug overdoses, problems at houseless encampments, and mental health service needs. These calls put an extraordinary strain on the fire service when budgets and staffing remain stagnant.

The Governor’s Fire Service Policy Council gathered fire service leaders at the Oregon State Fire Marshal headquarters in June 2024 to discuss these issues.

### **Fire districts lack authority to increase permanent tax rates**

Fire districts control their own budget and have a permanent tax rate established by Measure 50. The challenge lies in the inability to increase the permanent tax rate. Individual property assessed values are limited to three percent growth each year, which, in some cases, is inadequate to support expanded needs for service delivery. Fire districts cannot keep up with inflation and rising expenses. Communities experiencing rapid growth likely will see increased growth in property taxes from new buildings, while rural areas of the state with limited growth are more likely limited to the three percent increase.

Increasing tax revenue in communities experiencing rapid population growth often brings a corresponding increase in 911 calls for service. Fire agencies rely on taxes to provide service to their increased population and the service complexity that comes with density and changing needs. With urban renewal districts and enterprise zones, taxing can be frozen for decades, and fire agencies must compromise service levels or seek levies to offset those losses.

### **Tax levies are a critical tool for funding fire districts and departments**

Conducting campaigns for renewing tax levies can be burdensome. During periods of economic slowdown, it can be difficult for fire districts and departments to pass local option levy requests. If levies pass two or three times in a row, perhaps they could become part of the permanent tax structure.

### **Compression can reduce tax collections**

Fire district property tax collections can be reduced because of compression. The impacts of compression are likely to impact more communities as more local option levies are approved to fund essential services.

### **Economic development programs can reduce funding and increase demand**

Economic development programs, like enterprise zones or urban renewal districts, provide benefits like creating jobs and strengthening Oregon's economy. Some of these programs limit the assessment of property taxes and fees while increasing service demand on fire agencies. Economic development should not cause a reduction in department budgets. A potential solution could be to identify economic development programs that impact service demand and provide payments in lieu of taxes or allow fire departments to still collect taxes.

Data centers fall under this authority, and this causes issues in areas of the state. There are minimal increased service demands, but large computer networks can pose certain risks. The intent is good, e.g., creating jobs, but long-term impacts are hard to forecast.



Oregon's emergency response agencies rely on property taxes to fund emergency response services. Reductions to property tax collections because of property tax abatement programs or tax increment financing may impact the ability of first responders to provide essential services. These impacts are exacerbated when the use of tax abatement or tax increment financing programs are used in a way that increases service demand.

### **Update tax assessment authority**

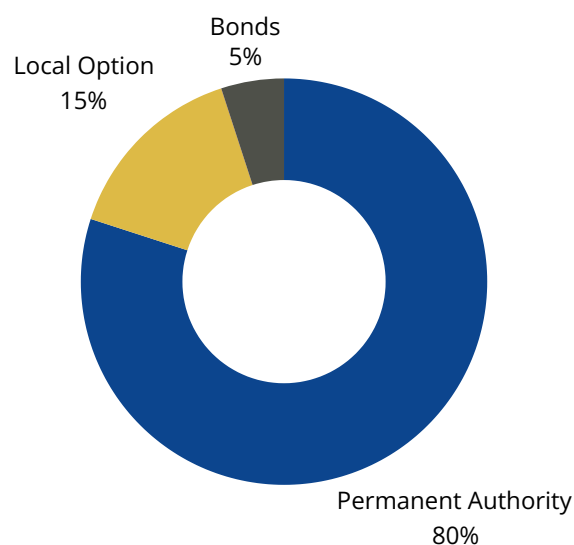
Fire districts and departments should be able to assess taxes to collect fees from entities that increase work burden. Some critical infrastructure and publicly owned facilities are tax exempt. For instance, state owned properties impact service demand and state parks draw countless visitors to areas of the state that lack the ability to provide emergency services. Agricultural properties are also limited to just portions of the property for assessment. These examples increase service demand but do not pay into base level funding.

Another challenge is related to the restriction of taxing properties of five acres or more that are classified as forest land (ORS 478.010, forest land classification), but this is out of scope for this task force as written in Senate Bill 2522 (2023).

