



State Fire Marshal

2024 Fire Safety Account Report

December 1, 2024

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Overview

The Minnesota State Legislature passed a bill in 2006 establishing a fire safety surcharge on homeowner and certain commercial insurance policies. The Fire Safety Account (FSA) was created to hold revenue generated by that surcharge. State statute requires insurance companies to submit surcharge collections quarterly to the Minnesota Department of Revenue on or before May 15, Aug. 15, Nov. 15 and Feb. 15.

The legislation also created a Fire Service Advisory Committee (FSAC) to make recommendations to the commissioner of public safety on how to spend FSA money. These revenues can only be allotted to:

1. The Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education (MBFTE).
2. Programs and staffing for the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's (DPS) State Fire Marshal (SFM) division.
3. Fire-related, regional response-team programs and other fire service programs that have potential statewide impact.

The FSAC is made up of representatives from state fire service associations, local units of government and the insurance industry. The FSAC meets quarterly to review the FSA's status and funding allotments. The FSAC also creates biennial budget recommendations for the DPS commissioner.

FY24 budget

Transfers from the FSA as established in the base FY24 budget:

- SFM — \$10.134 million
- Hazardous Materials and Emergency Response Teams (HMRTs) — \$1.695 million
- Bomb squad reimbursements — \$250,000
- Non-responsible party reimbursements — \$750,000
- MBFTE — \$5.5 million
- Minnesota Task Force 1 (MN TF-1) — \$1.125 million
- Minnesota Task Force 2 (MN TF-2), formerly known as Arrowhead Regional USAR team — \$200,000
- Minnesota Air Rescue Team (MART) — \$350,000

FY24 activity summary

Estimated resources

- Balance forward from prior year: \$10,424
- Receipts and transfers-in: \$27,592
- **Total resources available: \$38,016**

Estimated uses

- SFM: \$12,134
- MBFTE: \$7,715
- FY24 allocation: \$5,485
- **Total uses: \$24,794**
- **Balance before reserves: \$7,916**
- 60-day operating reserve for FY24 budget: \$3,288
- Budgetary balance: \$4,628

One-time allocations for FY24

The FSAC recommended a one-time funding allocation of \$6,303,951, which was approved by DPS Commissioner Bob Jacobson.

- MBFTE training reimbursement programs: \$2.085 million
- SFM Fire Chief Boot Camp: \$26,000
- SFM Service Planning Grant: \$40,000
- SFM HMRT equipment: \$425,500
- SFM community risk reduction programs: \$500,000
- SFM firefighter recruitment and retention programs: \$8,500
- MN TF-1, vehicle and equipment replacement: \$2.4 million
- MN TF-2 personal protective equipment (PPE): \$88,350

- MN TF-2 tools: \$58,801
- MN TF-2 training: \$35,800
- MN TF-2 vehicles and equipment: \$721,000

MBFTE

Minnesota fire departments had access to a \$5 million budget appropriation and a \$2.085 million one-time allocation from the FSA in FY24. More than \$5.4 million in training reimbursements were requested by 630 of the 771 Minnesota fire departments in FY24. The average training reimbursement per fire department in FY24 was \$8,572 based on the number of fire departments that submitted their requests.

Other FY24 highlights:

- The MBFTE provided reimbursement for National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1001, Firefighter 1, Firefighter 2 and Hazardous Materials Operations training. There was \$2.2 million available to Minnesota fire departments to pay for this training — enough to fund more than 1,200 firefighters.
- Approximately \$171,000 was available to fund 95 live-burn training events across Minnesota. Live-burn training is conducted in accordance with NFPA 1403 standards, which ensure all burns are conducted in a safe manner meeting a nationally recognized standard and meeting the statutory requirements of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.
- The MBFTE provided more than \$163,000 for 225 firefighters to attend continuing education courses and pass national certification exams in fire instructor, fire officer and fire apparatus operator.
- The MBFTE provided more than \$39,000 in reimbursements to local, regional and statewide fire service organizations for unique training events/conferences/seminars. These awards helped nearly 20,000 firefighters attend a total of 11 different training opportunities at a significantly reduced rate.
- The MBFTE issued 265 firefighter licenses and renewed another 191 licenses in FY24. Per Minnesota Statute, Chapter 299N.05, full-time firefighters are required to be licensed by the board, while volunteer firefighters have the option to be licensed. There are currently 2,547 full-time firefighters in Minnesota, and there are a total of 3,912 firefighter licenses issued by the MBFTE.

The MBFTE continues to educate fire departments, fire training providers and fire service organizations across Minnesota on resources made available through the FSA. The MBFTE maintains a simplified website and reimbursement process allowing user-friendly online management of training reimbursements for all fire departments and fire training providers.

