

VALLEY REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

ANNUAL REPORT



OUR MISSION

We serve the whole community.

The VRFA saves lives and protects property through reliable emergency services, preparedness and prevention.

OUR VISION

Creating the safest community to live, work and visit.

OUR GUIDING VALUES

Selfless Service. Integrity. Grit.

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@vrfa



FIRE CHIEF/ADMINISTRATOR'S MESSAGE



BRAD THOMPSON

As I reflect on the past year at the Valley Regional Fire Authority, I'm filled with gratitude and pride—for our community, our people, and the shared commitment that continues to move us forward.

One of the most meaningful milestones of the year was the overwhelming renewal of our Fire Benefit Charge [FBC] during the August Primary Election. With more

than 76% approval for Proposition 1, our residents sent

a clear and resounding message of trust in the work we do every day. The FBC renewal enables us to maintain and enhance the high level of service our residents expect and deserve. It funds critical components of our operation—emergency response staffing, equipment replacement, training, and facility upgrades—all essential to keeping our community safe, resilient, and prepared.

On behalf of the entire VRFA team, thank you for believing in our public safety mission and ensuring we have the resources to protect lives, property, and the environment well into the future.

This year also marked tangible progress on our capital facility plan, with design and permitting underway. We will soon break ground on Fire Station 36, which will

serve the growing north end of Auburn and improve our overall response coverage. Plans continue to advance for constructing two additional fire stations and a headquarters campus. These efforts are rooted in our commitment to providing timely, efficient service while preparing our organization to meet the demands of tomorrow.

Internally, we continued to strengthen our organization. We celebrated notable accomplishments, welcomed new employees into the VRFA family, and added Engine 336 as a fully staffed resource to improve response capabilities. Our staff remain focused on excellence in training, accountability, and service delivery.

Throughout it all, the heart of our agency remains the dedicated men and women of the VRFA. Every day, they

bring our core values—Selfless Service, Integrity, and Grit—to life in how they serve, support, and protect others. I am deeply proud of their professionalism, resilience, and unwavering focus on our mission.

As we look ahead, we are laying the groundwork with a new, community-driven strategic plan to guide us into the future. With the trust of our community, strong governance, and a team fully committed to continuous improvement, VRFA is well-positioned to meet new

challenges, embrace innovation, and remain a trusted partner in public safety.

Thank you to our residents, Board of Governance, and community partners. It is our honor to serve you.

The heart of our agency remains the dedicated men and women of the VRFA.

I am deeply proud of their professionalism, resilience, and unwavering focus on our mission.





BOARD OF GOVERNANCE

2024 REVIEW

As Chair of the Board of Governance, I am honored to present the Valley Regional Fire Authority's 2024 Annual Report. This report offers an overview of the VRFA's activities over the past year and celebrates the dedication of the men and women serving our communities.

I hope you find this report both informative and inspiring. Thank you for your ongoing support!

Nancy Backus 2025 Board of Governance Chair Mayor of Auburn





STRATEGIC PLAN

The VRFA continued to make progress on the strategic initiatives outlined in the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan. We are currently updating our Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover documents [Initiative 1]. Design work continues for Stations 31, 36, and 38 [Initiative 2]. Minimum staffing increased to 23 in the

INITIATIVE 1

ACCREDITATION COMPLETE

INITIATIVE 2

CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN COMPLETE

INITIATIVE 3

STAFFING COMPLETE

INITIATIVE 4

MENTORSHIP in-progress 95%

was hired, and we continue to work with the King County Chiefs' Association DEI Committee and regional WA Fire Careers for recruitment (Initiative 3). Progress in 2024 on the remaining two initiatives is outlined below.

first quarter of 2024, a Human Resources Specialist

INITIATIVE 5 COMMUNICATION—in-progress—> 95%

- VRFA CARES and Community Outreach teams continue to meet with all personnel to discuss mutual needs and various processes.
- Content within Station Information Kiosks has been refined.
- "Chief's Chat," a 60-minute virtual all staff meeting, are ongoing.
- Refinements to external communications, including annual report, Fire Watch newsletter, and social media are ongoing.

