

Seattle Fire Department

2026 Proposed Budget

Policy Considerations

Select Budget Committee | October 17, 2025

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Budget Summary

	2025 Adopted	2026 Endorsed	% Change	2026 Proposed	% Change
Operating Appropriations by BSL					
Fire Prevention	\$14.7M	\$15.4M	4.3%	\$15.7M	2.0%
Leadership and Administration	\$51.9M	\$54.3M	4.6%	\$57.2M	5.4%
Operations	\$261.0M	\$271.1M	3.9%	\$275.8M	1.7%
Operating Subtotal	\$327.6M	\$340.7M	4.0%	\$348.7M	2.3%

The 2026 Proposed Budget includes several new policy proposals, not anticipated in the 2026 Endorsed Budget:

- Expansion of Health 99 post-overdose response function, including 3 new FTE and 2 new vehicles at a cost of \$1.2M;
- The addition of 4 new civilian FTE to support data analysis, recruitment, technology deployment, and fire prevention and abatement of dangerous buildings;
- One-time funding of \$2.1M to expand the 2026 recruit class from 80 to 100; and
- One-time funding of \$1.5M for equipment and training needed in support of FIFA World Cup events.

Central Staff have not identified any policy considerations associated with these additions, other than overall sustainability, but have noted two other Policy Considerations for discussion.

SFD Policy Consideration – Potential to Add Aid Cars

1. Does SFD have enough aid cars to handle current call volumes?

- SFD currently has seven aid cars, five on 24/7 deployments and 2 on 12-hour shifts to serve peak call volume.
- These units are staffed by SFD Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) who are trained to assess and treat life-threatening emergencies.
- As SFD’s pattern of emergency response shifts toward medical calls, rather than fires, aid car call volumes have been increasing:

Year	Total Calls	Average Per Aid Car
2020	23,223	3,871
2021	25,273	4,412
2022	30,126	5,012
2023	33,784	5,613
2024	31,836	5,306
2025 YTD*	21,417	3,569

- These volumes are well above Washington Surveying & Rating Bureau guidelines, which suggest that 2,500 calls the level at which additional responders should be considered.

SFD Policy Considerations – Aid Car Options

Current Constraints

- The potential options to address current volume cars are not constrained by funding alone.
- SFD does not have sufficient staff to maintain minimum staffing levels without a heavy reliance on overtime. Adding Aid Cars before these issues can be addressed will only exacerbate this problem.
- SFD staff indicate that new Aid Cars should not be added until mid-2026, when its first class of 80 or more recruits is expected to replenish firefighter ranks.
- The department's preferred plan would be to add one 24-7 aid car. If the add of one 24-7 aid car is not financially feasible at this time, the department would request one 12-hour aid car to respond to calls during peak hours.

Options

- A. Add \$2.3 million for one 24-7 aid car: \$784,000 added one-time to provide overtime funding to staff the aid car between July-December 2026, \$1.04 million to add 10.0 FTE to the July recruit class to provide ongoing staffing for the aid car, and \$520,000 to add a vehicle.
- B. Add \$912,000 for one 12-hour, peak time aid car: \$392,000 to provide overtime funding to staff one 12-hour aid car during peak deployment hours and \$520,00 to add one aid car. Ongoing funding will be \$784,000 for overtime.
- C. No change.

SFD Policy Consideration – Ready Rebound & Return to Work

Ready Rebound – Description

Firefighter absences due to injury and related claims have significant impact on SFD's operations and budget. Ready Rebound offers concierge services that expedite care for firefighter injuries related to musculoskeletal conditions. While Ready Rebound's services may decrease recovery time for musculoskeletal conditions, there are trade-offs to consider:

- Ready Rebound's services do not appear to support the medical conditions or complicated issues that are the source of the SFD's greatest challenges with firefighter injury claims.
- Ready Rebound has apparently not resulted in cost savings for a comparable municipal employer (Spokane).
- SDHR's direct administration of workers' compensation claims means that implementation of Ready Rebound could create potential legal risks and liabilities. These risks should likely be discussed in an appropriately confidential forum.
- A comprehensive review of SFD's approach to returning firefighters will almost certainly impact mandatory subjects of bargaining and will require negotiations with the appropriate unions. Unilateral action on the City's part ahead of such potential negotiations might miss an opportunity to make other important process changes.

SFD Policy Consideration – Ready Rebound & Return to Work

Ready Rebound - Options

Options:

- A. Add \$400,000 to SDHR to support contracting with an organization, such as Ready Rebound, that offers expedited access to care and coordinated recovery services for firefighter injuries (subject to bargaining).
- B. Pass a Statement of Legislative Intent requesting SFD, in consultation with SDHR, union partners, and other relevant entities, to comprehensively report on ways to develop or enhance programs to strengthen the City's response to firefighter injury claims.
- C. No change.

Questions?