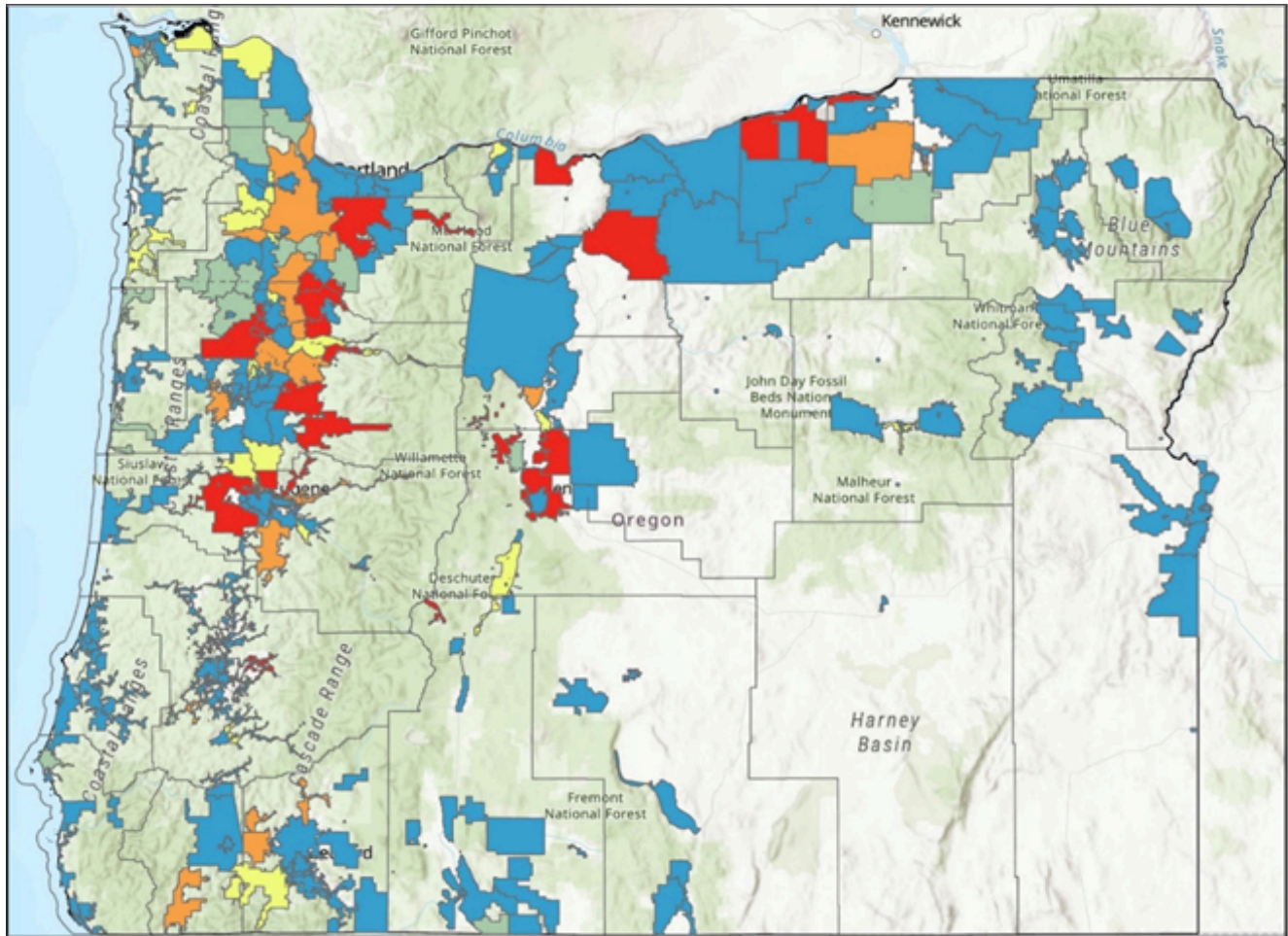
The goal of addressing these tax-related issues is to lessen the negative impacts to fire agencies by providing more funds and, at the same time, allow taxes and other economic tools to achieve their goals.

## **RFPD TAX IMPOSED BY CATEGORY**

Fiscal Year 2022-2023



## RFPDS BY TAX CATEGORY (FY 2022-23)



Permanent Authority vs.  
Local/Bonds

4.11 - 28

1.88 - 4.11

1.27 - 1.88

0.000001 - 1.27

0 or no data



## **ANNEXATION, SERVICE COVERAGE, DISTRICT BOUNDARIES**

### **Coordination between fire districts and local governments on annexation**

This topic is a well-known problem with a long history. Often, land will be annexed in rural or urban settings, and fire agencies are unaware. Requirements for coordination would solve this problem.

