Umatilla Rural Fire Protection District
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AUGUST 2026

CHIEF'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Reporting Period: JULY 2026 **Date Presented:** AUGUST 5, 2026 **Prepared by:** Chief Baker

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Administration and Finance

The last two months have been busy keeping the district moving forward while working through the normal day-to-day operations. Time has been spent on the budget, payroll, grants, board items, personnel issues, and several projects that will help strengthen the district for the future, including our Capital Improvement Plan, fire impact fees, and System Development Charges.

I was also deployed on two separate incidents with the OSFM IMT Red Team, which is bringing significant revenue back to the district. While I was away, I continued to handle district business remotely, and Battalion Chief Ray Harris did an outstanding job managing the day-to-day operations. I appreciate his leadership and the work of all of our staff while I was on assignment.

Staffing and Personnel

The last two months have kept our personnel extremely busy. We deployed one brush unit to two different wildland fires, including one State Conflagration, while continuing to provide emergency response here at home. Our crews handled several significant incidents, including a fatal motor vehicle crash, a teenage cardiac arrest, several large brush fires, and multiple boat rescue incidents.

Even with our region experiencing significant wildland fire activity, our personnel continued to answer the call both locally and across the state. I am proud of how our staff has stepped up, remained flexible, and continued to provide a high level of service to our community while supporting our neighboring agencies when needed.

Fleet and Equipment

The district fleet remains in good condition overall. Engine 11 (Seagrave) remains out of service at Hughes Fire Equipment for radio installation, compliance inspections, repairs, and pump testing. Engine 13 (HME) also remains out of service while repairs and compliance work are completed. All other apparatus and command vehicles remain in service and available for response.

Progress continues on both Engine 11 and Engine 13. While these projects have taken longer than anticipated due to fire season, operational demands, and our decision to utilize UCFD1 for much of the work because of their lower shop rates, both remain a priority. We expect both engines to be completed and returned to service in the near future.

Station 11

- Engine 11 (Seagrave) – Out of Service at UDFD1 for radio installation, compliance inspections, repairs, and pump testing.
- Engine 12 (Freightliner) In Service
- Brush 11 – In Service
- Brush 13 – In Service
- Water Tender 11 – In Service
- Boat 11 – In Service
- UTV 11 – In Service

Station 12

- Brush 12 – In Service
- Water Tender 12 – In Service
- Engine 13 (HME) – Out of Service for repairs and compliance work.

Command Vehicles

- Chief 10 – In Service
- Battalion 11 – In Service

Grants and Funding

The district continues to pursue grant opportunities to improve services while reducing the financial burden on our taxpayers. Over the last two months, we submitted applications for nearly **$3.8 million** through the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) and SAFER Grant programs to support future equipment and staffing needs.

We also received the equipment awarded through the Wildhorse Foundation Grant, including the new UTV slip-in firefighting unit and the fit testing machine. The UTV slip-in unit has already been placed into service and has proven to be a great asset during emergency responses. We appreciate the continued support of our grant partners as we work to improve the capabilities of the district.

Planning and Projects

Planning efforts over the last two months have focused on projects that will benefit the district for years to come. Work has continued on the Capital Improvement Plan, the development of fire impact fees and System Development Charges, and identifying future facility, apparatus, and equipment needs.

These projects are designed to help the district keep up with future growth, improve long-term financial stability, and ensure we can continue providing a high level of service without placing the full cost of growth on our existing taxpayers.

Challenges

The biggest challenge facing the district continues to be our long-term financial sustainability. At our current tax rate of **$0.8511 per $1,000 of assessed value**, combined with the impacts of enterprise zones, we are simply not generating enough revenue to keep pace with increasing costs and future service demands. While we have made significant progress correcting past practices and strengthening the district's financial management, the reality is that additional revenue will be necessary to maintain the level of service our community expects.

These are difficult conversations to have, but they are necessary. If we are unable to increase revenue through efforts such as fire impact fees, System Development Charges, grants, or other funding sources, the Board may eventually be faced with difficult decisions such as reducing services, consolidating with another agency, or entering into an intergovernmental agreement for service. My goal is to continue identifying every opportunity available so this district can remain financially stable and self-sufficient for many years to come.

Progress and Positive Notes

Despite the challenges, the district continues to make steady progress. We have been aggressive in pursuing new funding opportunities, improving our long-term planning, and investing in equipment that will better serve our community. Our personnel have continued to perform at a high level, both locally and while supporting statewide wildfire incidents.

I am proud of the direction the district is heading. We have a dedicated team, strong support from the Board, and continue to make decisions that will strengthen the district for years to come. While there is still plenty of work ahead, I believe we are moving in the right direction.

Closing

While we still have work ahead of us, I am confident we are moving in the right direction. By continuing to plan ahead, pursue new funding opportunities, and make sound decisions, we are building a stronger and more sustainable fire district for the community we serve.