

Emergency Response

How many firefighters are on duty?

Each shift has 1 Battalion Chief overseeing 13 Suppression Personnel responding from 4 stations.

Fire Station 1 – 2160 Santa Barbara Ave

Battalion Chief and 4 Firefighters
Truck 1, 2010 Pierce Arrow XT 100' Tiller
OES Engine 385, HME
Engine 1 (Reserve), 2001 Pierce Lance
Patrol 1 (Type 6), 2008 Ford F550
Medic Rescue 1, 2017 Leader Ambulance
4x4 STEN Utility, 2018 Chevrolet 2500
USAR Trailer

Fire Station 2 – 132 North Chorro

3 Firefighters
Truck 2, 2018 Pierce Arrow XT 75' Ladder
Trail Rescue 4x4 Utility
UTV2, 2017 Polaris Ranger w/Paramedic box

Fire Station 3 – 1280 Laurel Lane

3 Firefighters
Engine 3, 2019 Pierce Arrow XT PUC
Engine 5 (Reserve), 2003 Pierce Lance

Fire Station 4 – 1280 Laurel Lane

3 Firefighters
Engine 4, 2014 Pierce Arrow XT PUC
Engine 6 (Type III 4x4), 2007 International Navistar 7400

View our fire apparatus videos [here](#).

Why do we need 4 fire stations?

Timing is vital to outcomes for fires and medical incidents. Our resources are distributed throughout the City with a 4-minute travel time goal because left unchecked, a fire will double in size every 1-2 minutes. An external assessment calls for adding a 5th fire station in southern SLO. [Click here](#) for more information on our stations.

What are the services SLO Fire department provides?

The SLOFD is an "All Risk" Fire Department providing a wide range of services through four (4) Divisions. These Divisions are Administration, Operations, Fire Prevention, and Emergency Management. Administration oversees the entire department functions. This includes the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Admin Analyst, Admin Assistant. Operations is comprised of Emergency response and vehicle repair. Operations is comprised of 3 Battalion Chiefs, 12 Fire Captains, 15 Fire Engineers, 15 Firefighters and 2 Mechanics. Fire Prevention oversees all Fire and Life Safety Code compliance. Fire Prevention is staffed with Fire Marshal/Chief Building Official, Admin Assistant, 2 Fire Inspector III, 1 CUPA Haz-Mat Inspector and 1 Fire Inspector I. Emergency Management is responsible to the City Emergency Operations Plan, Training, EOC

operations, Community Wildfire Prevention Plan, Local Hazard Mitigation Planning and Community Preparedness. This Division is presently unstaffed.

Are all firefighters required to be a paramedic?

No, but 45% of our full-time firefighters are paramedics and the remainder are required to be basic EMT. All SLOFD firefighters are cross trained for medical response.

Do Paramedics also fight fire?

Yes, paramedics perform dual functions of emergency medical and fire suppression operations.

How much water is carried on the fire engine?

All SLOFD's pumper trucks have between 500 water tanks. Other department vehicles also have water tanks ranging from about 150 to over 800 gallons.

Does the Fire department charge a fee to respond to an emergency?

No fee is charged for the Fire department to respond to an emergency. Multiple false alarms at the same address can within a specified period can result in a citation fee. Ambulance transport (by San Luis Ambulance) to a hospital will result in a fee to the service provider, not the Fire Department.

Who should I contact about my ambulance bill?

All services performed by SLOFD are paid through San Luis Obispo City General Fund. If ambulance service is utilized for transportation to a medical hospital please contact [San Luis Ambulance](#) for any billing questions:

+1 (805) 543-2626
3546 S. Higuera Street
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401

How do I get a copy of a fire or medical patient report?

Fill out a [Fire Records Request](#). Medical reports are confidential and can only be provided to the patient with proper ID or to a representative of the patient with a [signed release](#).

Can I obtain or purchase patches from your fire department?

We apologize, SLOFD does not give out patches to the public; they are for official use only.

Why does a fire engine respond with the ambulance?