## **UNPROTECTED AND UNDER-PROTECTED LANDS**

### **Unprotected land or unfunded coverage on lands within service areas**

Fire districts need to respond to incidents on unprotected land, but they do not receive revenue to cover these costs. This issue is linked to cost recovery. Counties play a large role and have responsibility. A solution should be found by working with the Association of Oregon Counties.

### **Under-protected lands**

Some lands are under-protected, meaning they have some base level of coverage that is insufficient for current resource demand or incident response. Some places have fire coverage for structures or lands, but not both.

In areas of the state, people purchase property in remote locations and build homes. Homeowners want the local fire agencies to annex them, but the fire agencies cannot for various reasons. This leads to situations where the homes cannot be insured. This is likely to become a growing issue impacting fire districts.

## **ADAPTING TO EMS MODERNIZATION**

There is a separate discussion about emergency medical services (EMS) modernization through a task force established by House Bill 4081 (2023). Dr. David Lehrfeld spoke to the 2522 task force, and many of the following items are included in the EMS modernization task force's work. This task force strongly recommends reviewing the definition of ambulance services to ensure it complies with federal law and services.

### **Ambulance service areas (ASAs) impact fire resources**

Fire districts and departments are providing a service in ASAs for counties that typically do not provide funding for the fire agencies. Every square mile of Oregon has a dedicated ambulance service provider regulated by state statutes and corresponding county. Each county establishes ambulance service franchise areas which are then bid on by prospective service providers. In many rural areas of the state, the population density and emergency medical call volume does not fully pay the cost to provide ambulance service. In many of these areas, the cost of providing ambulance service is subsidized by property taxes.

The reliance on property taxes to provide ambulance services and out-of-hospital care jeopardizes the ability of districts and departments to provide the level of fire protection needed in the community.

Baker County and Oakridge are examples where the county or city lost fire/EMS funding, and the burden became much greater on their neighbors. Other communities like Dallas are unsure if they can continue financially. If small communities stop subsidizing their fire districts, the transport time from other communities is significant (more than an hour), putting a greater burden on the neighboring community's resources.

### **Reimbursement rates are insufficient**

Reimbursement rates for Medicare and Medicaid are a challenge because rates are low and do not cover the cost of the service. Many people don't have private health insurance and use Medicare and Medicaid, leaving a gap in funding for the fire service who responds to these calls.

### **Alternative transport options**

RFPDs need options to bill for alternative transport. A paramedic transporting to an emergency room as a one-size-fits-all approach is not working. Options should include alternative transport destinations (doctor's office, urgent care, etc.).

### **Transport ties up resources**

EMS calls have a compounding effect for the fire service because they take fire engines out of service, leaving a gap for all other calls. Across the state, especially in remote areas, reimbursement rates need to increase to cover the cost of essential services.

### **Fire service representation with EMS modernization**

The fire service needs to continue to have a seat on new committees established under House Bill 4081 to discuss important topics such as new money for community paramedicine and funding for EMS response calls that don't result in transport and reimbursement. Statute and rule need to recognize that Oregon fire districts provide care beyond fire. The task force supports the work of the EMS modernization workgroup.

### **Costs and demand are outpacing funding and resources**

Without a tax base to increase revenue, the demands some departments are experiencing are higher than the availability of apparatus, people, and resources to cover that demand. In many areas of the state, fire agencies are struggling to meet increasing service demands.



