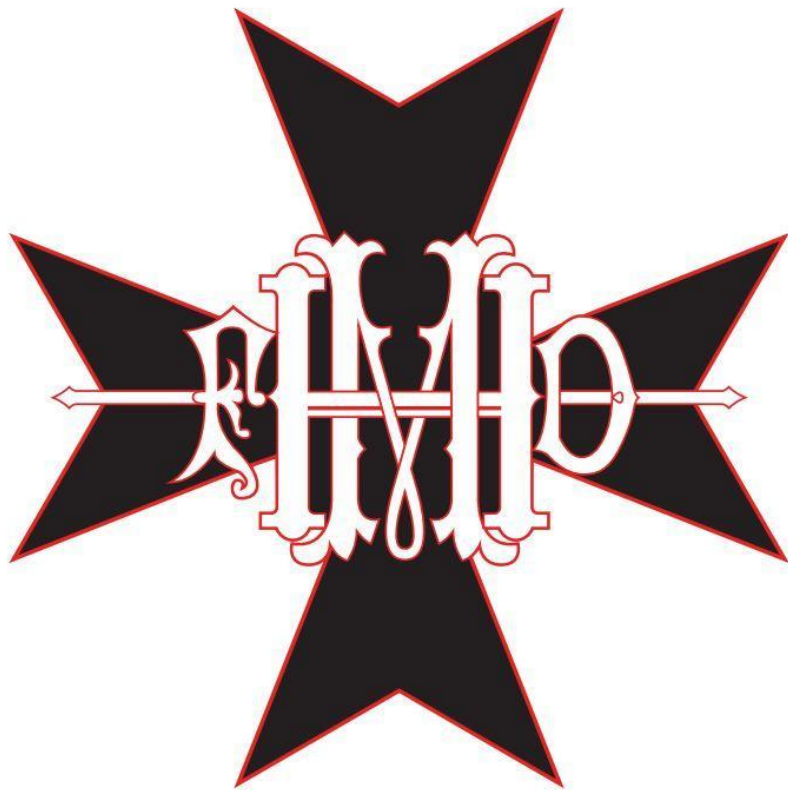


# Mount Horeb Area Joint Fire Department



2024 Operating  
Budget Request

The Mount Horeb Area Joint Fire Department presents the following 2024 Budget Request. The budget process began with a thorough review of historic spending and anticipated expenses. Due to the State of Wisconsin supplemental funding targeted at public safety needs (Act 12), we looked at our essential staffing needs to repair many budget shortfalls. This document covers the changed categories, both additions and subtractions. All other budget categories remain unchanged for 2024.

There has been a steady nationwide decline in volunteerism, not just in Fire and EMS, but across all types of volunteerism. The volunteer method of staffing Fire and EMS is no longer sustainable. As a combination department, we have 60 Fire and EMS volunteers that serve our Department, a number that has remained consistent. Volunteers for the MHAJFD are harder to recruit and the average annual hours by a volunteer has declined. In 2018 we had 44,900 annual hours covered by volunteer EMS; in 2023 that number dropped to 26,400 hours, a 41% decline over five years.

Our full-time staffing has been increasing over the years to fill holes in the primary ambulance response. Most nights in the last year we were not able to keep the back-up ambulance in service because of lack of staff. We had to rely on mutual aid ambulances to transport our patients. The fire side is struggling too, with single trucks going out the door with only three personnel, when four personnel is ideal. Secondly, many times it is necessary to have more than one truck respond, requiring an additional 3-4 personnel. Without proper staffing, the Fire and EMS service cannot survive.

Increasing call volume strains the volunteer workforce as well when they run calls all night or weekends then go to a full-time job or have other personal commitments the next day. Fire and EMS calls for 2022 totaled 1,538, increasing over 17% across the two prior years. This means crews are going out the doors over 4 times each day. As of June 30, 2023, Fire and EMS calls total 927, on track to be over 1,800 calls for the year, another 17% increase in a single year.

If volunteers choose to no longer serve, it would be at least a million-dollar budget addition. The one-million-dollar addition would provide minimum staffing

of 11 additional personnel, for a total of 18 (3 shifts of 6 FF/AEMTs), to keep one ambulance and one fire truck in service 24 hours a day. This does not include vacation or sick days. The 2024 budget begins to correct holes in our staffing and attempt to cover calls in the face of a national decline in volunteerism.

Our goal is to continue to recruit and retain volunteers to serve in Fire and EMS roles. It is a rewarding experience and will continue to sustain staffing roles at MHAJFD, hopefully for many years to come. If you know of anyone interested in volunteering and serving their community in Fire and/or EMS roles, please reach out and encourage them to apply to MHAJFD.