CAPITAL FACILITIES PLAN

The VRFA's Capital Facilities Plan (CFP), which was adopted by the Board of Governance in 2021, made four recommendations:

 Succession Planning: discussions are ongoing regarding succession planning at a variety of levels.

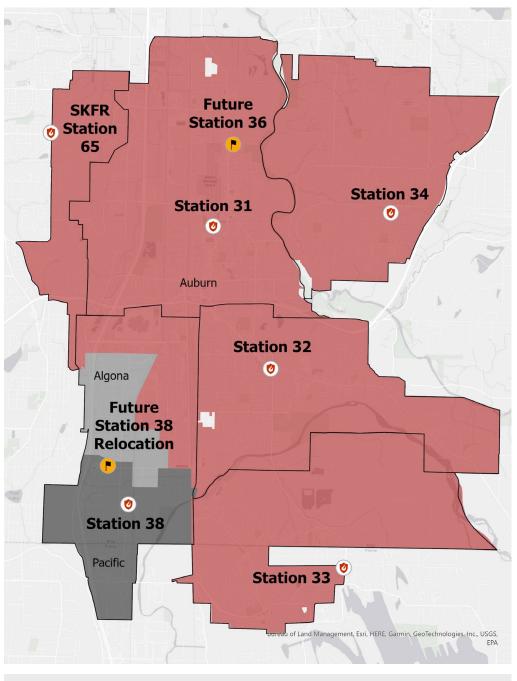
- Priority 1: build an additional station in the northern part of VRFA's service area
- Priority 2: relocate and rebuild Station 38 in Pacific
- Priority 3: remodel or replace Station 31
- Priority 4: find a permanent location for Support Services

In 2024, the VRFA took several significant steps to implement the CFP, including:

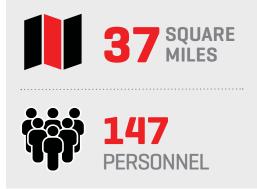
- Began working with architecture firm TCA and a variety of consultants on the design of Stations 31, 36, and 38.
- Hired a Project Manager to oversee the building of Fire Stations 31, 36, 38, and provide recommendations for training, warehouse, and maintenance space.
- Purchased property on the Ellingson corridor in Pacific to relocate Station 38.
- Station 36 groundbreaking and construction scheduled for May 2025.



OUR SERVICE AREA









EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

2024 HONORS



FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR **CORY WALLACE** FIREFIGHTER



FIRE OFFICER OF THE YEAR **JORDAN GUSTAFSON** CAPTAIN



PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AWARD **ANGIE BOYLE** FINANCE MANAGER

THE BILL MACK AWARD

Bill Mack was a firefighter who served with the legacy Auburn Fire Department and the VRFA for many years. He was known for his dedication to his colleagues throughout his career. He retired as a deputy chief in 2022 from East Pierce Fire & Rescue. He demonstrated camaraderie, respect, kindness,

inclusivity, and humor throughout his career. The 2024 Bill Mack Award recipients come to work with a positive attitude, work hard, make their colleagues laugh, and leave everyone feeling respected and included.

The 2024 Bill Mack Award Winners



STATION 31 SCOTT MCFERON **FIREFIGHTER**



STATION 32 **BEN GROENHOUT FIREFIGHTER**



STATION 33 **RYAN NAUER** FIREFIGHTER



STATION 34 **RYAN FREED**



STATION 35 LANDO ALVARADO **CAPTAIN**



STATION 36 AARON MARTIN



STATION 38 **LUCAS BUTLER FIREFIGHTER**

CARES AWARD

Spirit of Caring Award by **Catholic Community Services**

This award recognizes the CARES team for the work they do that makes a difference in our community.