SLOFD prides itself on the delivery of state-of-the-art emergency medical services to our community. Our fire engines are staffed by cross trained firefighter/paramedics. A fire engine is dispatched with an ambulance on many calls for various reasons. Patient-care timing and the number of ambulances in the City and County drives the need for fire-based EMS. In many cases, the fire engine may be closer and can initiate medical care before the arrival of the ambulance. The fire engine and ambulance crews work together to make a highly efficient team to provide you with an unsurpassed level of care and best possible outcome.

Why do so many apparatuses respond to simple incidents?

SLOFD units are dispatched according to information received by the 9-1-1 operator for the type of emergency occurring. Certain emergencies require a single unit response, such as a medical aid or smoke check, whereas a structure fire would require multiple

units and possible Automatic Aid for CAL FIRE our allied County Fire Agency. The Advanced Vehicle Locator system (AVL) computer program selects the closest unit to be dispatched and respond to the incident.

SLOFD is an “All-Risk” Fire Department, what does that mean?

SLOFD firefighters are trained, outfitted, and prepared to deal with a wide variety of emergencies. “All Risk” essentially means the Department responds to all types of Fires, Medical Emergencies, Technical Rescues, Hazardous Materials and Fire Prevention Code Enforcement. Department members participate in a rigorous yearly training plan that covers the many types of emergencies encountered.

Does SLOFD participate in Regional Teams?

Yes. Department members participate on ALL County Regional Teams. This includes the SLO Hazardous Incident Response Team, County Technical Rescue Team, SLO Fire Investigation Strike Team, XSL Type 3 Incident Management Team, SLO EMCC Committee, Critical Incident Support Debriefing Team and County Automatic Aid/Mutual Aid system.

How come I see fire trucks with full lights and sirens go through a red light at intersections and then, after they go through, they turn off their lights and slow down?

Sometimes several units are dispatched to the same incident. The first unit may have arrived on the scene, surveyed the situation, and informed the dispatcher that the situation was under control. Other responding units may be cancelled and placed into service ready to take another call.

Why do we see SLOFD fire crews at the store?

Firefighters are like everyone else. They need to eat and must supply and pay for their own food. SLOFD firefighters are on-duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week, always ready to respond to a call, even when they are at the grocery store. Each crew of firefighters stays together throughout their entire 48-hour shift to ensure they can respond to an emergency, with the proper equipment, from any location within minutes. Being out in the community also gives us a chance to meet with residents and get to know the people in our neighborhoods, which makes us better first responders.

Why do I see SLOFD firefighters cutting holes in the roof of a building on fire?

This is called vertical ventilation or "venting the roof." There are two basic reasons for this practice. The first is to remove dangerous and toxic gases (smoke) that accumulates in a burning building to improve visibility and reduce potential Flashover or Backdrafts. Another reason for venting the roof is to see how far the fire has progressed. One of the fastest avenues through which fires spread is the attic. Heat and smoke rise into the attic where the fire can move quickly. Firefighters may go ahead of the fire on a roof, cut holes to access the attic and stop the fire from spreading through the attic.

Why do you block traffic lanes at auto accidents—more lanes than are necessary?

We block traffic lanes for the safety of our personnel and our patients. Blocking extra lanes keep our personnel safe when they go back to our apparatus to get more equipment and help protect the victim we are trying to stabilize.

Why do firefighters care if you drive over fire hose?

Fire hoses should NEVER be driven over. Firefighters are very much concerned about running over fire hoses because the hose can be damaged thus cutting off the water supply to the pumping apparatus or firefighter at the end of a nozzle.

So many people want to be firefighters, it seems like the law of supply and demand would allow us to decrease firefighter salaries, right?

Turnover, training, and recruitment costs are high for departments without competitive salary or benefits. Although many want to be firefighters, when we focus on certified, qualified, experienced firefighters of character, the pool shrinks dramatically. Salaries and benefits are benchmarked against the region and similar sized agencies.

How does the daily operation of the SLO Fire department function?

The functions are divided into two primary areas, emergency, and non-emergency. Emergency operations consist of various fire incidents, fire alarms, medical calls, hazardous materials incidents, natural disasters, and automatic and mutual aid responses. Non-emergencies consist of fire prevention, training, maintenance, and public education activities. View our organizational chart [here](#).

What is the work schedule for SLO firefighters?

