



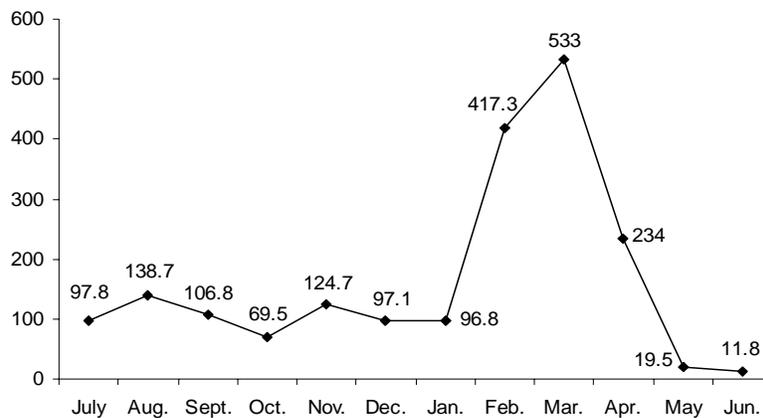
RURAL FIRE DEFENSE

Since 1994, the Legislature has steadily increased its support for rural firefighting efforts throughout the state. Over the seven years between FY'94 and FY'01, excluding capital bond expenditures, appropriations for rural fire efforts have increased by about \$4 million, or a four-fold increase.

Through a grant program administered by the State Department of Agriculture, the Legislature has developed programs that help the nearly 900 departments buy equipment and pay for daily operational costs.

The need for a rural firefighting network is a result of high fire danger in the state, especially during winter and spring.

Number of Fires Per Month
10-Year Average



Oklahoma's investment in the rural fire defense program has yielded an insurance ratepayer savings in excess of \$26 million in premiums annually due to reduced risk ratings on their property, according to an analysis by the State Insurance Department.

OKLAHOMA FIRE DEPARTMENTS

There are about 900 full-time and volunteer fire departments throughout the state. Between 1992 and 2000, the number of fire departments statewide has increased by 6%. Volunteer fire departments grew the most, with the addition of 55 departments over the eight-year period. The number of partially-paid volunteer departments fell by five as departments were eliminated or converted to other types of departments.

Fire Departments by Type

Type of Fire Department	1992	2000	% Change
Fully-Paid Fire Departments	34	36	6%
Partially-Paid Volunteer Fire Departments	75	70	-7%
Volunteer Fire Departments	707	762	8%
Others (4 federal, 3 state, 1 private)	8	9	13%
Total	824	877	6%

Source: State Fire Marshal

Oklahoma statutes provide for several department classifications, which are referred to by the corresponding statutory title: Title 11, Title 18 and Title 19.

Title 11 Fire Departments: 11 O.S. 29-101 et seq. grants municipalities authority to provide fire protection within their boundaries, contract for such protection, provide joint fire protection with other municipalities or private organizations, contribute to any fire department providing fire protection services, or provide fire protection beyond their corporate limits.

Title 18 Fire Departments: 18 O.S. 592 et seq. provides for incorporation of fire departments as charitable corporations. These full-time or volunteer incorporated departments are created to provide fire protection for an unincorporated area. These departments are authorized to assess fees on property owners to help support the services.

Title 19 Fire Departments: 19 O.S. 901.1 et seq. creates 11 rural fire protection districts throughout the state. Rural fire coordinators, under contract to the agriculture department, provide planning and technical assistance to fire departments in each of the 11 districts.

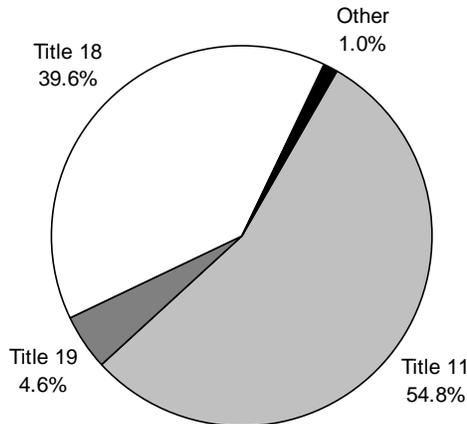
Since 1992, all classifications of fire departments realized a growth in the number. Title 18 fire departments experienced the largest share of growth.