LEAD SOCIAL WORKER, CARRIE TALAMAIVAO SOCIAL WORKER, STEPHANIE LOPES CLINICAL CARE NAVIGATOR, TODD HUNT CARE NAVIGATOR, LINDSAY NEMEYER CARES INTERN, KADIE LAWSON



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

PROMOTIONS



JIM ALLENBAUGH **BATTALION CHIEF**



SCOTT AUSTIN CAPTAIN

RETIREMENTS



TERRY ROBINSON FIREFIGHTER **25 YEARS**



JIM FRANKLIN DEPUTY FIRE MARSHAL



KIMBERLY TERHUNE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR



THOMAS DOWNS APPLICATION ENGINEER



EVAN ZIERATH SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATOR



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

YEARS OF SERVICE

30 YEARS

KEVIN MOREHART, BATTALION CHIEF

25 YEARS

RICK OLSON, DEPUTY CHIEF BRAD THOMPSON, FIRE CHIEF STEVE ZEHNDER, BATTALION CHIEF TERRY ROBINSON, FIREFIGHTER

20 YEARS

MIKE HOMAN, ASSISTANT FIRE MARSHAL TROY KILCUP, CAPTAIN REED ASTLEY, CAPTAIN JOEL TOLINE, CAPTAIN

15 YEARS

DARIS CONRAD, CAPTAIN

ANDY COOK, CAPTAIN

KELLY HAWKS, PUBLIC INFORMATION & EDUCATION OFFICER

JESSE MITCHELL, CAPTAIN
STEPHEN SPARKS, FIREFIGHTER
ANDREW O'DONNELL, CAPTAIN
MICHAEL COSAND, FIREFIGHTER
JUSTIN RUSLER, FIREFIGHTER
JOHN MONSEBROTEN, FIREFIGHTER
MEGHAN LOUDON, FIREFIGHTER
ANGIE BOYLE, FINANCE MANAGER
RYAN CONNELL, CAPTAIN

10 YEARS

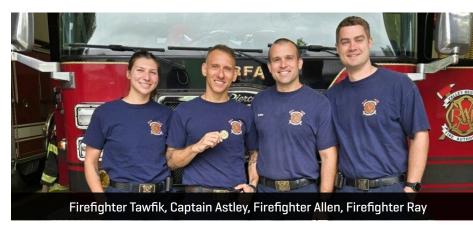
TYLER ELIASON, CAPTAIN

JUSTIN ERICKSON, FIREFIGHTER

SARAH BORDEN, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR

5 YEARS

RACHEL LABENDER, FIREFIGHTER
SHAWN BOWEN, FIREFIGHTER
THOMAS DOWNS, APPLICATION ENGINEER









FIRE OPERATIONS

The Valley Regional Fire Authority provides all-hazards emergency response to the Algona, Auburn, and Pacific communities, with automatic and mutual aid from neighboring jurisdictions.

TIERED RESPONSE SYSTEM

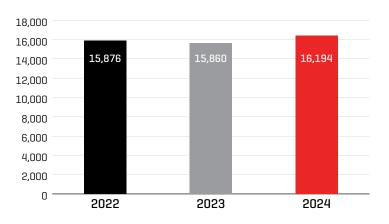
The VRFA provides emergency response through a single battalion consisting of five fire stations located strategically throughout our service area. Twenty-three personnel respond from five fire stations. These stations are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, by four shifts. A battalion chief oversees each shift, and a deputy chief manages the entire division. In 2024, the VRFA had 128 uniformed personnel [including chiefs] and 21 civilian personnel.

The type and severity of an emergency determine the resources dispatched to provide fire suppression, basic life support (BLS), advanced life support (ALS), or technical rescue operations. All VRFA firefighters are certified emergency medical technicians. One of seven South King County Medic One units is dispatched for ALS incidents. For example, a BLS call may only require an aid car and an engine, whereas an ALS call may require up to four responding units. Dispatchers will assign appropriate resources for all other calls, including fires, to protect life and property.