SFM

Approximately 70 percent of SFM's budget comes from FSA and general fund appropriations. The remaining 30 percent comes from fees and contracts for health care, daycare, school and motel inspections.

FY24 FSA dollars provided operational funding to SFM for the following:

- Health care and Department of Corrections facilities inspection team.
- Public and charter school inspection team.
- Residential care and lodging (RC&L) inspection team.
- Fire protection systems plan review and inspection team.
- Fire investigation team.
- Fire and life safety education and youth firesetter intervention.
- Administrative, management and other support services (such as fire service specialists).
- Fire incident data collection and analysis.

FSA funding supports statutorily-required fire inspections, fire investigations and fire sprinkler plan reviews. Inspections performed by the teams listed above help improve fire safety in many public buildings (e.g., schools, hotels/motels, hospitals). Fire investigations are performed to determine origin and cause following a fire. The findings from our fire investigations team support law enforcement arson cases and provide data to aid in fire prevention messaging.

Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2023, inspections, investigations and fire sprinkler plan review

- Health care: 1,151
- Correctional: 193
- RC&L: 2,318
- Investigations: 891
- Schools: 1,214
- Fire sprinkler plan reviews: 271

Training for Minnesota fire service

The FSA allows SFM to provide fire investigation, fire code, fire protection system and fire safety education training for the Minnesota fire service at no cost. This augments local government budgets, especially training dollars that are often in short supply on a local level.

The SFM Investigations Training Team provided awareness level training to 637 students in a total of 31 classes, operations level class for 26 students and technician level classes for 97 students in FY24. These fire investigation classes have a class make-up of firefighters, law enforcement, attorneys, along with other fire service stakeholders. The classes are intended to give the students the knowledge in basic awareness as a firefighter/fire department in the areas of scene preservations until a more trained investigator arrives, to the technical level training that a fire investigator would use to examine a fire scene.

The SFM Code Team works together to provide a week-long training at Camp Ripley aimed at local fire code officials who want to improve their skills and learn more about the Minnesota State Fire Code. Staff from all of the code enforcement teams work together to teach classroom lessons and hands-on training. Staff from the 2023 Fire Code Academy had 34 hours of classroom training, 19 classes and 33 students in attendance. Additionally, the code team offered training to DHS licensors, Family Childcare Licensors Association, Leading Age Minnesota, Hospitality Minnesota, health care professionals, correctional staff and education professionals.

Minnesota is a leader in offering fire protection system training with our fire protection demonstration trailer. The trailer was designed to highlight the various components and types of fire protection systems that fires may encounter. In 2023, the team presented 22 classes with the trailer and trained 350 students.

The Fire Life Safety Educator Team was busy in FY24, attending approximately 41 statewide events. Twenty-eight of them involved meeting with county and regional fire chiefs to discuss fire safety messaging that could be used on various social digital platforms, such as fire department websites, Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter) to reach their communities. During these meetings, SFM staff highlighted the division's risk assessment tool (UrbanLogiq) to establish data trends so department leadership could understand the risks in their local jurisdiction. The team also staffed 15 statewide fire safety educational community events, which allowed them to interact with Tribal members, city and county employees, local fire department retired members and numerous residents of all ages and backgrounds. Through these efforts the team met with 700 firefighters from 300 fire departments.

Turnout Gear Washer/Extractor/Dryer Grant Program

This program, administered by SFM, provides grant funding opportunities to local fire departments to assist with the purchase of turnout gear washer/extractors (up to \$10,000) and dryers (up to \$8,000). Thorough and effective washing of turnout gear is a cancer prevention initiative. This program wrapped up at the end of FY24 awarding a total of \$600,000 in grants for the 2023/2024 fiscal years. Since its inception, over 321 fire departments have benefited from this program.

State Response Teams

FY24 funds allocated to Minnesota's HMRTs were used to buy incident communications equipment, update atmospheric monitoring software and for expanding/enhancing atmospheric monitoring capabilities.

FY24 funds allocated to Minnesota's Urban Search and Rescue Task Forces (TF1 & TF2) were utilized for the purchase of multiple response vehicles (including towable trailers), the purchase of rescue and stabilization equipment and the purchase of mobile/vehicle-based communications equipment.

SFM staff continue to work with the HMRT and TF teams to identify gaps in administration and operation. Currently, identified gaps show the need for improved processes for team procurement of equipment with state funds and the need for a more detailed plan to update and replace designated equipment. As SFM staff continue to work on closing these identified gaps, the teams continue to operate at the high level they have been known for with no gaps in service.

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