

Santa Barbara County Fire Department

***Chapter 15 Amendments and 2026
Fee Study***



Presentation

- Chapter 15 Amendments
 - Board of Appeals
 - Permits
- Fire Department Fee Study
 - Legal Framework
 - Background
 - Fee Study Goals and Methodology
 - Fire Department Fee Schedules
 - Fee Schedule Approach and Hourly Rates
- Recommendations

Chapter 15 Amendments

- Chapter 15 was amended in late 2025 to adopt the 2025 California Fire Code
- Chapter 15 requires amendments for updates to the following sections:
 - Appendix A, Board of Appeals
 - Section 105 Permits
 - Article V, Section 15-101, Fee Schedule

Appendix A – Board of Appeals

- Board of Appeals has not convened in recent documented history
- Amendments to Appendix A and the Rules and Regulations required to allow for hearings for broader fire code, land use and building permit items related to the Fire Department
- Appendix A amendments reflect new Rules and Regulation updates and the decision-making process for the Board of Appeals
- Amendment also clearly states adherence to Brown Act Rules

Section 105 – Permits

- Amendments to Section 105 reflects minor changes to various special event categories and assemblies
 - Amusement areas
 - Carnivals and fairs
 - Places of Assembly
- In recent years, Prevention staff has noted activities and requirements for these types of inspections did not require different designations

Fees - Legal Framework

- User fees in California are required to conform to the statutory requirements of the California Constitution, Proposition 218 (1996), and the California Code of Regulations, including Government Code 66000 et seq.
- By law, user fees may not exceed the estimated reasonable cost of providing the services for which they are levied
- Proposition 218 ensures user fees are fair, transparent, and directly connected to the actual cost of the service provided.

Background

- The Fire Prevention Division has four distinct sections with different inspection and fee related activities
- Inspection Services Section
 - Operational Permits last reviewed in 2009
 - Special events, tents, schools, churches, industrial occupancies, occupancies with activities requiring permits
 - Previously conducted by Engine Companies
 - Currently conducted by a relatively new section within Prevention created in 2015
- Investigations Section
 - Cannabis Licensing
 - Film Permit Reviews
 - Fireworks
 - Operational Permit Enforcement

Background

- Planning and Engineering Section
 - Different categories of land use planning and building permit related fees last reviewed in 2006 and 2016
 - Current fees do not account for Housing Element and Builder's Remedy projects in terms of land use planning
 - Fees are currently significantly under market rates
 - Do not currently account for all Fire Department related activities and requests
- Vegetation Management Section
 - Fees have not been updated since 2010
 - Added new categories to reflect current environment of burning activities within the County

County Fee Policy

- “Departments shall ensure appropriate maximum reimbursement of... user fees that fully offset user costs...”
- “Departments are responsible for insuring that all legally allowed fees and charges are presented to the Board for adoption and for reviewing/adjusting as appropriate.”

Fee Study Goals and Objectives

- Align fees to the cost of the services being provided
- Identify fees that should be added to the fee schedule
- Analyze all costs and determine whether they are being appropriately recovered
- Follow industry standards
- Enhance fee transparency

Fee Study Methodology and Findings

The Fire Department contracted with Government Consulting Partners

- Define the fees to be analyzed
- Time spent on the fee-related service
- Develop fully burdened hourly rate
- Compare total costs to the current fee schedule
- Annual revenue projections

Proposed Increased Revenue Recovery

- Overall cost recovery increases by \$547,191.00
 - New fees are proposed to recover costs
 - Most fees increasing to cover costs to deliver services

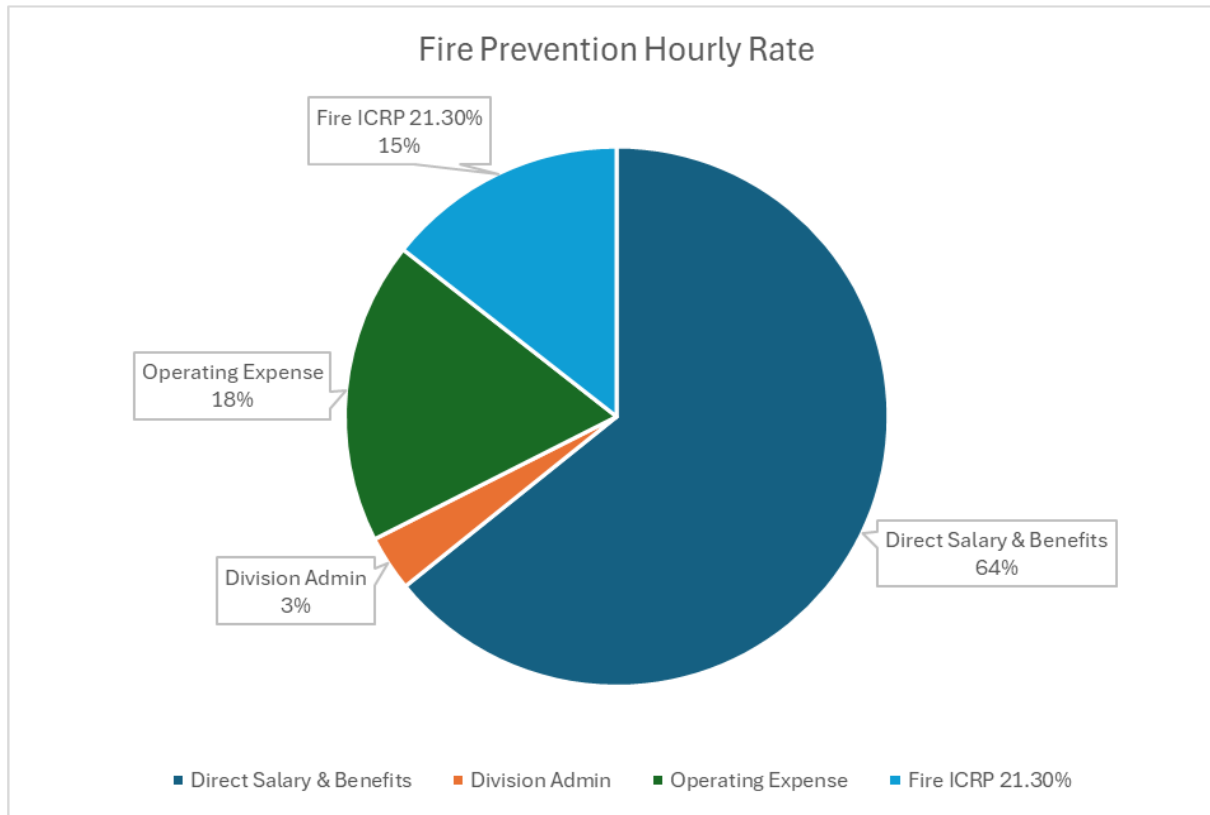
| Fee Service Area | Total Costs, User Fee Services | Current Revenue (Based on FY 24-25 Volume) | Proposed Fee Revenue | Increased Revenue |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|-------------------|
| Fire Prevention | \$932,528 | \$385,337 41% | \$932,528 100% | \$547,191 |