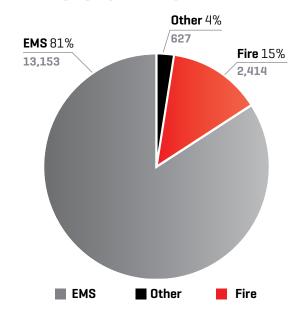
MINIMUM STAFFING INCREASE IN 2024

In 2024, one additional person was added to staff an engine at Station 31, increasing minimum staffing from 22 to 23. This additional engine will be housed at new Station 36 when complete.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE TOTALS



RESPONSE BY INCIDENT TYPE







FIRE OPERATIONS

RESPONSE TIME OUTCOMES

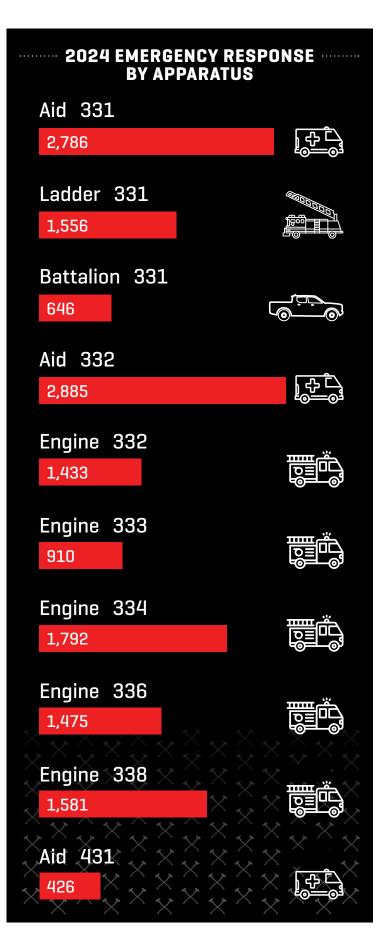
In an emergency, every second counts. The Valley Regional Fire Authority has established a Total Response Time (TRT) benchmark of seven minutes and 34 seconds [7:34] for EMS Calls and seven minutes and 49 seconds [7:49] for fire calls. TRT is the time it takes a unit to arrive at a scene once the call is received at the Fire Alarm Center. In 2024, we achieved those benchmarks 51% of the time for fire response and 61% for EMS response.

TOTAL RESPONSE TIME [TRT]









SPECIALIZED RESPONSE

The Valley Regional Fire Authority maintains a Technical Rescue Team that responds to high-risk, low-frequency incidents requiring specialized rescue capabilities. These include rope rescue, swift water rescue, and high-angle rescue. This 16-member team also provides expertise and assistance to partner agencies within King County.

The Dive Rescue program ended on July 22, 2024, after the results of a risk/benefit analysis determined a swiftwater rescue model would better serve the community.

The VRFA also maintains a 27-person "Red Card" Wildland Fire program. They respond within our jurisdiction and throughout Zone 3, the State, and out of state through special deployment. In 2024, VRFA Red Card firefighters deployed 26 times to assist with wildland fires in Eastern Washington and out of state. A Type 5 Brush Truck was purchased and received in 2024. After training is complete, the new brush truck is expected to go into service at Station 34 in the spring of 2025.

All operations personnel are trained in Hazardous Materials response, with three trained to the technician level. For larger-scale hazardous materials incidents, the VRFA utilizes Zone 3 resources.

TRAINING

The Valley Regional Fire Authority partners with the South King County Fire Training Consortium (SKCFTC) to provide fire academy training for new firefighters and ongoing training for current members.

VRFA first responders logged 36,665 hours of training in 2024, a 16% increase from 2023.

PEER SUPPORT

The VRFA's Peer Support team provides mental health benefits related to education, resource sharing, and peer-level assistance to mitigate cognitive and behavioral health hazards inherent to the fire service. Since its inception in 2018, the Peer Support team has seen contacts increase from 90 to 460. These contacts included anything from a simple conversation to more intensive intervention.

