



SAFE-D Recap of the 89th Texas Legislature

January 31, 2026



SAFE-D Legislative Recap

- Monday, May 29th – Last day of Session, Sine Die
 - Sine Die means without having a further date for activities
- Sunday, June 22nd - Governor signed or vetoed bills or they became effective
- September 1, 2025 – default effective date for new laws
- Special Session on many issues
 - July 21st through August 21st
 - "devastating floods in the Texas Hill Country"
 - Plus - Mid-decade redistricting



Final Regular Session Statistics

9,014 Bills and Joint Resolutions filed in total

Bill Type	Range	Democrat		Republican		Total		
		Filed	Passed	Filed	Passed	Filed	Sent to Gov	
House Bills	HB 1 - HB 5702	2354	138	3290	481	5644	619	11%
House Concurrent Resolutions	HCR 5 - HCR 172	28	10	140	86	168	96	57%
House Joint Resolutions	HJR 1 - HJR 218	75	1	133	7	208	8	4%
Senate Bills	SB 1 - SB 3075	1232	158	1843	436	3075	594	19%
Senate Concurrent Resolutions	SCR 1 - SCR 58	17	10	41	18	58	28	48%
Senate Joint Resolutions	SJR 1 - SJR 87	33	0	54	10	87	10	11%
Total		3739	317	5501	1038	9240	1355	15%

*source Telicon

* Over 8000 bills and JRs filed in 2023;
About 7200 bills and JRs filed in 2021



Significant Actions

- SB 2 (school voucher program);
- SB 9 (limiting eligibility for cashless bond);
- SB 12 (banning DEI in K-12 schools);
- SB 31 (permits medically necessary abortions);
- SB 3070 (lottery removed online, Texas Lottery Commission abolished and replaced);



Significant Actions

- SB 7 & HJR 7 (improving state water infrastructure);
- HB 2 (public school finance package);
- HB 229 (defining only male and female sexes);
- HB 1586 (printable conscientious exemption form for child vaccinations)



Significant Bills that Died

- SB 19 (taxpayer funded lobbying bill);
- SB 240 (bathroom bill);
- SB 2880 (criminalizing abortion pills);
- 26 Bills in total vetoed by Governor
 - SB 3 – (THC ban)



Budget Actions

- State Budget approved by Legislature:
Conference Committee Report on HB 1 issued
May 28th and adopted June 2nd
 - \$338 Billion for Biennium
 - \$24 Billion budget surplus
- Legislature approved...
 - \$620 million for backlogged volunteer fire department assistance grants and firefighting aircraft for the Texas A&M Forest Service
 - \$7.8 million for vehicle acquisition for the Texas Division of Emergency Management



Bills of Interest

Of the 429 bills we were monitoring...



ESD Operations



HB 3000 - Passed

- HB 3000 passed, establishing the rural ambulance service grant program. Rural counties may petition the comptroller for funding under this program to supplement their own available revenue for an effective rural ambulance system.
- Counties of less than 10,000 people may receive up to \$500,000 and counties of up to 68,750 people may receive up to \$350,000. ESDs in those counties must work with the County to obtain funds.



SB 2778 - Passed

- SB 2778 passed, amending Section 775.073(b) of the Health and Safety Code adjusts the cap for expenditures that can be disbursed by an employee without requiring prior approval from the governing board from \$2,000 to \$50,000



HB 1522 - Passed

- HB 1522 passed, requiring open meeting postings be available three business days before the meeting (increased from 72 hours).
- For meetings where the budget of the entity will be discussed, a copy of the proposed budget and a tax burden comparison must also be posted publicly. The tax burden comparison will show the property tax for the median home value under the proposed budget and under a balanced, no-new-revenue tax rate.



SB 916 - Passed

- SB 916 passed, extending billing limits for ground ambulance services from SB 2476 (88th Legislature) to September 1, 2027, and permits the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to revoke, suspend, or refuse to renew government-operated EMS provider licenses should they not comply with the billing limits.
- Annual rate changes for government-operated ground ambulance services may not increase more than the Medicare Ambulance Inflation Factor or 10% of the previous calendar year's rates, whichever is lower.



HB 3732 - Passed

- HB 3732 passed, allowing fire departments to request an extension to comply with minimum standards set by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection established under Government Code, Section 419.047.

