

ANALYSIS

Item 20: Department of the State Fire Marshal

2025 Fire Season

Analyst: Katie Bannikov

Request: Appropriate \$6,213,451 General Fund to the Department of the State Fire Marshal for 2025 fire season costs.

Analysis: The Department of the State Fire Marshal (DSFM) is responsible for mobilizing firefighting resources throughout the state when local fire agencies are not able to protect structures from fire on their own. During the 2025 fire season, DSFM mobilized firefighting resources for seven prepositioning and readiness response activities and eight conflagrations. The 2025 fire season was officially declared over on October 17, 2025. The original estimate for the 2025 fire season was \$16.2 million; however, based on actual invoices received, the revised estimated cost is \$17.6 million for DSFM.

DSFM coordinates mobilizations under the Emergency Conflagration Act, where firefighters and equipment from other fire protection agencies in the state are “loaned” to the local agency for the duration of the incident, and DSFM provides reimbursement to the agencies loaning aid. In practical terms, local fire agencies have 60 days to submit invoices to DSFM, and the Department must reimburse the costs within 90 days as outlined in the Oregon Fire Service Mobilization Plan. The Department’s budget initially pays the submitted invoices for mobilizations, then DSFM seeks reimbursement from the federal government for eligible expenses and requests state resources for the total conflagration costs.

Large wildfires with a level of destruction constituting a major disaster may qualify for federal reimbursement from the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) program. FEMA evaluates fires based on four criteria: (1) threats to lives and improved property, (2) high fire danger conditions, (3) potential for major economic impact, and (4) availability of state and local firefighting resources. Qualifying wildfires receive 75% reimbursement of the eligible wildfire costs.

During the 2025 session, the Legislature approved \$10 million in Other Funds expenditure limitation for mobilization costs for prepositioning, readiness response, and conflagrations. Of the \$17.6 million total gross fire costs, \$7.8 million is anticipated to be FEMA eligible with the remaining \$9.8 million state responsibility. However, FEMA reimbursements have historically taken 12 to 30 months to receive once billed. Since DSFM has decoupled from the Oregon State Police, due to cash flow and budgetary concerns, the estimated total gross fire costs have been reimbursed while awaiting federal reimbursements. Additionally, since gross costs have been

reimbursed based on estimates, reconciliation of actuals is necessary to ensure that both the agency and state are made whole.

DSFM anticipates \$25.6 million in FEMA reimbursements dating back to the 2023 fire season. With the state advancing General Fund while waiting for FEMA reimbursement, the reconciled balance owed to the General Fund is \$25.3 million, subject to change once all actual expenditures are paid and reimbursements are received. The difference is attributable to expenditures the Department has paid from the State Fire Marshal Fund since estimates are used to calculate the General Fund appropriation needed for DSFM's gross fire costs.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means recommend appropriating \$7,621,128 General Fund to the Department of the State Fire Marshal, with a corresponding decrease in the special purpose appropriation to the Emergency Board for natural disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, in a budget reconciliation bill during the 2026 legislative session for 2025 fire season costs.

Request: Appropriate \$6,213,451 General Fund for costs incurred during the 2025 fire season.

Recommendation: Consider the request during the 2026 Legislative Session.

Discussion: The Department of the State Fire Marshal (DSFM) is requesting reimbursement for the estimated costs incurred during the 2025 fire season. During the 2025 Legislative Session, the Legislature provided \$10.0 million in advance of the fire season for immediate response and prepositioning (\$6.0 million) and mobilization costs related to wildfire response (\$4.0 million) (Senate Bill 5538, 2025). The source of this funding was federal reimbursement to the DSFM from prior fire seasons. DSFM's 2025 fire season costs for mobilizations, including immediate response, pre-positioning, and conflagrations were estimated at \$16,213,451 as of December 8, 2025, and this request will reimburse the agency for \$6,213,451 made from the department's operating budget. DSFM continues to refine the estimate for the actual cost of the 2025 fire season as reimbursable costs from fire service partners are submitted to the agency.

While the 2025 fire season was significantly less costly to the agency than the 2024 fire season, the impact on people and property was still significant. DSFM provided immediate response and pre-positioning support to seven fires and responded to eight conflagrations across the state. Although there were fewer acres burned than in 2024, the number of structures lost, 205, was greater than the 174 lost in 2024.. The department estimates the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will provide reimbursement for \$7.8 million in costs incurred during the 2025 fire season.

Legal Reference: Increase General Fund appropriation made by chapter 554, section 1(3), Oregon Laws 2025, by \$6,213,451 for the Department of the State Fire Marshal, Emergency response for the 2025-27 biennium.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

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December 8, 2025

The Honorable Senator Kate Lieber, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE, H-178
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Lieber and Representative Sanchez:

Nature of the Request

The Department of the State Fire Marshal respectfully requests the opportunity to appear before the January 2026 Interim Joint Committee on Ways and Means to request reimbursement of \$6,213,451 from the General Fund for the 2025 fire season.