Fire Department Classifications

Classification of Fire Departments	1992	2000	% Change
Title 11 Fire Departments	464	481	4%
Title 18 Fire Departments	314	347	11%
Title 19 Fire Departments	38	40	5%
Other (4 federal, 3 state, 1 private)	8	9	13%
Total	825	877	6%

Source: State Fire Marshal

Types of Fire Departments 2000



Oklahoma Firefighters

More than two-thirds of all firefighters work on a volunteer basis. Since 1992, there has been an overall growth in the number of firefighters in the state, with the greatest percentage growth occurring in volunteer departments.

Types of Firefighters

Type of Firefighter	1992	2000	% Change
Paid Firefighters	3,635	4,725	30%
Volunteer Firefighters	5,843	10,236	81%
Total	9,478	14,961	58%

Source: Oklahoma State Fire Marshal

FUNDING PROGRAMS

The Legislature has created various programs to help support rural fire departments throughout the state.

Operational Grant Program

Operational grants are provided through the State Department of Agriculture for each certified rural fire department. Funds are divided equally among each department pursuant to 19 O.S. 901.56. Funds may be used for basic operating expenses such as insurance, fuel, supplies, tools and equipment. For FY'00, the Legislature made available about \$1.9 million for these grants to rural fire departments.

80/20 Grant Program

The 80/20 Grant program provides matching grant funds to improve rural fire protection and rural economic development. The funds are used for construction, renovation or equipment. The grants are competitive in nature with awards based on rated applications, pursuant to 19 O.S. 901.57. The program requires rural fire departments to pay 20% of the cost of each project in cash or through labor and materials. For FY'00 about \$1 million was made available for the state match for this program.

Rural Fire Defense Equipment Fund Program

The Rural Fire Defense Equipment Fund Program allows the State Department of Agriculture to bid on surplus equipment and vehicles from other state agencies to be placed with the state fire departments statewide. For FY'01, the program received an appropriation of \$150,000, enough to equip 25 to 30 fire departments for a year.

Rural Fire Surplus Property Program

The State Department of Agriculture utilizes program funds to purchase surplus equipment from the Oklahoma and U.S. transportation

departments for placement with rural fire departments. The FY'01 appropriation of \$50,000 allows for the purchase of 20 vehicles.

Federal Rural Fire Prevention & Contribution Grants

Congress appropriates federal funds to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service for the Rural Fire Prevention and Contribution Grant Federal 50/50 Program. The funds are used to support fire prevention programs for schools, clubs and other organizations. The funds also are used for fire training, advanced technology benefiting the program and related activities. For FY'00, the federal government made available about \$200,000 for the matching program.

Federal Rural Community Fire Protection Grants

The Federal Rural Community Fire Protection Grant Program funds are awarded to rural fire departments on a competitive 50% local matching basis. Funds are used for purchase of equipment or providing training. For FY'00, the federal government made available \$31,000 for the program.

Other

Other assistance programs provide water delivery systems for use during extreme fire outbreaks. Rural fire coordinators administer the dry hydrant program, whereby hydrants are constructed in ponds to allow fire trucks and helicopter buckets to refill with water. Rural Fire Districts match the state funding on a one-to-one basis. The federal government administers other programs. The U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the National Park Service also provide assistance as necessary to protect federal lands.

FIRE SERVICE TRAINING

Since the mid-1930s, when a fire service training program opened at Oklahoma A&M University, Oklahoma has maintained one of the most advanced fire training programs in the nation.

The Fire Service Training Division of the College of Engineering, Architecture and Technology at Oklahoma State University maintains a comprehensive training program for both career and volunteer fire services. OSU was the first organization in the nation to be nationally accredited to certify firefighters. Today, OSU offers one of the only masters-level programs in the country.

Training is delivered through a network of part-time instructors (comprised of members of fire departments throughout the state), OSU full-time staff, and in-house instructors in various fire departments.

Rural Fire Training Centers

Since FY'00, funds have been made available for the construction of rural fire training and rescue centers throughout the state. These facilities help departments comply with state and federal safety regulations, improve customer service, and train an increasing number of firefighters. The centers work in conjunction with the OSU Fire Service Training Division, municipalities and career-technical (vo-tech) centers.

Fire Training Centers are located or under construction in the following places:

- Antlers
- Afton
- Broken Bow
- Enid
- Lawton
- Poteau
- Tahlequah
- Weatherford
- Woodward
- Wilburton

Wildland Fire Training Unit

The Legislature provided funds to the State Department of Agriculture to construct a movable Wildland Fire Training Unit. The training facility is located in a 45-foot semi-trailer. The trailer contains an interactive, computer-controlled emergency response simulator. The simulations immerse firefighters in wildfire scenes for training purposes.