SB 1173

- SB 1173 passed, raising the threshold for competitive procurement methods required by political subdivisions, increasing the expenditure limit from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

HB 150 - Passed

- HB 150 passed, requiring
 - each elected or appointed official and employee of a political subdivision who has access to the entity's information resources or information resources technologies to complete a cybersecurity training program annually;
 - provides authority to deny access to the information resources or information resources technologies to individuals who have not completed the required training;
 - requires the entities to report employee and official completion of the mandatory training to the new Cyber Command; and
 - penalizes entities that do not comply by impacting the entity's ability to apply for or keep certain grants administered by the state.
- Bill removed the prior 25% threshold—added in the 2023 legislative session
- Must complete the training beginning in 2026. DIR's current reporting deadline for cybersecurity training is August 31.

HB 3512 - Passed

- H.B. 3512 passed, requires local government officials to take artificial intelligence training certified by the Department of Information Resources.
- Specifically, the bill:
 - requires employees and officials who have access to the entity's computer system or database and use a computer to perform at least 25 percent of the employee's or official's required duties to complete artificial intelligence training;
 - gives entities authority to deny access to a computer system or database to those individuals who have not completed the required training;
 - requires entities to report employee and official completion of the mandatory training; and
 - penalizes entities that do not comply by impacting an entity's ability to apply for or keep certain grants administered by the state.



HB 4224 - Passed

- HB 4224 passed, requiring health care providers to post instructions online for a consumer to request their health care records from the entity, contact the disciplinary or licensing authority for the provider, and file a consumer complaint.



HB 1109 - Passed

HB 1109 passed without our amendments, exempting only counties from state motor fuel taxes.

SAFE-D needs more data to support a similar request for ESDs.



HB 111 & HB 5027 - Dead

If passed as filed, the bill would have expanded the amount of documents eligible for public information requests and narrow the use of attorney-client privilege to withhold information, favoring transparency. Several amendments and committee substitutes narrowed the scope.

HB 111 moved the furthest. It died on the Senate floor.



HB 13 & SB 2512 - Dead

If passed, it would have established the Texas Interoperability Council to support emergency communication interoperability with policy and grants.

HB 13 moved the furthest. It was never heard in the Senate.



HB 129 - Dead

If passed, it would have prohibited foreign adversary companies and federally banned companies from submitting a bid for a contract or entering into a contract with a governmental entity for goods or services.

It was not heard in the Senate.



Legislative Advocacy Related Bills



SB 19, HB 3257, & HB 4860 - Dead

If passed, it would have prohibited the use of public funds by political subdivisions (including ESDs) and associations (like SAFE-D) for hiring or contracting with a lobbyist.

SB 19 went the furthest. It was never heard in the House.



Special Session Refiles

Taxpayer funded lobbying was one of the special focus items described by the governor for the special session.

SB 19 was been refiled in the Special Session as HBs 36, 46, and 64.

Did not pass.



Wildfire Related Bills



SB 868 - Passed

SB 868 passed, mandating that at least 10% of funds in the Rural Volunteer Fire Department Assistance Program be given to eligible departments that the Texas A&M Forest Service determines are at high risk for large wildfires.



SB 767 - Passed

SB 767 passed, establishing a statewide database of firefighting equipment. The Texas A&M Forest Service will create and maintain an electronic database of all fire departments' (volunteer and professional) wildfire response equipment and contact information.



SB 34 - Passed

SB 34 passed, commissioning a study on wildfire risk in the state, establishing a statewide wildfire firefighting resource database, and increasing funding to volunteer fire departments in areas of high wildfire risk. SB 34, SB 767, and SB 868 cover overlapping topics.



Taxation Related Bills



HB 21 - Passed

HB 21 passed and restricts existing property tax exemptions for housing finance corporations. Taxes levied by conservation, reclamation, and emergency service districts can no longer be exempted under these changes.

Housing finance corporations are now strictly limited to develop land within the boundaries of the sponsoring local government unit, or to the approved areas of non-sponsoring counties, municipalities, or housing finance corporations.



HB 250 - Dead

If passed, it would have repealed the disaster exemption allowing 8% increase; repealed the de minimis exception allowing a \$500,000 increase in revenue; eliminated any multiplier applied to the previous year's maintenance and operations expense for additional income.

It was never heard in committee.



