

ANALYSIS

Item 13: Department of Emergency Management Disaster Reimbursement

Analyst: Steve Robbins

Request: Increase Other Funds expenditure limitation for the Department of Emergency Management by \$15,791,030 for the disbursement of reimbursements received for disaster support provided to other states.

Analysis: The Oregon Department of Emergency Management (ODEM) is Oregon's fiscal agency for the nationwide Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) as authorized by ORS 402.105. The EMAC is a mutual aid agreement that enables sharing resources between participating parties during declared emergencies or disasters. Under the agreement, ODEM is responsible for coordinating the deployment and receipt of interstate assistance, including validating requests for reimbursement and transferring funds between involved parties deployed under the compact. This request covers reimbursements received for three disasters' where personnel and resources from Oregon were deployed.

First, Oregon provided 366 personnel and related equipment from 102 fire agencies across the state to assist with the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles County, California in January 2025. Total costs were \$15,504,544, which were borne by participants while awaiting reimbursement. The California Office of Emergency Services has provided reimbursement to ODEM.

Second, in September 2024, hurricane Helene caused flooding in North and South Carolina. The Oregon State Fire Marshal and local fire districts staffed incident management in North Carolina for two weeks (\$254,168) and ODEM provided a FEMA public assistance grant specialist to South Carolina to assist with recovery efforts (\$15,178). ODEM has received reimbursement from those states and will disburse funds once expenditure limitation is approved.

Finally, in July 2024 a severe windstorm caused severe damage to the tree canopy in the Missoula, Montana area. Tree risk assessors and arborists from Portland and Springfield aided in August and September 2024 to assist at a cost of \$17,140. Oregon is awaiting reimbursement, and the funds will be arriving shortly.

Recommendation: The Legislative Fiscal Office recommends that the Joint Interim Committee on Ways and Means recommend including an increase of \$15,791,030 in Other Funds expenditure limitation for the Department of Emergency Management in a budget reconciliation bill during the 2026 legislative session to allow for disbursement of reimbursements received for disaster support.

Request: Increase Other Funds expenditure limitation by \$15,791,030 for disbursement of reimbursements received by the Oregon Department of Emergency Management for disaster support provided to other states.

Recommendation: Approve the request during the 2026 Legislative Session.

Discussion: The Department of Emergency Management (OEM) is the state of Oregon's fiscal contact for the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), authorized in ORS 402.105. EMAC is a nationwide mutual aid agreement that allows for resource sharing during state-declared emergencies. As such, OEM is responsible for coordinating the deployment and receipt of interstate fiscal assistance, including validating requests for reimbursement and transferring funds between the impacted state and supporting member states deployed under EMAC.

This request includes reimbursements received for three events occurring in the past 18 months, for which Oregon's personnel and other resources were deployed:

- The **Palisades Fire** of Los Angeles County, California, began on January 7, 2025, and burned through 23,000 acres and 6,800 structures before being contained. Under EMAC, the State of California requested Oregon's firefighting assistance. As a result, Oregon deployed 366 personnel and related equipment from 102 fire agencies with a total cost of \$15,504,544. While costs were initially covered by Oregon's fire agencies, OEM received reimbursement from the California Office of Emergency Services on October 14, 2025.
- **Hurricane Helene**, which struck Florida on September 27, 2024, caused extensive flooding across the southeastern U.S. The Oregon State Fire Marshal and local fire districts staffed an incident management team in North Carolina for two weeks, and OEM provided a FEMA public assistance grant specialist to South Carolina to support recovery efforts. The costs of these deployments were \$254,168 and \$15,178, respectively. OEM received reimbursement for these costs on November 5, 2025, and will disburse funds to Oregon's supporting agencies once the expenditure limitation is approved.
- Lastly, in response to a **severe windstorm** that caused widespread damage to the tree canopy in Missoula, Montana in 2024, the cities of Portland and Springfield, Oregon deployed risk assessors and arborists to the impacted areas between August 26 and September 6. The total deployment cost was \$17,140. OEM has not yet received reimbursement from the State of Montana, which, once received, will be disbursed to the supporting agencies if the expenditure limitation is approved.

Per OEM's intergovernmental agreements with local agencies, OEM is required to reimburse deployment costs within 30 days of receiving funds from the supported state. Because of this, OEM utilized existing Other Funds expenditure limitation in the

Mitigation and Recovery program budget to reimburse fire agencies for costs incurred while supporting the Palisades Fire earlier this year. This portion of the limitation request, if approved, will make whole the Other Funds expenditure limitation within Mitigation and Recovery and allow OEM to spend these funds in support of future disaster mitigation work during the 2025-27 biennium.

