



WEBER FIRE DISTRICT

A community-wide investment in safety, health, and peace of mind!

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CONSTRUCTION OF NEW FACILITIES AND TAXING

WHY WEBER FIRE DISTRICT CANNOT MAKE NEW GROWTH PAY FOR ALL INCREASED NEEDS

Service districts face several structural and legal barriers that prevent them from charging new development the full cost of growth-related infrastructure and services. The main reasons include:

1. **Legal Limitations**

State laws (e.g. Utah's *Impact Fees Act*) restrict impact fees to fund the proportionate share of capital improvements attributable to new development. Fees cannot fund existing deficiencies, replace aging infrastructure, or raise the level of service for current residents.

2. **Shared Infrastructure**

Many facilities – such as water treatment plants, arterial roads, and fire stations – serve the community as a whole. Since both new and existing users benefit from system improvements, it would be inequitable and legally indefensible to allocate 100% of costs to new development.

3. **Existing Deficiencies**

Upgrades needed to address current shortfalls in capacity or quality must be funded through general revenues (like property taxes), not impact fees.

4. **Operational Costs**

Impact fees can only fund capital projects, not ongoing operations, maintenance, or staffing. These recurring expenses must be covered through user fees or tax revenues.

5. **Affordability and Development Feasibility**

Imposing the full cost of infrastructure on new development would raise housing and business costs, potentially discouraging construction, and worsening affordability challenges.

6. **Time Constraints and Planning Challenges**

Statutory deadlines (such as Utah's six-year rule for spending or encumbering impact fees) limit the ability to use these revenues for long-term or large-scale projects.

CONCLUSION:

Because of these constraints, the financial responsibility for accommodating growth is typically **shared** among new development (via impact fees and connection charges), existing residents (through taxes and rates), and higher-level governments (via grants and aid). This balance approach supports growth management, fiscal sustainability, and community equity.



IS IT TRUE THAT WEBER FIRE DISTRICT DOES NOT GET AUTOMATIC TAX REVENUE INCREASES WITH GROWTH? 💰

Utah's **Truth in Taxation** (TNT) law ensures that property tax revenues don't automatically increase when property values rise. It is designed to **protect taxpayers** and **promote transparency** by requiring public notice and hearings before any tax revenue increase.

HOW IT WORKS

1. Revenue-Based, Not Rate-Based

- The law limits **total property tax revenue**, not the tax rate.
- When property values rise, the **tax rate is automatically lowered** so that the district collects the same amount of revenue as the previous year (plus new growth).
- This prevents hidden tax hikes caused by rising property values.

2. New Growth Exception

- Special districts may collect additional revenue from **new construction, improvements, or developments**.
- This allows funding for services in expanding areas – **the only automatic increase permitted**.

3. Public Hearing Requirement

- To collect **more revenue** than last year's total plus new growth, a district must:
 1. **Notify the public** of the proposed increase and the new tax rate.
 2. **Hold a "Truth in Taxation" (TNT) public hearing** to explain and justify the increase.
 3. **Allow citizen input** before final approval.

4. Transparency and Taxpayer Protection

- Taxpayers are informed and given a chance to comment before any property tax revenue increase.
- The process ensures **accountability, open communication, and no automatic tax hikes** due to higher property assessments.



WHY IS WEBER FIRE DISTRICT NOT REQUIRED TO LIVE ON A BUDGET LIKE EVERYONE ELSE? 💰

Weber Fire District is legally required to operate on an annual budget and follow strict fiscal procedures outlined in the Utah Code, specifically *Title 17B, Chapter 1, Part 6*.

BUDGET REQUIREMENTS

Mandatory Budgeting:

Utah law requires all special districts, including fire districts, to adopt a formal **annual budget**. Each district must prepare a **tentative budget**, hold a **public hearing** to receive comments, and formally adopt a **final budget**.

Expenditure Limitations:

The district's **budget officer** is responsible for ensuring that expenditure aligns with the adopted budget. District funds **cannot be spent** if there is not an adequate unencumbered balance in the appropriation, except in the event of a **declared emergency**.

Transparency and Oversight:

Districts with annual budgets of **\$50,000 or more** must submit their tentative budgets to **constituent entities** and the **State Auditor** and must publish notice of public hearings on the **Utah Public Notice Website** and in local newspapers. This **“Truth in Taxation”** (TNT) process promotes transparency by ensuring public awareness and providing residents an opportunity to comment before any proposed tax increase is approved.