Our firefighters are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. SLOFD firefighters are assigned to work 48-hour shifts beginning at 8a.m. To ensure 24/7 coverage, there are three separate shifts each working an average of 56 hours a week. Working less than the 56-hour schedule could require adding a 4th shift and 14 more firefighters.

Do SLO Firefighter work overtime?

The SLOFD minimum staffing is 14 firefighters on duty daily to service the City of San Luis Obispo and through contract Cal Poly University. Oftentimes firefighters are mandated to work to fulfill minimum staffing due to firefighters being off on benefit time (sick/vacation) or out of county on mutual aid incidents. The cost of mutual aid incidents is reimbursed to the City to cover ALL operating costs. To help maintain the daily minimum of emergency response personnel, the City has invested in two important programs including a functional movement program to reduce the occurrence and severity of physical injuries and over-hire program of three additional firefighters to cover benefit time and work comp injuries.

Does SLOFD lose any fire protection when our units are out of town on Mutual Aid assignments?

On an incident where resources are dispatched to assist another community for an extended period, we recall firefighters to staff the fire station and remaining apparatus. These members are usually in quarters within an hour of the dispatch. We provide Mutual Aid to those communities in need as they would provide our community the same under similar circumstances.

What do SLO firefighters do when they are not fighting fires?

Fighting fires are only a small portion of a firefighter's duties. Medical emergencies, and other types of calls keep firefighters busy. Firefighters are responsible for the care and upkeep of all apparatus and equipment used in fighting fires and caring for patients. All equipment must be in top condition and ready for any type of incident. Maintenance of apparatus and equipment is vitally important to the fire service. This not only assures us of proper operating conditions, but it constantly familiarizes members with the technical aspects of our equipment. Firefighters also are responsible for the care of the

fire station, a host of daily chores, give station tours and participate in ongoing training. All this is between emergency calls.

Who cleans the station?

The Firefighters do.

Do I live within SLOFD Boundaries?

Check out our [map](#) to see if you are within our boundaries. You can also determine who your fire and EMS providers are by accessing your property records. You can do that by going to the [County Property Records site](#) and searching for your address.

Does SLOFD offer Ride-Along?

Yes. We allow ride-along Monday through Friday 9am-4pm. Only one person can ride-along per company, and we limit participation to once every six months. We require you to dress appropriately and expect you to wear full-sturdy shoes, long pants, and complement our image of being clean and professional. You must be 18 years old and have signed the [release form](#). Please call us at (805)781-7380 to schedule a ride-along. **DURING COVID THE RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM IS PAUSED.*

How far away should you be when parking near a fire hydrant?

You need to have a 15-foot distance between your vehicle and the fire hydrant. In the event of a fire, our personnel need adequate room to operate the fire hydrant and connect hose lines.

How can I make a monetary donation?

Donations can be accepted through the nonprofit SLOFD BEAR Foundation. This 501c3 is set up to support the mission of the San Luis Obispo City Firefighters and Fire Department. A recent program supported by the BEAR fund is the Open Space Rescue eBike Program.

What should we do if we are instructed to “shelter-in-place” during an emergency?

Sheltering-in-place simply refers to taking refuge in a building, in the event there is an airborne hazard, active shooter or other emergency which deems staying inside is safer than evacuating from an area. Depending on the situation, it may be safer to quickly shelter-in-place rather than try to drive to a safe area. It might be sheltering at home, at work or in some other building and if you understand a few principles, it should be easy. If the shelter in place is related to a hazardous material incident the purpose is to get out of the outside-air and inside a building that is not contaminated. You want to keep the inside-air in, and the outside-air out, until the bad outside-air blows away. When sheltering-in-place: Close all windows and doors, exterior and interior. Open interior doors as little as possible. Turn off all fans, heaters, and air conditioners so that they do not continue to blow outside-air into your house. Close the fireplace damper so that outside-air cannot blow down the chimney and inside the building.

Take water, food, and disaster supplies, including a radio, into the most airtight room, preferably one without windows, but with a phone. Bring your pets in with you, along with additional water and food for them. Use duct tape or other strong tape to seal all cracks around the door, vents, etc., into the room to help keep out any outside air.

Listen on your radio or television for further instructions. Read this article for further information: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies.html>

If the shelter in place is unrelated to a hazardous material release, stay inside and monitor local radio and television for additional instructions and information.