OEM does not have the expenditure limitation in their 2025-27 Legislatively Adopted Budget to cover the additional costs included in this request. If approved, OEM will make the appropriate disbursements within 30 days of receiving reimbursement from other states.

Legal Reference: Increase the Other Funds expenditure limitation established by chapter 423, section 2(5), Oregon Laws 2025, for the Oregon Department of Emergency Management, Mitigation and Recovery, by \$15,791,030 for the 2025-27 biennium.



Oregon

Tina Kotek, Governor

Oregon Department of Emergency Management

3930 Fairview Industrial Drive SE

Salem, OR 97302

Phone: 503-378-2911

TTY: 7-1-1

www.Oregon.gov/OEM

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 Oregon Department of Emergency Management (OEM) respectfully requests a \$15.8 million increase in Other Funds expenditure limitation to reimburse the Oregon Department of the State Fire Marshal and local fire districts for costs incurred while deployed responding to disasters in other states under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

Agency Action:

EMAC is a nationwide state-to-state mutual aid agreement that enables sharing resources during declared emergencies or disasters. OEM is authorized to participate in EMAC and other mutual aid compacts by ORS 402.105. Under the EMAC framework, partner states act through their emergency management agencies to administer the EMAC agreements, making OEM responsible for coordinating the deployment and receipt of interstate assistance. OEM acts as the fiscal agent for the state of Oregon under EMAC, validating requests for reimbursement and transferring funds between the supported state and the organization(s) deployed under the compact.

OEM is requesting a total of \$15,791,030 Other Funds reimburse Oregon State Fire Marshal and local governments in Oregon for their cost of responding to the following disasters:

The Palisades Fire started on January 7, 2025, in Los Angeles County, California, resulting in 12 deaths, 6,800 destroyed structures, and over 23,000 acres burned before it was contained. The State of California reached out to the state of Oregon through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to request firefighting support during this catastrophe. Between January 8-26, 2025, Oregon deployed 366 personnel and related equipment from 102 fire agencies to assist California. The deployment resulted in costs of \$15,504,544, which was initially incurred by Oregon fire agencies through their response efforts.

OEM received reimbursement from the California Office of Emergency Services (CALOES) on October 14, 2025. OEM's intergovernmental agreements with local agencies require that reimbursement for deployment costs be transmitted within 30 days of OEM's receipt of funds from the requesting state. In addition to meeting OEM's programmatic obligations, the 2025 California wildfires deployment was largest in the history of Oregon's EMAC program, putting an additional financial strain on these local governments, underlying the importance of reimbursing these expenses as soon as possible.

Hurricane Helene struck Florida on September 27th, 2024. The aftereffects of the storm caused flooding throughout the southeastern United States. In response, OSFM and local fire districts staffed an incident management team (IMT) in an emergency operation center in North Carolina for two weeks, and OEM sent a specialist in obtaining FEMA public assistance grants to South Carolina to assist with their recovery efforts. Costs totaled \$254,168 for North Carolina and \$15,178 for South Carolina. Both North Carolina and South Carolina have been invoiced and OEM has received reimbursement, but the responding agencies have not been paid yet.

In response to a **severe windstorm in Missoula, Montana** that caused widespread damage to the tree canopy there, the Cities of Portland and Springfield, Oregon sent tree risk assessors and arborists between August 26, 2024 and September 6, 2024. The crews incurred costs of \$17,140 through the EMAC mission. OEM has invoiced Montana for the amount and is awaiting reimbursement. The responding agencies have not been paid yet.

OEM does not have budget authority to pay EMAC expenditures as part of its 2025-27 Legislatively Adopted Budget. In the past, OEM (or its predecessor agency) made one-time requests to the legislature to make EMAC payments. OEM used Other Funds expenditure limitation in the Mitigation and Recovery program to reimburse the fire agencies for the California fire response in November 2025. Using this existing limitation to reimburse the fire agencies more rapidly helps ensure their financial stability going into the 2026 fire season. This request ensures we have legal authorization to spend the Mitigation and Recovery funds for their original purpose of supporting local government disaster mitigation projects during the 2025-27 biennium.

Action Requested:

Increase Other Funds expenditure limitation by \$15,791,030 for the Oregon Department of Emergency Management consistent with the reimbursement of the Oregon fire agencies that deployed personnel and equipment in response to the January 2025 California wildfires.

Legislation Affected: Oregon Laws 2025, Chapter 426, Section 2(5).

Sincerely,



Erin McMahon, Director