HB 1585, HB 2937, & SB 2976 - Dead

If passed, it would require housing finance corporations to operate only within their approved jurisdiction, and make them ineligible for tax exemptions outside of their approved areas.

HB 1585 moved the furthest. It was never heard in the Senate. HB 21 incorporated some of these provisions.



HB 416 - Dead

If passed, it would have delayed many significant property tax deadlines for appraisers, causing challenges to adopt tax rates that might exceed the voter approval rate.

It was never heard in committee.



HB 485 - Dead

If passed, it would have allowed ESDs to impose sales tax on local electric and gas consumption.

It died in committee after its hearing.



Annexation and Territory Related Bills



SB 2965 - Passed

SB 2965 passed, requiring municipalities prove that they can provide equivalent or better service to an area proposed for annexation from an ESD prior to annexation. The ESD must agree with their determination. Any disagreements are resolved through arbitration.



SB 1503 - Dead

If passed, it would have required that municipalities consent to annexation of territory within their limits or ETJ by an ESD.

It was never heard in committee.



SB 3040 - Dead

If passed, it would require some ESDs in Travis, Collin, and Denton County to remove territory within a municipality's corporate limits at the request of the municipality (10,000-19,000 population).

It was never heard in committee.



SB 2295 - Dead

If passed, it would prohibit any political subdivision (including ESDs) from expanding or being created within a municipality's corporate boundaries. It would also prohibit ESDs in particular from forming or expanding within a municipality's ETJ.

It was never heard in committee.



HB 2345 & SB 2962 - Dead

If passed, it would have removed the municipal authority to remove territory from an ESD under Section 775.022, Health and Safety Code.

Both companions were never heard in committee.



HB 377 - Dead

If passed, it would have required that municipalities negotiate with landowners about the provision of services unless specifically covered in a contract or by existing statute. The requirements were unable to be waived.

It was never heard in committee.



Other Bills Of Interest



HB 4464 - Passed

HB 4464 passed, allowing for workers' compensation coverage for ESD employee's (and others) participating in Texas Task Force 1 to be provided by the regular employer, an intrastate fire mutual aid system team, or a regional incident management team.

The Texas Division of Emergency Management has expressed intentions to reimburse all costs of participation properly documented and submitted.



HB 3687 - Passed

- HB 3687 passed, establishing new certification requirements for fire marshals and related personnel in districts and counties with populations of 100,000 or more.



HB 5611 - Dead

If passed, it would have authorized ESDs to provide preventative healthcare in addition to emergency healthcare.

It died on the House floor after several attempts to put it on the calendar.



HB 2388 & SB 758 - Dead

If passed, it would have expanded the definition of "governmental body" to include state associations of similar political subdivisions, like SAFE-D, for public information disclosures under the Public Information Act.

SB 758 moved the furthest. It died on the Senate floor.



HB 3977 - Dead

If passed, it would require that political subdivisions engage in collective bargaining (union negotiations) with firefighters when requested. It would also prohibit firefighters from striking.

It was never heard in the Senate.



What's next?

Texas Legislature – 2026 Primaries

- Primary election date: March 3, 2026
- Primary runoff date: May 26, 2026
- Filing deadline: December 8, 2025

Why It Matters

- Legislative turnover can affect **ESD taxing authority and EMS operations**
- Committee leadership may shift
- New members often require **ESD education** early in the cycle

Key Facts - Senate

10 Senate incumbents face contested primaries statewide

- 5 Open Republican districts, 2 Republican Incumbents being challenged
- One Democratic Incumbent being challenged
- Several challengers could shift committee dynamics

Key Facts - House

40 of 150 incumbents face contested primaries statewide and 16 open seats

- 29 Republican Incumbents being challenged
- 10 Open Republican Seats have contested primaries
- 11 Democratic Incumbents being challenged
- 6 Open Democratic Seats have contested primaries

Potential ESD Impacts

- Possible changes to **VATR debates**
- Shifts in committees overseeing Local Government, Finance, Fire Service and EMS
- Increased need for **district advocacy** during the interim

Takeaways

- Monitor primary outcomes
- Prepare updated **legislative priorities**
- Engage early with both incumbents and potential new members



After the Primaries?

