

Proposition Police & Fire

A no-tax-increase permanent funding source for Joplin Police and Fire.

Why? Strong public safety services are essential for the future of our community.

Both police and fire services are considered **essential public services** because their **absence or underfunding** statistically increases **deaths, injuries, crime and economic loss.**

Statistics:

- A peer-reviewed study tracking patrol locations found that a **10% decrease in police presence caused a 7% increase in crime** in affected areas. Source: *https://direct.mit.edu/rest/article/103/2/280/97658/Police-Presence-Rapid-Response-Rates-and-Crime*
- **Cities facing officer shortages** after 2020 **saw higher violent crime rates** compared to cities that maintained staffing levels, according to policing workforce studies. Source: *https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/linking-the-workforce-crisis-crime-and-response-time/*
- **Longer police response times** significantly **increase the likelihood of injury**, especially in violent and domestic incidents. Source: *https://academic.oup.com/ej/article/133/654/2147/7147570*
- Fire studies using national incident data show that **fire severity and property loss increase** steadily **when response times exceed 3–5 minutes.** Source: *https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10694-019-00870-4*
- **Staffing levels** are the single **most important predictor of police response time**, more than call volume or overtime. Source: *https://www.crimrxiv.com/pub/02md8eqk/release/1*
- **Fire staffing levels** have a greater impact on **victim survivability and firefighter safety** than apparatus arrival alone. Source: *https://www.nist.gov/publications/report-residential-fireground-field-experiments*
- **Inadequate staffing increases risk** to occupants and firefighters. Source: *https://www.nfpa.org/1710*

Takeaways:

- Appropriate Police Department staffing acts as a **preventive force**, while understaffing could allow crime opportunities to expand.
- Appropriate Fire Department staffing levels are a key component to community **risk reduction** and fire suppression.

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City Manager Nick Edwards
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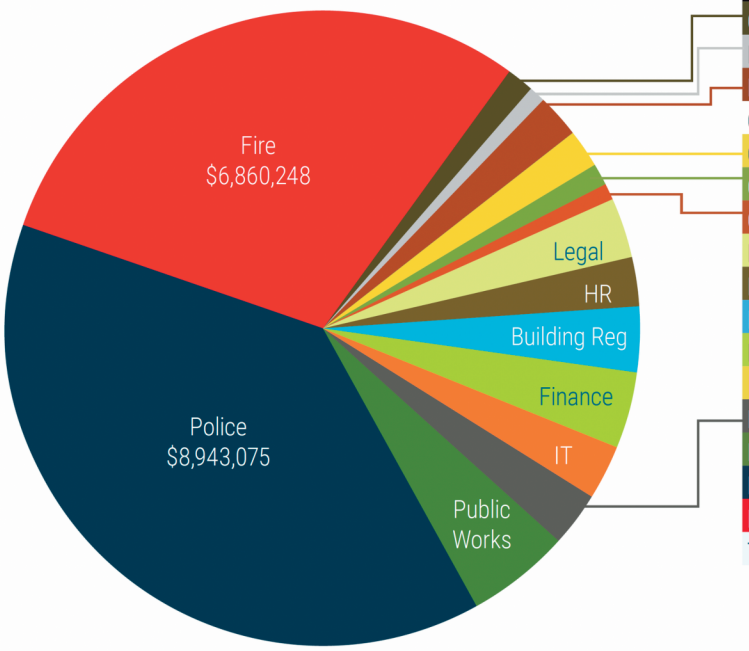
JOPLIN MISSOURI

2024 General Fund Personnel Expenditures by Department



Department	Personnel Services
Cemeteries	$340,826
Emergency Mgmt	$158,007
Neighborhood Impr	$506,820
City Council	$1,354
City Manager	$486,621
Communications	$270,938
City Clerk	$174,681
Legal Services	$706,600
Human Resources	$603,317
Building Regulations	$739,377
Finance	$934,180
IT	$595,922
Municipal Court	$704,121
Public Works	$1,164,385
Police	$8,943,075
Fire	$6,860,248
Total General Fund	$23,190,472

Public Safety departments are expensive to operate. Police and Fire have large staffs, needed to protect the City around the clock in shifts. Together, these departments spend about 2/3 of the total personnel expenditures from the City's General Fund.

Public Safety Challenges in Joplin:

The City, IAFF, and FOP have worked diligently to improve public safety services for the community. Since 2020, the City has accomplished:

- Built Fire Station 7
- Replaced 3 fire engines (total cost approximately $4.3m)
- Added 5 additional positions to the Fire Department
- Added 6 additional positions to the Police Department
- Added "Take Home" vehicles for the Police Department
- Created a Police Flex Platoon
- Created a Police Co-Responder Unit
- Police implemented a part-time bicycle patrol
- Improved wages for Police and Fire personnel

Despite these improvements, the Police and Fire Departments are **falling behind in competitive pay**, routinely **losing experienced and highly-trained leaders** to better-paying departments, and **struggling to maintain full staffing.** The proposed tax replacement would provide a dedicated funding source, allowing the City to implement pay increases as negotiated with the Police and Fire unions. Average starting pay for a Police Officer is approximately **$12,000 less** than the regional average, while the average starting pay for a Firefighter is approximately **$7,000 less** than the regional average.