Agency Action

As written in the Emergency Conflagration Act, the agency is to request reimbursement from the state for mobilization expenses.

Agency Responsibilities and Season Overview:

The Oregon Department of the State Fire Marshal is responsible for mobilizing, managing, and directing the Oregon fire service during major emergency operations through mobilizations and the Emergency Conflagration Act (ORS 476.520 through 476.610). The governor invokes the Emergency Conflagration Act to mobilize firefighters and equipment when the threat of wildfire to structures and communities exceeds the local jurisdictions' response capacity. When this occurs, the department mobilizes, supports, and provides leadership for Oregon fire service resources that respond from the more than 300 fire service agencies across the state. Responding local fire service agencies and other response partners submit invoices to the department for payment of costs incurred during their participation in the mobilizations. The Department of the State Fire Marshal is required to reimburse those costs.

Oregon's 2025 fire season had less acres burned than 2024, but more homes were lost. Despite the overall reduction in acreage, the impact on people and property was significant. The Rowena Fire in Wasco County was the most destructive fire of the season, destroying 56 homes and 91 other structures on June 11. This season showed that even in a year with fewer large-scale burns and megafires, the human toll of wildfire can still be high and have lasting impacts. As of December 8, the Department of the State Fire Marshal's incident management teams responded to eight conflagrations to provide command and control, management, and logistical support.

2025 Fire Season Expenses and Agency Mobilization Reimbursement:

The Department of the State Fire Marshal was given a budget of \$10 million in Other Funds during the 2025 legislative session for mobilizations. The estimated agency mobilization costs include conflagrations, immediate response, and pre-positioning to date total approximately \$16,213,451. The agency is requesting \$6,213,451 General Fund.

Action Requested

The Department of the State Fire Marshal respectfully requests appropriation of \$6,213,451 from the General Fund for the net cost of the 2025 fire season.

Legislation Affected

Senate Bill 5538 (2025) Oregon Law 2025, Chapter 554, Section 1(3)

Sincerely,



Mariana Ruiz-Temple
State Fire Marshal
Department of the State Fire Marshal

CC Amanda Beitel, Legislative Fiscal Officer
 Kate Nass, Chief Financial Officer
 Katie Bannikov, Agency LFO Analyst
 Jonathan Bennett, Agency CFO Analyst
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Attachments:

- Attachment A: 2025 Statewide Conflagrations
- Attachment B: 2025 Immediate Response & Pre-Positioning Mobilizations

Attachment A: 2025 Statewide Conflagrations as of 12/8/2025

Conflagrations	Completion	County	Date Began	Estimate	State Costs	FEMA Eligible	Payment begins
Rowena	Yes	Wasco	6/11	\$1,602,999	\$441,013	\$1,161,986	July/Aug
Alder Springs	Yes	Jefferson	6/18	\$1,277,728	\$319,432	\$958,296	July/Aug
Cold Springs	Yes	Umatilla	7/2	\$435,767	\$435,767	No	Aug/Sept
Elk	Yes	Klamath	7/9	\$1,058,584	\$264,646	\$793,938	Aug/Sept
Highland	Yes	Deschutes	7/12	\$813,401	\$203,350	\$610,051	Aug/Sept
Cram	Yes	Jefferson & Wasco	7/14	\$4,171,444	\$4,171,444	No	Aug/Sept
Flat	Yes	Jefferson & Deschutes	8/22	\$5,559,500	\$1,389,875	\$4,169,625	Sept/Oct
Moon Complex	Yes	Curry	9/27	\$865,381	\$865,381	No	Oct/Nov
2025 Estimated Running Total				\$15,784,804	\$8,090,908	\$7,693,896	

Attachment B: 2025 Statewide Conflagrations as of 12/8/2025

Immediate Response & Pre-Positioning	Completion	County	Date Began	Estimate	State Costs	FEMA Eligible	Payment begins
Upper Applegate	Yes	Jackson	6/18	\$80,000	\$20,000	\$60,000	July/Aug
Cold Springs IR	Yes	Umatilla	7/2	\$7,000	\$7,000	No	Sept/Oct
Rogue Valley	Yes	Jackson	7/8	\$144,000	\$144,000	No	Sept/Oct
Turner Road	Yes	Marion	7/10	\$67,000	\$67,000	No	Sept/Oct
Bullard	Yes	Klamath	7/14	\$90,000	\$90,000	No	Sept/Oct
Steele Road	Yes	Wasco	8/7	\$20,115	\$20,115	No	Oct/Nov
Backbone	Yes	Curry	9/27	\$20,532	\$20,532	No	Oct/Nov
2025 Estimated Running Total				\$428,647	\$368,647	\$60,000	