Fee Schedule Approach and Hourly Rates

- Determine direct and indirect costs
- Examine actual project volumes and time spent
- Calculate hourly rates
- Determine fee changes based on code or process changes
- Recommend fee types: fixed or actual cost

Fee Schedule Approach and Hourly Rates

Government Consulting Partners calculated a fully burdened hourly rate of \$192.00 per hour for Fire Prevention related services.



| Fire Prevention Staff | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| Direct Salary & Benefits | \$ 4,096,327.00 |
| Division Admin | \$ 212,195.40 |
| Operating Expense | \$1,156,820 |
| Fire ICRP 21.30% | \$917,715 |
| | <hr/> |
| | \$ 6,383,057.67 |
| Total Direct Hours Available | 33,270.00 |
| Fully Burdened Hourly Rate | \$ 191.86 |

Fee Schedule Update Examples

Previous Fee Schedule

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Fire Protection Certificate | \$536 |
| Sprinkler Plan Check Residential | \$232 |
| Tent Inspection | \$137 |
| Conditional Use Permit - Major | \$519 |
| Development Plans | \$1,247 |
| Tentative Parcel Maps | \$1,247 |
| Land Use Permit | \$0 |
| Fire Safety Officer/Film Standby | \$0 |

Proposed Fee Schedule

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| Minor and Major (Over 3600SF) FPC | \$575 / \$1,151 |
| Sprinkler Plan Check Residential | \$815 |
| Tent Inspection | \$192 / \$48 |
| Conditional Use Permit - Major | \$1,534 |
| Development Plans | \$2,493 |
| Tentative Parcel Maps | \$1,151 |
| Land Use Permit | \$384 |
| Fire Safety Officer/Film Standby | \$192 |

Peer Agency Fee Comparison

| Fee Category | Current Fee | Proposed Fee | Peer Average | Los Angeles County | Ventura County | Orange County | City of Culver City | Santa Monica |
|---|-------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|---|---|
| Fire Prevention - Operational Permits | | | | | | | | |
| Places of assembly | \$99 | \$384 | \$620 | \$390 | \$336 | \$1,133 | N/A | N/A |
| Hot work operations | \$99 | \$288 | \$365 | \$390 | \$378 | \$138 | compared to Welding and Cutting fee of \$555.44 | Miscellaneous - uniform fire code permits, others Actual Cost |
| Land Development - Sprinklers and Alarms | | | | | | | | |
| NFPA 13D Sprinkler | \$232 | \$815 | \$714 | \$565 | \$630 | \$738 | \$942.27 | \$695.85 |
| Fire Protection Certificate (Under 3,600 SF) | \$536 | \$575 | \$913 | \$565 | \$756 | \$747 | \$1716.82 | \$779.38 |

Recommended Actions

- Approve the introduction (first reading) of an ordinance amending Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code to adopt amendments and the recommendations of the “Santa Barbara County Fire Department User Fee Study: April 10, 2026” included as Attachment C;
- Read the title “An ordinance amending Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code and Adopting a Revised Fee Schedule” and waive the full reading of the Ordinance, as shown in Attachment A; and
- Continue the hearing to May 12, 2026, on the Administrative Agenda to consider recommendations, as follows:
- Determine that the adoption of an ordinance amending fees for Santa Barbara County Fire Department is not subject to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15273(a)(1) and 15378(b)(5); and
- Adopt (second reading) “An ordinance amending Chapter 15 of the Santa Barbara County Code and Adopting a Revised Fee Schedule,” as shown in Attachment A; and
- Direct the Santa Barbara County Fire Department to conduct a subsequent fee study after a period of twelve (12) months to propose adoption of a cost neutral policy and develop a cost neutral rate for land development, operational permit, occupancy inspection and miscellaneous inspection fees;
- Approve the adoption of a Resolution of Legislative Findings Supporting Amendments to the California Fire Code.