- Keep an eye out for SAFE-D 3rd Tuesday Events coming up!
- January 12, 2027 – 90th Texas Legislature
- Interim Studies
 - Cancer in female firefighters
 - Rural firefighting and rescue capabilities
 - Wildfire risks



Next?

- Create relationships with Legislators
- Write letter or email to your Legislator (introduce yourself)
 - Ask for opportunity to meet
 - invite the Legislator to lunch, coffee, social event, fire department activity, Christmas Party (group, hospital or family)
 - SAFE-D can help
- Be persistent.
- Make in person visit to District office to ask for meeting.



Issues for ESDs

Results of Roundtable
Discussion
October 2025



EMS Issues



Follow on HB 3000 – rural
ambulance/EMS

Collaboration with TORCH
Collaboration with TEMSA



Supplement for Medicaid patients (HHS)

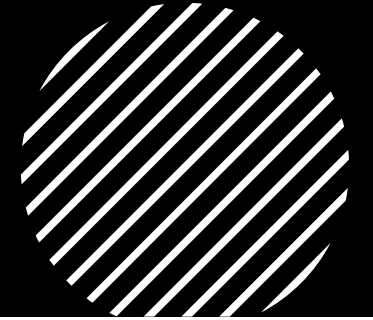


Mobile Integrated Healthcare

Annexation Issues

- Defense/clarification on SB 2965 – possible fix on arbitration language
- Voluntary annexation into ESDs
- Election to confirm special district annexation
- Fixing territorial boundaries for ESDs
- ETJ removal exempted within 15 miles of military base (Bexar)
- Sales tax from Limited Purpose Annexations

Governance



ELECTED/APPOINTED
COMMISSIONERS

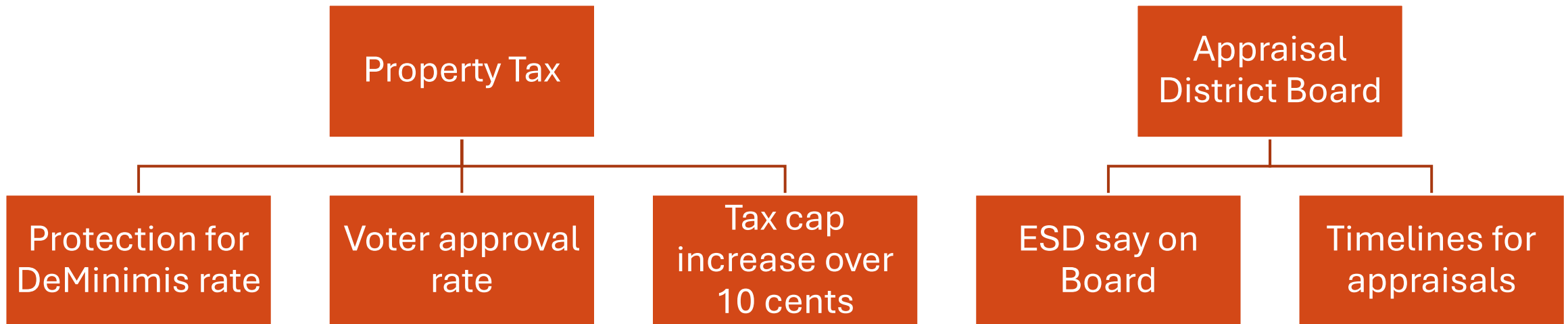
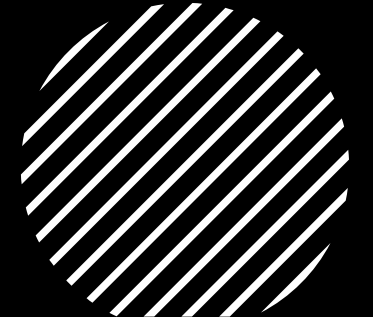


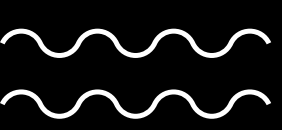
LOCAL OFFICIAL
REPRESENTATION AT CAPITOL



