



Levy 27-148: Frequently Asked Questions

When is Election Day? Election Day is May 19, 2026.

What is the purpose of the levy?

The SW Polk Fire District, Board of Directors have determined the need to replace the previous voter-approved operating levy that reduced response times, increased staffing, and enhanced community safety. The Board is asking voters to replace this local option levy to maintain these vital service levels.

What services does SW Polk provide?

SW Polk provides fire suppression, wildland fire response, hazardous materials response, fire prevention, basic rescue services, quick response to medical incidents, and ambulance transport services.

In January 2024, the Polk County Board of Commissioners assigned SW Polk an Ambulance Service Area (ASA) for part of the Rickreall and Salt Creek communities. However, the Commissioners denied the District's request for ASA coverage in the Bridgeport community area, requiring those citizens to still wait for ambulance service from the City of Dallas.

What is the impact on response times?

Our fire stations, located in Bridgeport, Rickreall, and Salt Creek, allow for the distribution of our resources. This distribution of resources generated quicker response times across the District.

- In 2020, the average response time to emergency incidents was 25 minutes (90% of the time).
- In 2024, average response times were less than 10 minutes—a direct result of levy supported staffing and infrastructure.

How does increasing career staff impact volunteers?

Career staff provide consistent, guaranteed response coverage, which relieves volunteers from having to respond to minor or routine incidents. Volunteers remain a critical part of the District's response network, particularly for large-scale or concurrent emergencies.

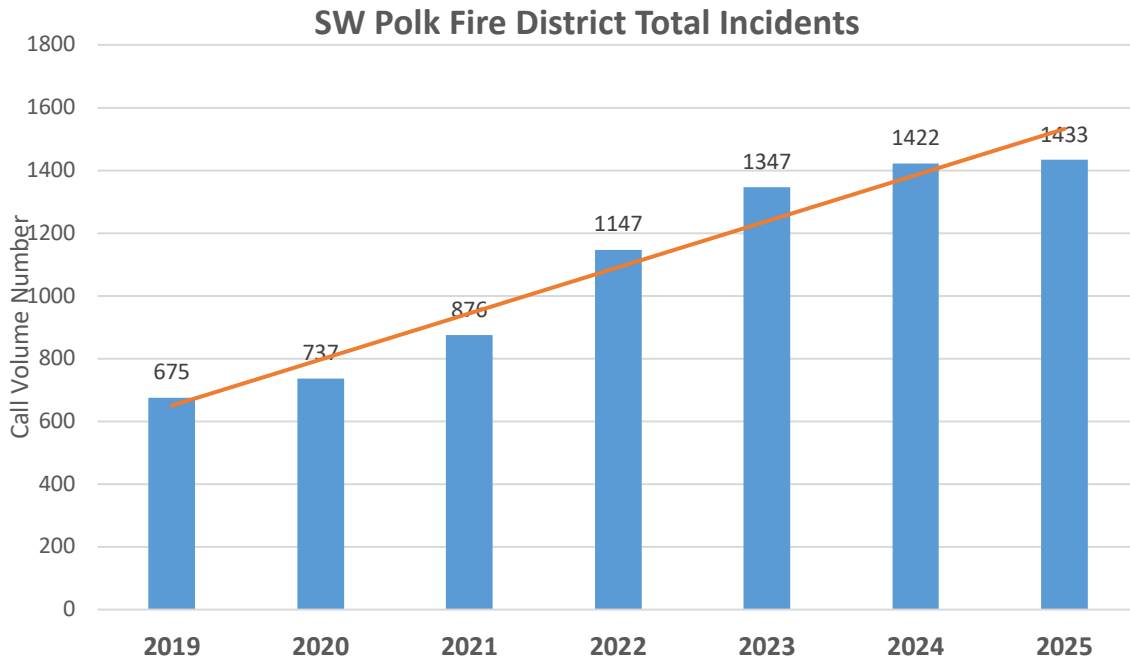
What external factors are affecting fire districts?

The Board recognizes several challenges:

- Increasing number of emergency incidents across the region
- Growing reliance on mutual aid between neighboring agencies. In 2025, SW Polk responded to 448 incidents to assist the City of Dallas.
- Maintaining responders to support both our volunteer base and current career staff as call volumes continue to rise.

How have fire districts changed in the last 10 years?

Like many agencies, we have experienced extraordinary emergency call volume increases. For SW Polk, the number of annual incidents has doubled since 2019. Without this levy funding, the District will not be able to meet this growing demand.



What changes have occurred in our insurance rating (ISO)?

SW Polk recently completed an Insurance Services Office (ISO) evaluation, which helps determine local fire insurance premiums. A lower ISO rating means lower fire insurance premiums for residents. With three new fire stations and higher staffing, the District anticipates an improved ISO rating upon the next official review.

How long will the levy last?

The proposed levy is a 5-year local option levy. The Fire District is intentionally going out for this operating levy before the current levy expires. This way, should the levy fail, the Board has time to make difficult decisions regarding the level of service that the District can provide given the level of funding that the community is willing to support.

How much will the levy cost?

The replacement levy includes an increase from \$0.81 to \$1.37 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. For a property assessed at \$200,000, this means an increase from \$162/year to \$274/year—approximately \$112 more per year, or less than \$10 per month.

What is assessed value?

Assessed value (AV) is the amount used to calculate Oregon property taxes. Each year, the county assessor determines your property's real market value (RMV) and assessed value (AV). You are taxed on your assessed valuation. This can be found on your annual property tax statement or by searching your property at: <https://apps2.co.polk.or.us/PSO>.

What did the voter-approved General Obligation Bond measure accomplish?

In 2017, voters approved a bond to fund critical infrastructure and equipment upgrades. The bond provided:

- Three new fire stations
- Three new fire engines
- Replacement of outdated safety equipment

The bond was approved at a rate not to exceed \$0.69 per \$1,000; SW Polk has conservatively managed the rate at an average of \$0.64 per \$1,000 annually.

What other funding options have been considered?

The District aggressively pursues public and private grant opportunities. Over the past four years, SW Polk has requested more than \$3 million in grants and received \$1,629,578.54 for equipment and staffing support, including:

- Cardiac monitors
- A new fire engine
- Wildland tank and pump
- Fuel tank trailer
- 20 new sets of turnout/bunker gear
- Wildfire staffing and community risk reduction projects

While these grants are vital, funds can only be used for their designated purposes and cannot replace operational funding provided by the levy.