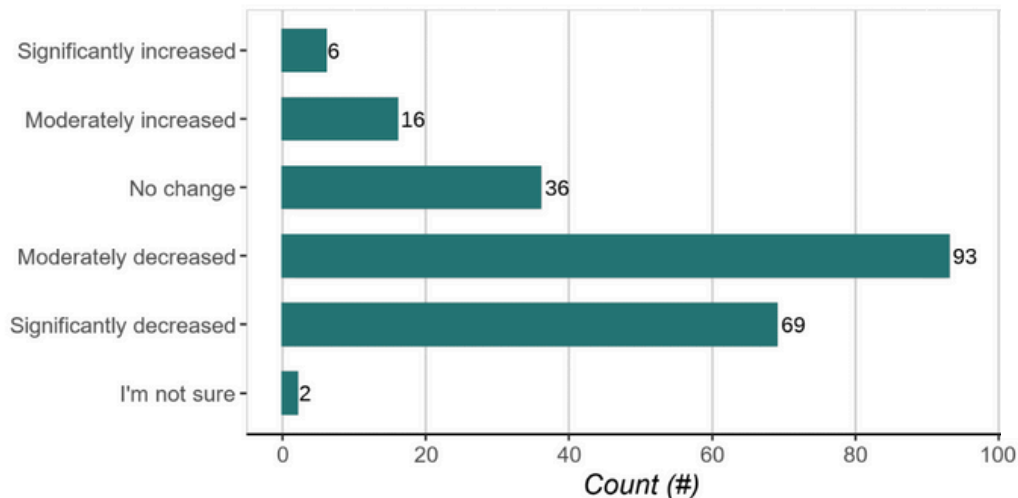
## RECRUITMENT/WORKFORCE/SERVICE LEVELS

### Reduction in volunteers

Volunteer firefighters are declining in Oregon. The fire service has historically relied on volunteers, especially in rural areas. Districts need more volunteer and career firefighters. Fire agencies are adapting and working with the volunteers and staff they have, but it's clear that we need a solution to find more volunteers and career firefighters to sustain and support the demand.

A comprehensive report was completed in November 2022 by the firefighter capacity workgroup. [Review the report here.](#)

**Figure Q95: Department Change in Number of Volunteer Firefighters Within Last 5 Years**



Source: LPRO

Data: LPRO

Notes: Bar charts showing fire departments distributed by change in number of volunteer firefighters within last five years.

### Recruitment and retention of fire service employees

Fire agencies are seeing challenges with recruitment in all areas, from firefighter to fire chief, and must adapt to the concerns of those seeking employment. Generational differences and a change in the workforce present hiring difficulties. Wellness and work-life balance issues must be addressed to attract new firefighters into the career. Many people seeking firefighter jobs aren't necessarily looking for a career in the fire service, leading to more turnover. The fire service was traditionally filled with career-long employees.

ORS 478 was designed for RFPDs to protect for fire and fire hazards, and now RFPDs provide all-hazard response. The response demands keep growing.

### **Extend OSFM wildfire season staffing grant program**

The OSFM implemented a successful wildfire season staffing grant program with Senate Bill 762 (2021) funds. Each year, this \$6-million grant provides additional capacity to allow fire agencies to respond to not only wildfire calls but other calls, improving response times, and ultimately saving lives. Local fire agencies received up to \$35,000 to hire extra firefighters using their current staffing model. Priority was given to agencies whose annual property tax income does not exceed \$2 million. This grant is important for adequate wildfire response, but 2024 is the last year the OSFM has funding for the grant.

## **MUTUAL AID, SERVICE AGREEMENTS**

### **Growing mutual aid needs**

The continually evolving mutual aid network grew significantly within the last 10 years. This area doesn't pose statutory challenges, but operational challenges. Mutual aid isn't addressed heavily in ORS 478 as in other legislation. This falls into the scope of the Oregon State Fire Marshal to address because it's connected to the mobilization plan.

### **Standardize mutual aid and service agreements**

Mutual aid is a system that provides extra capacity to neighboring districts. Encouraging expanded mutual aid, standardization of formal agreements, and integration into the state mobilization plan should be a priority.