The following budget categories have proposed changes for 2024:

*5231.08 Insurance **\$5,000***

Property insurance for the Public Safety Building increased by 29% in 2023. We verified pricing and coverage through the Building Committee in a bid process. Workers Compensation Insurance and other non-building insurance coverages increased as well.

*5231.11 Admin Office Personnel **\$11,000***

This budget category adds a part time administrative assistant to help with bookkeeping, reporting and customer service needs. Part of this budget is split off for 2024 to create a separate item for outside accounting services.

*5231.15 Fire/EMS Administrator **\$500***

This account is the salary for the full time Chief position. The salary schedule was approved by the Board of Directors in January of 2019 and stayed within estimates given in the Fire Chief Transition Plan. The increase in this account for 2024 is the scheduled raise in the approved salary schedule. The associated payroll taxes are moved from this account in 2024 to the Employee Benefits account.

*5231.15.1 Deputy Chief **\$85,000***

This budget category adds a full time Deputy Chief position to help with administration and staffing in our department. This position was abandoned in 2019 when the current Chief was promoted. Our department has 68 members, and full-time supervision tasks need to be shared by more than just the Chief position. This position will also respond to fire and EMS calls.

*5231.18 Employee Benefits **\$147,500***

Benefit costs include State of Wisconsin retirement, health care, dental, and a retirement health savings account for accrued sick leave. For 2024 the employer payroll taxes will be moved to this account from the associated wage accounts to make monthly accounting easier to understand. Additions to the benefits category for 2024 include those related to the SAFER grant position, one new Firefighter/AEMT position, and Deputy Chief position added to the 2024 budget. The state announced a health insurance premium increase of 6% for 2024 as all health care services continue to increase. Retirement contribution rates have also been increased for 2024.

*5231.18.1 Staff Uniform Allowance **\$2,400***

This budget category is split from the Administrative-Disposable Supplies 5231.21 so that it can be better tracked. Each full-time employee has a \$300 annual allowance for duty uniforms required to be worn by the MHAJFD.

*5231.21 Disposable Supplies **(\$3,000)***

This budget category is decreased from the split of Staff Uniform Allowance to its own category for 2024.

*5231.22 Administrative Computer Equipment **\$2,000***

This account needs to accommodate an increase in the cost of our accounting software as well as replacement of two desktop office computers. Prior to 2019, two of our 16 computers were replaced annually. Single units were replaced in

2020 and 2021, with no replacement made in 2022. We are now having issues so need to ensure our two-replacement program resumes.

*5231.23 Travel and Mileage **\$200***

The Chief is covering travel costs for one or more conferences attended annually. This increase will add some more coverage in that area.

*5231.24 Attorney Fees **\$2,500***

MHAJFD has contracted with an employment law attorney to assist in negotiating a new union contract. Costs will be ongoing in employment related areas and legal advice.

*5231.29 Accountant **\$5,000***

This cost splits from the Admin Office Personnel account where the new accounting fees were paid from in 2023. The accountant assists MHAJD in making sure the department is running as effectively and efficiently as possible and complying with rules and regulations that govern public sector organizations.

*5231.30 Service Award Program **\$2,000***

This account funds the Service Award Program that was started in 2001. This program gives a retiring volunteer an award based on the years of service they have given the department. An annual investment per volunteer is put into this account and is met by a state match. We maximize the investment to get the full state match. State matches are growing, paired with more members in the system so necessitates an increase.

*5231.31 Heat **\$1,800***

The total price of the natural gas we used for heating in the last 12 calendar months increased. Quantity of gas used has remained consistent. The proposed budget figure will match the historical spending figure over the last 12 months.

***5231.33 Utilities-electric \$4,100***

The Fire Department's electrical expense for 2022 was \$27,535. Mount Horeb Utilities just announced a rate increase effective 8/1/2023. The adjustment to this account hopes to accommodate this usage and rate increase.

***5231.35 Utilities – water & sewer \$700***

Historical costs from the last year were reviewed and this category needs an adjustment to reflect usage and cost. Total expense is still lower than we were paying at our old station, due to lower flow fixtures and a new system for washing trucks that uses less water.

***5231.37 Telephone (\$1,300)***

This budget category can be reduced based on historical spending in 2023. Phone rates have increased, but cellular phones and data plans have remained constant in pricing and use.

***5231.39 Maintenance \$4,800***

The Public Safety Building Committee has reviewed historical repair costs on the building in addition to potential upcoming replacements. Maintenance includes annual service on our equipment to curb repair costs and to keep it running longer. Equipment includes boilers and boiler chemicals, kitchen hood extinguishment system, elevator, fire alarm system testing and monitoring, grease traps, and inspection and upkeep of the roof. We add \$2,000 annually to a fund for future building repairs or replacements. This is matched by the Village of Mount Horeb and managed by the Joint Public Safety Building Committee. Historical spending in this account has been over budget the last three years, prompting this adjustment.

