



**Office of the State Fire Marshal**  
**A Division of the Oregon State Police**  
Written Testimony: Jim Walker/Claire McGrew  
Committee: Senate Finance & Revenue

Bill Number: HB 2084A
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Chair Burdick and Members of the Committee,

HB 2084A proposes to increase the Fire Insurance Premium Tax from 1% to 1.15%, which will enable the state's fire programs to maintain the current service level to first responders and the citizens of Oregon. The Office of State Fire Marshal (OSFM), Oregon State Police (OSP), and the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST) partner statewide with the fire service, law enforcement, local communities and businesses to provide a wide variety of critical public safety services.

Fire Programs currently funded by FIPT are:

- Governor declared emergency preparedness and response
- Fire prevention and education for vulnerable populations
- Inspection and investigation coverage in local communities without a local fire marshal
- Fire certification and training for local fire jurisdictions
- Arson investigation and prosecution

These state programs assist Oregon schools, hospitals, business owners, and the public comply with fire-related laws and codes, keeping people safe where they work, play, and go to school.

For example, in 2012, 15 Deputy State Fire Marshals conducted a total of 1,639 inspections of facilities. This resulted in the correction of 1720 deficiencies which could have caused a fire or allowed flames and smoke to spread more rapidly through the facility increasing the danger to staff, patients, and visitors.

Our Fire & Life Safety Education Branch develops and implements fire safety education programs, providing lifesaving knowledge and skills to children, families and communities.

An example is the *Start Safe Fire and Burn Prevention Program* for preschoolers and their families. This training is offered through a partnership with Oregon Safe Kids and regionally based Head Start Programs. OSFM staff trained more than 480 Head Start teachers, administrators, staff and fire service personnel. An important complementary component of this program was the joint use of the OSFM Smoke Alarm program which provided more than 500 smoke alarms in low-income residences throughout Oregon.

This is significant because preliminary data from 2012 demonstrates that one of every four residential fires was in a home with no working smoke alarm. These fires were responsible for at least 21 residential fire deaths, 207 injuries, and an estimated \$98.6 million in property damage. For example, in two separate home fires, smoke alarms provided by the OSFM & installed by Washington County Fire District #2 and Fairview Rural Fire Protection District alerted occupants and allowed them a timely escape.

It should also be noted that the OSFM Youth Fire Prevention and Intervention Program is a nationally recognized model focusing on developing prevention education on early identification of youth with firesetting behavior, and expanding interview and treatment resources for those youth and their families.

The OSFM Emergency Response Services Branch coordinates structural firefighting efforts during major emergency operations, and assists federal and state forestry agencies protect homes and communities from wildfire.

For example, during the 2011 wildland fire season, 352 residences and businesses were threatened by advancing wildfires during three Governor declared conflagrations. Under the Emergency Conflagration Act, the OSFM was coordinated the mobilization of 47 fire departments and two incident management teams to protect lives, homes and businesses from the threat of wildland fire. The costs of the conflagrations were approximately \$1.18 million, while estimated value protected was \$45 million.

The OSP Arson Unit provides responsive fire investigation services. That information is provided to insurance companies and prosecutors in an effort to identify, apprehend, and prosecute arsonists creating a deterrent benefit with reduced losses and increased safety.

It should be noted that the OSP Arson Unit received an award recognizing the program for its work to reduce the incidences of arson. Informally known as the "Wildland Arson Patrol," the collaborative project of the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and Oregon State Police (OSP) garnered the Oregon Chapter 31 International Association of Arson Investigators' Outstanding Accomplishment Award.

The DPSST Training and Certification Section coordinates and delivers training for more than 15,000 fire service personnel annually, providing Oregon's first responders with the knowledge and skill to keep themselves and their communities safe.

Statistics show that in the last ten years Oregon has experienced at least 16 firefighters killed in vehicle crashes while on duty. Utilizing FIPT funds, DPSST with support from various fire service stakeholders, including the Oregon Fire Chiefs, Oregon State Firefighters Council and the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association developed the *Skid Avoidance For Fire Apparatus Driving Program* to address one of the leading causes of line-of-duty deaths in the fire service. This program was the recipient of the Senator Paul S. Sarbanes Fire Service Safety Leadership Award in 2012. The award recognizes organizations for their outstanding contributions to firefighter health and safety.

Your endorsement of HB 2084A will allow the state's essential fire programs to continue their critical work protecting our lives, homes, schools and businesses from fire.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. At this time, we would be happy to answer any questions you might have.