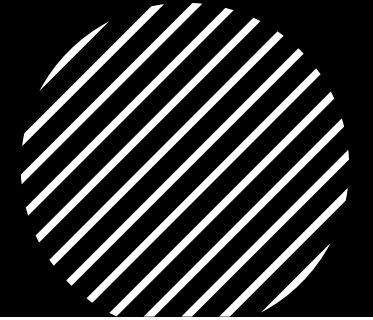
ESD SERVICE PROVIDER
JURISDICTION

Property Tax





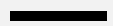
Communications



Interoperability

Dispatch –
coordination,
costs, personnel

Miscellaneous Issues



- ESDs provide residents with capabilities for first response



***ARE THERE
MORE?***



INTERIM LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM FOR 90TH SESSION

Planning key legislative actions for
upcoming session



PROGRAM OVERVIEW



CAPITOL TO COMMAND: TEXAS FIRST RESPONDER BRIEFINGS

Bridging Policy and Response

The program connects policymakers with emergency responders for deeper understanding. It enhances collaboration between legislators and Emergency Services Districts (ESDs).

Firsthand Insight Experience

Guided tours and briefings provide lawmakers with direct exposure to emergency operations. This hands-on approach reveals challenges and community impact.

Mission Statement

The slogan 'Where Policy Powers Emergency Response' emphasizes aligning legislation with responder needs. It symbolizes the program's core mission.

Enhancing Legislative Support

Direct engagement fosters informed policy decisions. The program strengthens legislative backing for emergency response initiatives.





PROGRAM DETAILS





PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

Program Educational Purpose

The program educates legislators on Emergency Services Districts' structure, funding, and operations.

Immersive Experience Goal

Immersive experiences demonstrate the community impact of Emergency Services Districts effectively.

Target Audience

Target audience includes Texas legislators, county commissioners, legislative aides, and local officials.

Engagement Importance

Engaging stakeholders builds informed support and fosters collaboration for emergency services policy.

HOSTS BY AND PROGRAM GOALS

Program Hosts

Texas ESDs partner with regional fire chiefs, EMS directors, and SAFE-D to lead the program.

Legislative Education

Educate legislators on ESD operations and community impact through walkthroughs and testimonials.

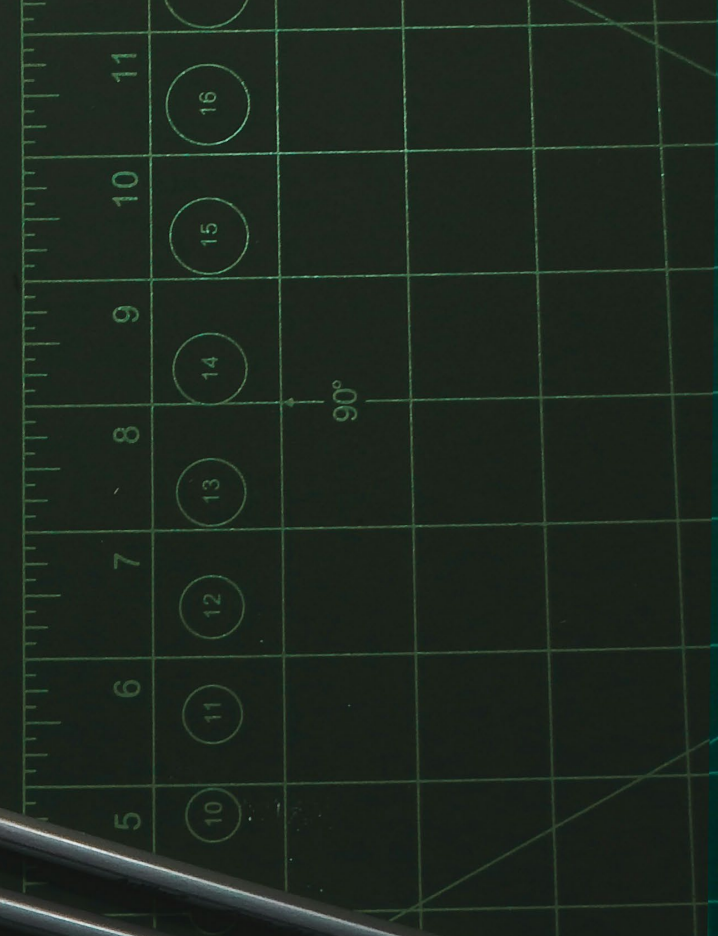
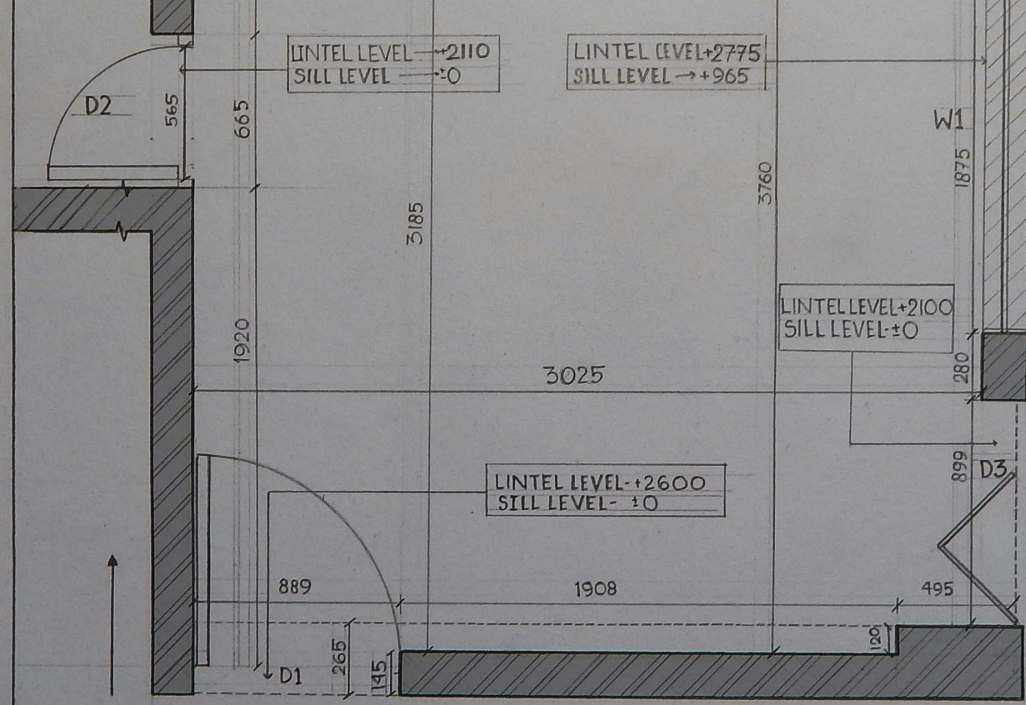
Highlight Priorities