For Open Space Rescues why do you sometimes wait for a helicopter instead of just getting an injured person to the closest hospital as soon as possible?

SLO has nearly 60 miles of open space trails not including the trails adjacent to Cal Poly. The SLOFD operational procedures priority is to rapidly gain access to the patient to render care and determine extraction needs. Due to the severity of injuries, location of the patient and patient medical needs, helicopter extraction may be necessary. Helicopter extraction is typically used after walking the patient out, carrying down or utilizing UTV2 is ruled out. We are fortunate to have CHP H70, Santa Barbara and Ventura County close enough to effectively assist with helicopter extraction. In most cases it takes less time to have a helicopter transport a victim to a trauma center than it does to walk/carry them out to an awaiting ambulance to drive to the nearest hospital.

Where can I take Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) classes?

Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) classes are offered at local community colleges. [Allan Hancock College](#) and [Cuesta College](#)

When will you be hiring next?

We hire firefighters periodically. Visit City of San Luis Obispo's [Human Resources](#) page for current job openings and descriptions. Candidates who wish to work for SLOFD should pursue California State Fire Marshal Firefighter 1 Academy Certification and participate in the CAL JAC FCTC program as well as a reciprocity for their EMT-Basic or Paramedic certifications.

When responding to a call in the middle of the night, do the firefighters have to sound the fire engine sirens even though traffic is probably light?

Yes, state vehicle code mandates that while responding Code 3, an emergency response vehicle must have all emergency lights on and the siren sounding. A Code 3 response is initiated when life, property or the environment is in immediate jeopardy (i.e. life-threatening emergencies, fires, or the release of hazardous materials.)

How many calls do you have per day?

For department call volume and other annual statistics, please refer to our "Annual Report" page under the "About Us" tab.

2019 SLOFD responded to over 6,000 incidents which was an increase of over 5.5% from 2018.

Firefighters wear a lot of gear; is it fireproof and how much does it weigh?

The gear we wear weighs about 50 pounds. The special clothing is called "turn-outs" or "bunker" gear as they originally were turned inside out and kept next to bunks to facilitate a quick change at night. The turnouts are made of a material called PBI/Nomex which is fire retardant but not fireproof, so it will burn, but at very high temperatures. We must be able to put our turnouts on in less than a minute and yes, it does get very warm in the summer as we must wear this gear when responding to structure fires, hazardous materials incidents, and traffic accidents.

Why do we have a 100-foot tiller-ladder truck?

The ladder truck is based on our ISO rating, insurance rate tables for homeowners and businesses based on local Fire Department capabilities. Truck 1 staffed with four (4)

firefighters from Fire Station #1 it is a unique and vital tool for protecting the community. The paramedic staffed ladder truck can help us with elevated rescues, overcome setbacks, elevated water tower operations, and exposure protection. It is the ideal size for our downtown, big box complexes and Cal Poly. The tiller makes it possible to maneuver on very tight streets.

Why does SLOFD need a UTV?

SLOFD UTV2 is grant funded through SLO County Parks and is available for a wide variety of emergency and non-emergency uses such as; off-road access and extrication of medical patients to a safe treatment and/or transportation and transporting SLOFD personnel and equipment when responding to and/or non-emergency special events. UTV2 is located at FS#2 and cross staffed with FS#2 personnel off Truck 2. The primary use is rescues in both City and Cal Poly open space trails.

Why does SLOFD need E-Bikes?

SLOFD E-Bikes was grant funded as part of the SLO Stringer Family through SLO Firefighters BEAR Foundation and are available and appropriate for a wide variety of emergency and non-emergency uses which include such as; off road access, assessment, treatment, and preparation for extraction of patients and transporting SLOFD personnel and medical equipment to remote or inaccessible areas that the UTV or department apparatus cannot access. This special resource has proven to cut access times to injured persons on trails by nearly 60%.

Why do I see other agencies responding in SLO for hazardous materials incidents, complex rescues, and fires?

In addition to our automatic aid agreement, we also have specialized teams throughout the County including regional hazmat, urban search and rescue, and fire investigations teams. This is a cost-effective way of providing full-service capabilities while sharing personnel, training, and equipment with other fire departments in our area.