***5232.02 Fire Apparatus Repair \$3,000***

The cost of maintaining our aging fleet of fire apparatus has been over budget. Engine 4 was set to be replaced in 2022 at 20 years of age, but due to manufacturing delays it will not arrive until 2025. Numerous repairs to all the

vehicles and increased price of parts and labor necessitate an adjustment to this category.

*5232.04 Fire Equipment Repair **\$2,000***

The cost of maintaining our fire equipment has been over budget. We are required to check and test our air packs and masks on an annual basis as well as annual checks on our extrication equipment and gas monitors. Increased prices of this maintenance and parts necessitate an adjustment to this category.

*5232.11 Fire Volunteer Stipend Program **\$20,000***

MHAJFD began a program at the beginning of 2023 to help retain firefighter volunteers. Before 2023, the firefighters received no money for calls or training. This stipend program awards points for coming to calls and training, converting the point into a monetary reimbursement in December of each year. The program was funded by Fire and EMS run charges for 2023 and will need its own budget category for 2024. Additional funding is added to the program for 2024 to encourage volunteer firefighters to join and serve our department.

*5232.12 Fire Run Charges **(\$3,500)***

This amount was historically paid to the Volunteers organization on a \$10 per call basis, cut in 2023 from \$15 per call. This money was moved to the Volunteer Stipend Program for 2023 to reward those individual volunteer firefighters who attend calls and training.

*5232.15 Firefighter Salary **\$64,400***

This category takes on the SAFER grant Firefighter/AEMT position that was funded by the federal government for three years, ending in 2023. Also added is an additional Firefighter/AEMT position to help with responder shortages. The increase in this account for 2024 also includes the scheduled annual increase in base pay of the approved salary schedule. These staff costs are equally shared in the EMS Expense category 5255.15.

*5232.16 Fire Fill-In Staff **\$4,000***

Fill-in staff covers openings in the full-time staff through sick, vacation, and other absences of a staff member. The increase in this category includes both a correction to match actual costs in historical spending along with possible hourly rate increases in order to stay competitive in attracting persons to cover fill-in shifts. These staff costs are equally shared in the EMS Expense category 5255.27.

*5232.19 Fire Computer Program **\$300***

Costs of annual programming and maintenance of our MDT (mobile data terminal) computers in the fire apparatus has increased in the last two years.

*5232.22 Fire Equipment Replacement **\$5,000***

The cost of a set of turn out gear and helmet has increased \$950 per set in the last year. In order to stay within NFPA requirements of 10-year gear use, we need to order 6 sets of turn out gear each year for replacement.

*5232.27 DNR Grant Equipment **\$6,800***

The annual DNR grant is traditionally a 50% state funded grant awarded in October for equipment used in wildland firefighting. Several years ago, the DNR changed to funding only a portion of each portable radio. This year we have requested funding for two portable radios, wildland fire pants, an AED, and backpack pumps. The equipment requested is different every year.

*4522.7 DNR Grant Funds **(\$2,200)***

This is an increase in the income from the DNR grant if we are awarded it in October. The grant traditionally pays for 50% of the requested items for wildland firefighting and \$1,250 per portable radio. For 2024 we have requested more equipment which means more income from the grant, if awarded.

*4422.9 Fire Income – Fire Runs **\$8,000***

This billing income involves vehicle accidents that require extrication, fire extinguishment, traffic control or other fire related tasks on scene. The Fire Board



has approved billing for all accidents, but the rate is now lower to encourage payment of bills. The rates used are FEMA approved rates for fire apparatus and personnel.

*Fire Insurance Dues (\$74,300)*

2% dues from the State of Wisconsin are a portion of fire insurance premiums collected by insurers doing business in Wisconsin. The funds are to be used exclusively for four purposes: purchasing fire protection equipment, performing fire inspection and public education, training firefighters, and funding pensions for firefighters. Historically these funds have been retained at the municipal level, but for better accounting of purchases and to meet state requirements, the MHAJFD requests the 2% dues paid to each municipality starting in 2024 are distributed to the MHAJFD. In 2024 the payments received for MHAJFD were 5.49 to 28.5% higher than 2023 payments. The excess funds each year, as 2% dues continue to increase, should be applied to the fire equipment and training needs of the MHAJFD within that calendar year.

*5255.02 EMS Apparatus Repair (\$2,000)*

A new rescue arrived in 2023, which will send our high mileage rescues to backup status or sale. Historical data has shown that as our rescues age, we see an increase in maintenance costs until the next replacement. With this new rescue, maintenance costs should be lower while it is under warranty.