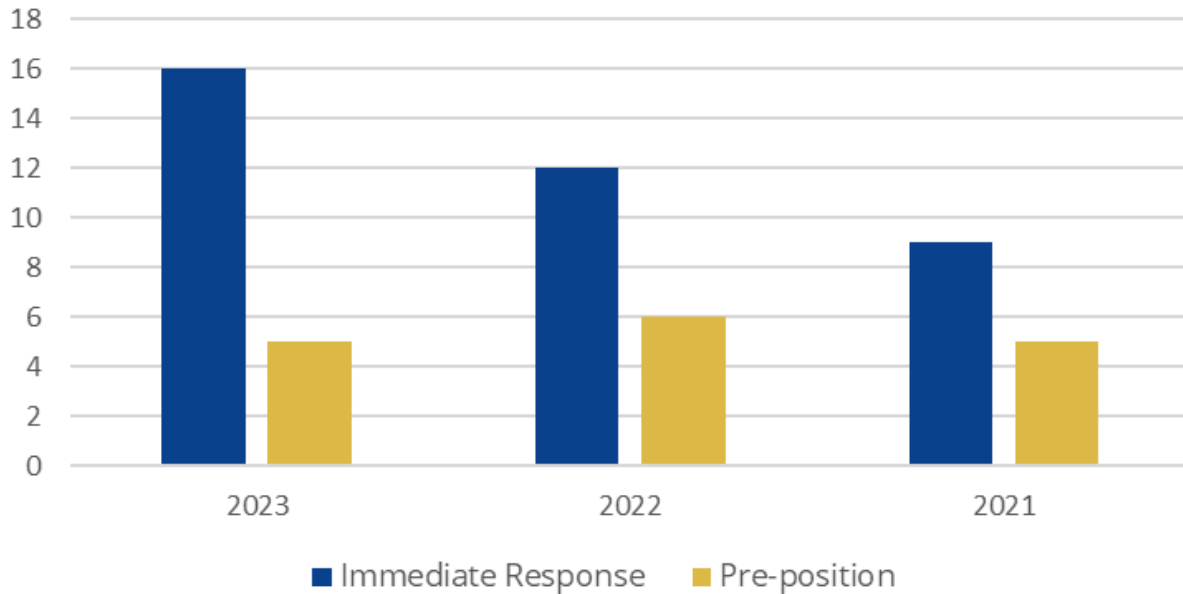
### **Continue investments in Response Ready Oregon tools**

The OSFM implemented the immediate response and pre-position initiatives from Senate Bill 762 (2021) funds. These tools boost capacity and modernize wildfire response within the Oregon Fire Mutual Aid System (OFMAS). The goal is to attack fires while they are small and keep them away from communities. As part of Response Ready Oregon, the OSFM hired seven regional mobilization coordinators to be the local contact for fire chiefs for local response needs.

Because of these one-time funds and resulting initiatives like pre-positioning, mutual aid and communication for fire response in the past few years improved and became more robust. The 2024 fire season is a good example of this smooth coordination and response system.



## OSFM RESPONSE READY OREGON MOBILIZATIONS BY YEAR



### OPEN BURNING

#### **Coordinate open burning regulatory agencies**

This topic is lightly addressed throughout Oregon Revised Statute 478. There must be coordination and consistency between various regulatory entities to ensure all fire districts are acting similarly.

The task force recommends all language regarding burning to be consistent.

#### **Coordinate on air quality, smoke management, and prescribed fire**

Air quality issues are expected to increase along with the need to collaborate and identify agency areas of responsibility for smoke management and prescribed fire.

The task force identified field burning to be out of scope.

# TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force created short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations.

## SHORT-TERM

These recommendations include statute revisions, additions, or deletions. The task force recognizes formal language changes need to be accomplished through the legislative process.

### Language Changes

The task force recommends the following language changes to Oregon Revised Statute Chapter 478. Find a full spreadsheet of ORS 478 recommendations in the appendix.

- 478.155 – section 6 language should be aligned with section 1.
- 478.260 - sections 1, 2, 3, 5: Modify to be more inclusive and broader.
- 478.270 – strike the word “monthly.”
- 478.940 – Filing and posting of fire prevention code. To modernize this section, the code copies should be electronic. One central location only applies if additional code is adopted on top of the state fire code.

The following codes are connected and the OSFM should clean up the language and make it consistent:

- 478.972 – Application by district to State Fire Marshal for identification name.
- 478.980 - Identification name for district formed by consolidation or merger of districts.
- 478.982 - Reuse of names of dissolved districts.







### **Out of Scope**

After a thorough review, the task force found six sections of ORS 478 to be out of scope. They include:

- 478.010, section 2(c) Formation; territories that may not be included in districts.
- 478.150 Conference with State Forestry Department required prior to formation of district or annexation of territory.
- 478.300 Contracting with others to provide facilities and services for fire protection or road lighting; authority over open burning and fire permits; rules. 478.310, section 4, Response to fire or public safety incident outside its own territory by district or municipality; liability for costs.
- 478.315, section 5, Response to fire or public safety incident in Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area; payment of costs.
- 478.665 Withdrawal of territory from district; inclusion in forest protection district; assessment.
- 478.960, sections 1, 6, 7, 8, Burning of certain materials permitted only with permission of fire chief; damage or injury; burning schedules and restrictions.