REASONS FOR TAX INCREASES

Fire districts typically increase taxes only when necessary to maintain essential services and meet rising financial demands. Common reasons include:

- **Rising Operational Costs:**
Significant cost increases have been reported in Utah for essential items such as fire suits (+86%), fuel (+32%), medical supplies (+21%), and wages (+26%).
 - **Staffing and Retention:**
Growing competition for qualified personnel, high turnover, and declining interest in public safety careers require **salary adjustments** and **additional staffing** to maintain operational readiness.
 - **New Facilities and Equipment:**
Population growth and increased service demands often necessitate **new fire stations, training facilities**, or high-cost equipment such as **ladder trucks** (which have seen price increases up to 69%).
 - **Increased Demand for Services:**
Weber Fire’s population growth drives higher demand for fire and emergency services, requiring **expanded budgets** to sustain timely and effective response capabilities.
 - **Limitations on Revenue:**
Weber Fire District’s primary funding source is property taxes. Other sources are very limited and restricted by current tax laws. Local sales tax increases have been proposed as an alternative, but Weber Fire District does not currently qualify under Utah law to impose a sales tax.
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SUMMARY

Weber Fire District only adopts tax increases when **financially necessary** to maintain safety and service standards. The budgeting and taxation process is **strictly governed by state law**, ensuring **fiscal accountability, public transparency, and community input** before final approval.

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🔥 WHY DOES WEBER FIRE DISTRICT NEED A TRAINING TOWER/FACILITY? 🚒

Building a Safer Community: Why Firefighter Training Towers Matter

Weber Fire District is committed to protecting lives and property – and that starts with giving our firefighters the best possible training. A **training tower** is a vital tool that helps firefighters prepare for real emergencies in a safe, controlled, and realistic setting.

Real-World Training, Close to Home

Training towers are designed to simulate the types of buildings firefighters encounter every day – from single-family homes to apartments, and high-rises. They allow crews to experience real heat, smoke, and complex layouts so they can respond quickly and effectively when every second counts.

Developing Life-Saving Skills

These facilities let firefighters practice a wide range of essential skills, including:

- Fighting live fires and learning ventilation techniques.
- Conducting search and rescue operations in confined spaces.
- Climbing, rappelling, and using ladders safely.
- Advancing hoses up multiple stories and managing standpipe systems.
- Handling hazardous materials (HAZMAT) incidents.
- Forcing entry through different building types and materials.

Safer, Smarter, and Stronger Response

Hands-on training in a controlled environment builds confidence and muscle memory – helping firefighters make quick, life-saving decisions during real emergencies. It also ensures the highest level of safety for both our crews and the community.

Meeting Modern Challenges

Modern buildings use materials that burn hotter and faster than ever before. Training towers let firefighters practice updated tactics that match today’s construction methods and fire behavior.

Investing in Our Community

Having a local training facility saves both time and money, allowing firefighters to train more often without leaving the district. It’s an investment in preparedness, safety, and the future of our community.

A training tower isn’t just a building; it’s a commitment to the safety of our firefighters and everyone they protect.



WHY DOES WEBER FIRE DISTRICT NEED A NEW FIRE STATION?

AND HOW DID THEY DECIDE TO DO THIS?

Fire station Planning and Decision-Making

Weber Fire District determines when to add new fire stations through a **data-driven, comprehensive analysis of community needs**, guided by a **Master Plan**. The process ensures that emergency services remain efficient, equitable, and responsive to community growth and risk profiles.

KEY FACTORS IN DECIDING NEW STATION LOCATIONS

1. Population Growth and New Development

As population increases and new residential or commercial developments emerge, demand for fire and emergency services rises. Weber Fire evaluates how growth affects call volumes and whether existing stations can maintain service standards.

2. Response Time and Coverage Standards

Weber Fire strives to meet established response time goals, often aiming for a **first-due engine company to arrive within 4 minutes** of travel time. Achieving these standards supports effective emergency response and can improve a district's **Insurance Services Office (ISO)** rating, which may lower homeowner insurance costs.

3. Call Volume and Demand Trends

Increasing incident volume in specific areas signals greater service demand. Data on call frequency and type helps determine whether an additional station is needed to balance workloads and maintain reliability.

4. Geographic and Topographic Barriers

Features such as mountains, rivers, or major highways can hinder quick response. New station locations are often selected to minimize delays and ensure all parts of the district are within reasonable reach.

5. Existing Facility Capacity

Weber Fire assesses the condition, capacity, and functionality of current stations to determine if expansions or upgrades could meet needs, or if entirely new facilities are required.

6. Fire Risk Assessment

Areas with higher inherent risk—industrial zones, wildland-urban interfaces, or large public venues—may warrant enhanced coverage due to the potential for high-impact incidents.

7. Operational Efficiency and Personnel Health

Strategic station placement reduces response fatigue, balances workloads, and ensures firefighters have access to modern, safe, and healthy working environments.

THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. Needs Assessment

A thorough analysis identifies whether current resources can meet both current and projected service demands.

2. Feasibility Study

Districts evaluate options such as remodeling, expanding, or constructing new facilities, comparing costs and operational impacts.

3. Public and Political Review

Funding decisions, especially within Special Service Districts, require public hearings and approval from local governing bodies to ensure transparency and community support.

4. Funding and Approval

Construction is commonly financed through **property tax revenues**, **impact fees** on new developments, or other capital improvement funds. Once approved, the district coordinates with architects and construction managers to design facilities that meet all **building and fire codes**.