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What is being proposed?

- Proposition Police & Fire is for a **½-cent Public Safety Sales Tax**.
  - Earmarked for **Police, Fire, and Dispatch** only.
  - Without a sunset because it will be used for:
    - **Staffing**
    - **Pay & benefits**
    - **Capital expenditures** (facilities, vehicles & equipment)
- Secures funding to improve critical public safety services for **today and future generations**.
- The ½-cent Public Safety Sales Tax **would replace the funding currently provided by the "Prop B" general sales tax**, which will expire after Prop B obligations are met (Public Safety Pension will be fully funded to 120%).
- The continuation of the ½-cent tax rate **will take effect in 2027** only after the current "Prop B" tax obligations have been met and expired.
- **Proposal would not result in any tax increase.**

A "No" vote will cause the current tax to expire without replacement:

✗ Expiration of the current tax will leave no dedicated funding for competitive pay or additional public safety personnel. It will also reduce the City's ability to fund capital improvements for facilities, vehicles and equipment for Police and Fire.

A "Yes" vote allows for:

Improved Public Safety Staffing:

✓ 9 Additional Police Officer positions, to put more officers in neighborhoods and reduce response times.

✓ 6 Additional Fire Fighters.

Improved Pay for Better Market Competitiveness:

✓ $2m in pay adjustments for Police.

✓ $2m in pay adjustments for Fire.

✓ All pay adjustments guaranteed through Collective Bargaining Contracts.

Improved Facilities:

✓ Replacement of Fire Station 3.

✓ Modernization of Police Firing Range.

✓ Improvements to the Public Safety Training Center.

Better Equipment

✓ Adds funding for Police vehicles and other Police equipment.

✓ Replaces Fire Ladder Truck 1.

✓ Replaces Fire Rescue Truck 5.

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Joplin Police Department:

Key Facts (2025):

79,532 calls for service
Narcotics and DWI cases combined **rose 19%** over 2024.
477 unfilled patrol shifts
35 officers resigned or retired since 1/1/2024.

Operational Impacts:

- Extra shiftwork leads to officer burnout and leaving the agency - often for work at other Police agencies.
- The Patrol Bureau has uncovered shifts daily, leaving Patrol Beats unassigned.
- Full authorized strength of 43 Beat Officers, but current Beat Officers is 28 (as of Jan. 27, 2026).
- Police Firing Range in critical need of repair and updates for safety purposes.

Priority Needs:

- Critical need to address competitive pay to help retain quality, veteran employees.
- Need additional officers to relieve call volume for patrol officers and provide more opportunity for proactive crime prevention.
- Need to maintain quality equipment to help officers better protect the community.
- Continuous officer training on legal updates, safety, and de-escalation techniques.

Joplin Fire Department:

Key Facts (2025):

9,980 calls for service
Calls increasing **4–7%** annually
30,576 overtime hours
Avg. **3.5 extra shifts** per day
1,274 Overtime shifts
244 Forced overtime shifts

Operational Impacts:

- Business fire inspections have been discontinued due to understaffing.
- Increased firefighter fatigue, injuries, and sick leave.
- Aging facilities and apparatus under growing demand. Replacement of Fire Station 3 is needed. It was constructed in 1980 and no longer meets modern safety or operational standards.

Priority Needs:

- Critical need to address competitive pay to help retain quality, veteran employees.
- Need facility improvements, such as replacing the deteriorating Fire Station #3.

Police & Fire Annual Starting Pay Comparison: (as of 9/1/2025)

Job Title	Joplin Starting Pay	Regional Average Starting Pay
Firefighter/EMT	$40,125	$47,849
Police Officer	$40,800	$53,043

Regional benchmark cities: Springfield, Branson, Jefferson City, Liberty and St. Joseph in Missouri, plus Bentonville and Ft. Smith in Arkansas.

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Why are Police and Fire services so essential?

Impact Area	Police Services	Fire Services
Public Safety	Investigating & working to reduce crime & violence.	Working to reduce injuries & fire deaths, improve medical emergency response.
Response Time	Striving for prompt arrests & quick delivery of aid.	Striving for early emergency response to protect lives and property.
Economic Protection	Aiming to prevent thefts & minimize damage.	Protecting billions of dollars in property through fire control and emergency mitigation.
Community Trust	Responding to crisis & maintaining order.	Responding to fire, medical, rescue, hazmat & disasters.

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