Emphasize funding needs, infrastructure upgrades, and legislative priorities for emergency services districts.

Build Relationships

Foster lasting connections between ESD leadership and elected officials for ongoing support.





PROGRAM STRUCTURE



EVENT FLOW AND ACTIVITIES

Welcome and Orientation

ESD leaders introduce mission and service area while distributing briefing packets.

Facility Tour

Guided walkthrough of fire stations, EMS bays, and dispatch centers with demos.

Responder Roundtable

Informal Q&A with firefighters, paramedics, discussing staffing and training challenges.

Closing and Recognition

Presentation of certificates or coins, group photos, and future invitations.



MESSAGING AND MATERIALS

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY AND RESOURCES

Central Messaging Theme

The slogan connects policy with emergency response effectiveness, reinforcing program goals.

Customized Invitations

Invitation language is personalized for each event to increase engagement and relevance.

Essential Program Materials

Materials include briefing packets, maps, talking points, certificates, and optional signage.

Professional Presentation

Resources improve communication clarity and leave a lasting professional impression.



STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS





PLANNING AND OUTREACH

Strategic Event Scheduling

Schedule events during interim sessions or work periods for maximum legislator availability.

Collaborative Outreach

Coordinate with regional fire and safety groups for outreach and support.

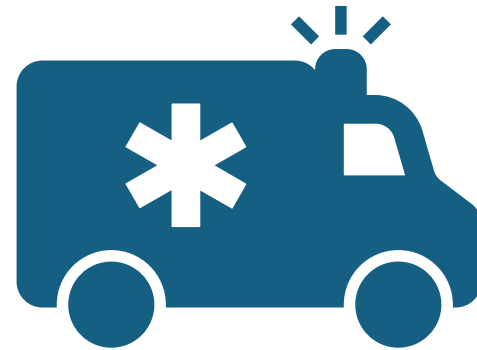
Bipartisan Support and Media

Engage bipartisan participation and media coverage to boost visibility and credibility.

Follow-up and Engagement

Track attendance and send thank-you notes with policy updates to maintain engagement.