*5255.04 EMS Equipment Repair \$500*

We have maintenance contracts on our new defibrillators and the cot and power load system in Rescue 40. With those set costs and miscellaneous other repairs, this budget category should be increased.

*5255.14 EMS Run Charges (\$11,700)*

This amount was historically paid to the Volunteers organization on a \$10 per call basis, cut in 2023 from \$15 per call. This money was moved to the Volunteer Stipend Program for 2023 to reward those individual volunteer firefighters who attend calls and training.

*5255.15 EMT Salary **\$64,400***

This category takes on the SAFER grant Firefighter/AEMT position that was funded by the federal government for three years, ending in 2023. Also added is a new Firefighter/AEMT position to help with responder shortages. The increase in this account for 2024 also includes the scheduled annual increase in base pay of the approved salary schedule. These staff costs are equally shared in the Fire Expense category 5232.15

*5255.19 EMS Computer Program **\$900***

The scheduling software had a large increase at the end of 2022, necessitating a budget increase.

*5255.22 EMS Equipment Replacement **\$2,000***

This category included long duration equipment items including EMS turnout gear. The category was reduced for 2023 due to a one-year only grant program from the State of Wisconsin. The category needs to increase to pre-grant levels

*5255.26 EMS New Equipment **\$2,000***

This category includes patient care items and other EMS equipment that last for only several years. The category was reduced for 2023 due to a one-year only grant program from the State of Wisconsin. The category needs to increase closer to pre-grant levels.

*5255.27 EMS Fill-In Staff **\$4,000***

Fill-in staff covers openings in the full-time staff through sick, vacation, and other absences of a staff member. The increase in this category includes both a correction to match actual costs in historical spending along with possible hourly rate increases in order to stay competitive in attracting persons to cover fill-in shifts. These staff costs are equally shared in the Fire Expense category 5232.16.

*5255.28 EMS Paid on Call (\$5,000)*

This category shows a historical decrease. Volunteer EMS coverage of shifts declines greatly in the summer months when many are on vacations. In the last three years there are fewer total hours filled on the rescues in this staffing category

*SAFER Grant Staff Reserve (\$60,000)*

On the last page of the Budget Summary, is a two-year temporary item. This budget item removes for 2024 as the SAFER grant ends and the expenses are split between Firefighter Salary, EMT Salary and Employee Benefits. This allowed us to slowly ease our budget into the addition of the 8<sup>th</sup> full-time position that was covered by a 100% funded FEMA SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response) grant. The grant provided us with \$217,500 over 3 years for a full-time firefighter/AEMT that started January 1, 2021. This position allowed us to move to one full-time person on duty 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

I would like to thank the Mount Horeb Volunteers Inc in their financial support of the MHAJFD. They fund the Student Volunteer program, which trains high school students in firefighting. Some of those students have transitioned to volunteer membership or the Internship program. In addition to supporting the Students, the Volunteers have donated \$400,000 in the last five years to the Joint Fire Department in the purchase of equipment, apparatus and a storage building to help meet the needs of the MHAJFD. Part of that funding went to new defibrillators and a LUCAS device which helps to provide cardiac compressions during a cardiac arrest. With this equipment and crews of full-time staff, interns, and volunteers, we had two cardiac saves in the last few months!

Wisconsin Fire and EMS organizations have lobbied heavily in early 2023 to secure the new Wisconsin supplemental funding in Act 12. This will provide a means to substantially or completely fund the 2024 MHAJFD budget increase. Maintenance of effort will be required from Fire and EMS to secure this new municipal funding each year. This will include looking at equipment expenditures, training and

maintenance of licensure for Firefighters and EMS personnel, response times for Fire and EMS, and full-time equivalent hours of all our Firefighters and EMS personnel which includes the volunteers. These are all areas where we are currently struggling, but this proposed budget can get us back on track.

An informational session on the 2024 MHAJFD Budget for municipal clerks, treasurers, and board members will be hosted on Thursday, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, starting at 7:00 p.m. at the Mount Horeb Public Safety Building, 400 Blue Mounds Street, Mount Horeb. The general public is welcome to attend as well to learn more about the funding of their Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services. The session will start with a review of the budget and supplemental funding explanation followed by a question-and-answer section. Tours of the building will follow the session. Approval of the 2024 MHAJFD Budget will be at the Annual Budget Meeting set for September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. Questions on the 2024 Budget Request can be directed to Fire Chief Jenny Minter at the Fire Station, 608-437-5571 or email at [jminter@fdmh.org](mailto:jminter@fdmh.org).