## **MID- AND LONG-TERM**

These recommendations will take more time to enact beyond the 2025-2027 legislative period. These may require work groups and partner connections, including the larger fire service and others. Themes identified will guide significant future work and discussions.

As the task force discussed, there are several issues facing the fire service that need to be addressed to ensure rural fire protection districts can continue their vital work responding to emergency calls and keeping their communities safe.

Cost recovery is a leading issue impacting rural fire protection districts and other fire agencies around the state. We must find ways to get impacted fire agencies the needed resources to protect and respond to incidents in their service area.

Taxing authority and enterprise zones are important issues, some tying to cost recovery. The current demand for service exceeds what rural fire protection districts are funded for. There are many areas of taxing to be examined to find ways to provide the needed funding for community emergency response.

Emergency medical services modernization is important for all fire agencies. From funding for these calls, to staffing and demand, the current model is insufficient. Oregon's volunteer and firefighter workforce is experiencing significant declines. We must address this to encourage future generations of firefighters. The nature of the job, generational differences, pay and benefits, and physical and mental impacts are all important contributing factors that should be addressed.

In the area of mutual aid and service agreements, Senate Bill 762 funding allowed the Oregon State Fire Marshal to create successful response initiatives, including immediate response and pre-positioning. The fire service could look at standardizing these agreements to address the growing mutual aid needs.



# CONCLUSION

The House Bill 2522 task force thoroughly examined the current state and challenges of rural structural fire protection districts in Oregon, resulting in a comprehensive set of recommendations to modernize and improve the efficacy of these essential services.

Along with ORS language changes, the group also discussed critical areas outside of ORS 478 that require attention, including cost recovery, taxing authority, emergency medical services modernization, volunteer recruitment and retention, mutual aid agreements, and coordination on open burning regulations.

The mission of the fire service is to ensure the safety of Oregonians. This cornerstone highlights prevention, response, and overall fire protection services. Adequate investment and confidence in the fire protection system are essential for the continued safety and security of communities across the state.





# VISION TO GUIDE FUTURE WORK

As we look toward the future of rural fire protection districts in Oregon, our vision is to establish a fire service system that is resilient, adaptive, and fully capable of meeting the evolving needs of our communities. This vision is centered on three core principles.

**Modernization** involves a continuous effort to update and refine our statutes, operational frameworks, and technological tools to reflect the changing landscape of fire protection. As our rural fire protection districts increasingly face complex challenges such as population growth, urban encroachment, and diverse emergency response demands, it is essential that our policies and practices are not only current but also forward-thinking. We envision a fire service that leverages the latest innovations in firefighting technology, data-driven decision-making, and training to enhance response capabilities and ensure the safety of all Oregonians.

**Collaboration** is critical to our vision. The challenges facing rural fire protection districts are multifaceted and cannot be addressed in isolation. Our vision sees a future where fire agencies, local governments, state bodies, and community stakeholders work together seamlessly. This collaboration will extend beyond traditional boundaries, fostering partnerships with other emergency services, healthcare providers, and community organizations. By breaking down silos and promoting shared responsibility, we can create a more cohesive and effective emergency response network that serves all regions of Oregon.

**Sustainability** is the foundation upon which our future efforts will be built. We recognize the need for a fire service that is financially stable, environmentally conscious, and resilient in the face of ongoing and emerging threats. This includes securing long-term funding solutions, promoting volunteer recruitment and retention, and implementing environmentally sustainable practices in fire management and prevention. Our vision is to create a fire protection system that can endure and thrive, even in the face of challenges like climate change, economic fluctuations, and demographic shifts.

As we move forward, this vision will guide our actions and decisions, ensuring that the recommendations and strategies we develop today will lead to a more robust, effective, and sustainable fire protection service for all of Oregon. By staying committed to these principles, we can build a future where our fire protection districts are not only equipped to handle current demands, but also prepared to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

# APPENDIX

- [HB 2522 \(2023\)](#)
- [ORS 478 recommendations](#)
- [Firefighter Capacity Workgroup report](#)
- [EMS modernization work](#)

This report was prepared by the Oregon State Fire Marshal and is endorsed by the  
**OREGON GOVERNOR'S FIRE SERVICE POLICY COUNCIL**