Emergency Services District (ESD) Overview



District Name

Date of Station Tour

District Contact
Information
History of the
District

Year RFPD Created

Year ESD Created

Brief description of why the
district was established

Service Area & Population

- Population Served
- Area Served (general description)
- Map of Service Area (attach if available)
- Cities Overlapped



Emergency Response Statistics

EMS Runs per Year

- Motor Vehicle Accidents
- Heart Attacks
- Strokes

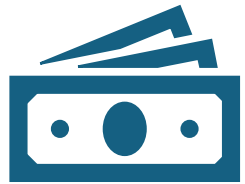
Fire Runs per Year

- Structural Fires
- Wildfires

Rescue Services Provided

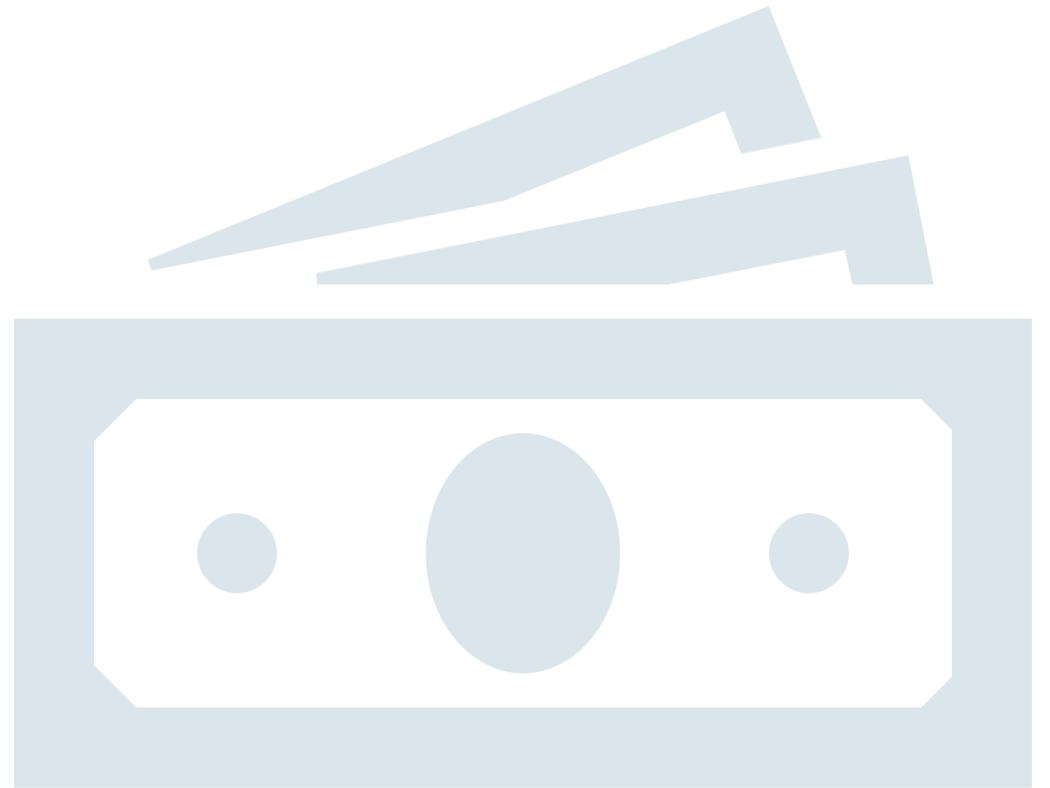
Response Time

- Average or Percentile



Financial Overview

- Tax Rate (per \$100 valuation)
 - 2020, 2021, 2022
- Sales Tax
- Annual Budget
- Per Capita Costs



Operational Metrics

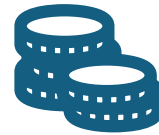


ISO Rating



Number of Stations

Cost to Build



Equipment

Cost to Acquire



Personnel

Paid/Volunteer Roster

Training

Payroll Cost

Key Takeaways for Legislators



IMPACT OF ESD ON
COMMUNITY SAFETY



EFFICIENCY AND
COVERAGE OF
EMERGENCY SERVICES



FINANCIAL
STEWARDSHIP AND
TRANSPARENCY



OPPORTUNITIES FOR
LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT

Questions & Discussion



Invite legislators to ask questions



Provide contact information for follow-up