



GOVERNOR JOSH SHAPIRO

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In Visit to Erie Fire Department, Governor Shapiro Highlights Plan to Increase State Support for Pennsylvania Firefighters

Following the arson attack on the Pennsylvania Governor's residence, Governor Shapiro continues to thank first responders across the Commonwealth and call for more support for our firefighters, who are stretched thin right now.

Governor Shapiro's 2025-26 proposed budget includes a new \$30 million competitive grant program to help fire companies purchase life-saving equipment and recruit and retain firefighters.





Erie, PA – Today, **Governor Josh Shapiro** visited the **Erie Fire Department** to thank first responders for their work and highlight key proposals in his [2025-26 proposed budget](#) aimed at strengthening fire companies and preventing disasters before they happen. The visit to the Erie Fire Department comes after the Governor has visited with first responders in [Harrisburg](#), [Bethlehem](#), and [Mt. Lebanon](#) over the past week.

In the face of significant danger, Pennsylvania's professional and volunteer firefighters continue to rise to the challenge and protect our communities, responding to more calls even as their ranks decline. That's why Governor Shapiro is continuing to advocate for more state support to help firefighters get the equipment, personnel, and resources they need to build safer communities for all Pennsylvanians.

Governor Shapiro has witnessed firsthand how firefighters run towards danger to keep us safe. Last week, the Governor and the First Family [joined Chef Robert Irvine](#) and the Robert Irvine Foundation at Harrisburg Bureau of Fire Station 1 to thank the firefighters who responded to the arson attack at the Governor's Residence.

"Last weekend, my family and I saw firsthand the incredible bravery and professionalism of our firefighters and first responders," said **Governor Shapiro**. "These heroes run toward danger every single day to protect their communities — and we have a responsibility to support them. That's why my proposed budget includes real investments: creating a new competitive grant program so fire companies can buy the equipment they need, funding annual cancer screenings for firefighters, and launching a pilot program to help local departments collaborate and share services. I've seen the very best of Pennsylvania's fire service in action, and I'm committed to ensuring the Commonwealth continues to have their backs."

The **Erie Fire Department** operates seven stations throughout the city to ensure rapid emergency response and comprehensive coverage. In 2024, the department responded to approximately 9,100 emergency calls — a nearly 70 percent increase in the last 10 years. The department's team includes 138 firefighters represented by the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) Local 293, as well as three fire marshals and three dedicated fire mechanics.

Under **Governor Shapiro's** leadership, the Commonwealth has delivered significant support to the Erie Fire Department through the Commonwealth Financing Authority. In October 2024, a \$500,000 grant was awarded to help purchase a new fire pumper truck – replacing aging vehicles in the department's reserve fleet – and in January 2025, the department added a new water rescue truck to its fleet, made possible through a \$142,234 grant. Additional support from the [Fire Company and Emergency Medical Services Grant Program](#), administered by the [Office of the State Fire Commissioner \(OSFC\)](#), provided \$16,322 and \$16,951 to further strengthen emergency medical response.

While there is a foundation of support for fire companies like Erie Fire Department at the state level, the current system makes it hard for companies to make a single big purchase or equipment upgrade — especially for resources like new fire trucks that cost more than the state's current grant program would provide. That's why **Governor Shapiro's** 2025-26 budget proposal includes three major initiatives to continue to support and sustain Pennsylvania's fire service:

- **Creating a new \$30 million competitive grant program** for fire companies to help them purchase life-saving equipment, recruit and retain firefighters, and meet their unique local needs — in addition to the \$30 million that is already distributed to fire companies annually.
- **Establishing a pilot program** to help municipal fire companies work together and share resources more efficiently through cooperative service models.
- **Covering annual cancer screenings for firefighters**, recognizing the chemical exposures and health risks they face on the job.

"The people of Erie have really come to understand what a great friend you are to this city, Governor Shapiro, and we truly appreciate it," said **Erie Mayor Joe Schember**. "I'm especially excited about the Governor's proposed budget, which includes a potential \$30 million increase in funding for fire departments. If passed, this investment would have a tremendous impact on our fire department — allowing us to continue upgrading technology, improving equipment, and most importantly, protecting our firefighters while they serve the public. Governor, you're known for your ability to get things done. My team and I fully support your proposal and urge our state legislature to approve this critical funding. I look forward to working with the Governor to share more about the needs of our fire department and to continue building on the support he's already shown."

"We want to thank our brothers and sisters in Harrisburg for their hard work in achieving a successful outcome that night—and every day," said **Chief Leonard Trott, Erie Bureau of Fire**. "We're deeply grateful to Governor Shapiro and our representatives in Harrisburg for working tirelessly on our behalf. The Governor's proposed \$30 million grant fund is crucial for Erie and departments across the Commonwealth to keep pace with growing needs. Perhaps most critically, cancer screenings are essential to protecting the brave men and women who selflessly risk their lives each day. Early detection and treatment of occupational cancers — tragically common in the fire service—can save lives. We know this pain firsthand in Erie, with the recent loss of a young, active firefighter and the many retirees now battling cancer."

"Governor Shapiro, thank you for taking the time, putting in the work, and prioritizing the needs of firefighters across Pennsylvania. Make no mistake — your efforts have already saved lives, and they will continue to do so," said **Lieutenant Greg Wells, Erie Fire Department**. "Act 121 of 2024, the post-traumatic stress injury bill you signed into law, gives firefighters critical resources to cope with the cumulative toll — the sights, the sounds, the emotions — that come with responding to tragedy. We are deeply grateful."

"We represent over 7,000 first responders every day, advocating for our brothers and sisters — whether in Harrisburg or Washington, D.C. — to improve the safety and well-being of those who show

up 24/7, 365 days a year,” said **President Bob Brooks, Pennsylvania Professional Fire Fighters Association**. “Governor Shapiro is no stranger to standing with first responders. He was with us last year when we passed legislation to provide benefits for post-traumatic stress injuries. That was a long, bipartisan effort, and we got it done. But there’s still more work to do. Emergency management starts locally, where first responders are on the front lines of public safety. The challenges we face — rising costs, staffing shortages, and strained resources — are nothing new. Public safety can’t be funded one bake sale at a time. It must be a priority at budget time, and Governor Shapiro has made it one. That’s why we proudly support his proposal for \$30 million in competitive grants to help fire companies meet critical needs, from recruitment to retention and beyond.”

The Governor’s proposed investments in firefighters build on a strong foundation of support that **Governor Shapiro** has already delivered on:

- In the **2024-25 budget**, the Governor invested **\$37.5 million** in grants to over 2,500 local fire and EMS departments, supporting equipment, training, facility upgrades, and operational costs.
- In his first budget, the Governor secured an increase to the 911 surcharge, from \$1.65 to \$1.95 — increasing critical emergency funding for all 61 emergency call centers across the Commonwealth and strengthening emergency services in all 67 counties.
- In October 2024, the Governor signed legislation expanding worker’s compensation to include post-traumatic stress injuries for Pennsylvania’s first responders. The law will take effect in October 2025.

The **Shapiro Administration** remains focused on delivering for Pennsylvania’s first responders — ensuring firefighters have the tools, training, and support they need to protect their neighbors and communities, today and into the future.

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