In 2024, the Health, Safety, & EMS Battalion Chief position was created. This position will provide more consistent support and oversight of the Peer Support program.

This year the R.E.C.E.S.S. program was introduced. This 100% voluntary program provides tangible tools to improve overall health, quality of life, and personal and professional performance by allowing employees to take an intentional and temporary pause from their everyday work and duty assignment.



14 Water Rescue RESPONSES



52 Technical Rescue RESPONSES



111 Wildland Fire RESPONSES



215 RESPONSES





Nine new Peer Support Team members added in 2024



Each team member received 20 hours of training

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

CARES

The CARES program aims to reduce community risk and build healthy communities by meeting underlying healthcare, human, and social service needs for CARES-enrolled patients in the VRFA and contracted service

718
REFERRALS

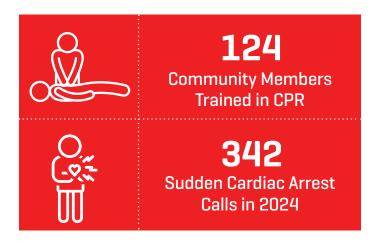
386 ENROLLMENTS

areas. Two social workers take those referrals and work with patients to enroll them in the CARES program. In 2023, we contracted with the University of Washington to establish VRFA CARES as an internship site for social work students. In late spring 2024, the three interns who began their program the previous fall

completed their 10-month internships and transitioned out of the program. In October, one new intern joined the program.

In 2024, the CARES team successfully procured the competitive Federal CDC grant of \$1.5 million aimed at improving services to patients with opioid use disorder. Part of the grant included two temporary full time Care Navigator positions.

The CARES program received 718 referrals in 2024 including 386 new enrollments, 360 unique patients referred once, and 104 patients referred more then once. Six months post intervention there was a 72% decrease in 911 calls and a 70% decrease in emergency department visits for those patients enrolled in the CARES program.



CARES PATIENTS



72% decrease in 911 calls

70% decrease in emergency department visits



CPR

King County has one of the highest survival rates for witnessed sudden cardiac arrest. The increased survival rate is due to the number of CPR-trained community members in King County willing to provide CPR to their fellow community members.

The VRFA has joined forces with Puget Sound and Renton regional fire authorities to create an enhanced CPR and First Aid Program for our community members. Certified firefighter/EMTs teach classes using a nationally recognized curriculum. The sessions are on Saturdays, with locations varying between Auburn, Kent, and Renton.





COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION (CRR)

The VRFA evaluates and provides risk reduction with a comprehensive approach combining prevention, planning, and ongoing active mitigation. The Fire Marshal coordinates personnel in risk management through building and fire plan review to ensure compliance with national and locally adopted codes and standards, inspections of building life safety systems, target hazard inspections, code compliance inspections, and investigation of qualifying fire incidents to identify hazard trends throughout the response area.

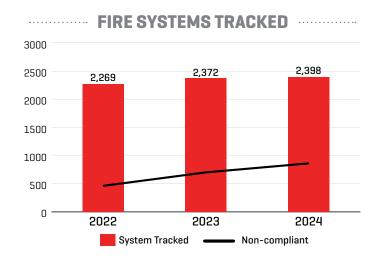
COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION INSPECTIONS

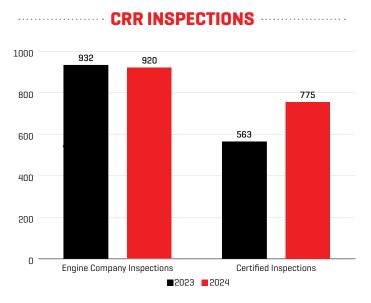
Community risk inspections focus on commercial, industrial, and multi-family buildings. In 2024, certified inspections increased by 34 percent, and companylevel inspections decreased by one percent but with a 100 percent completion rate.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

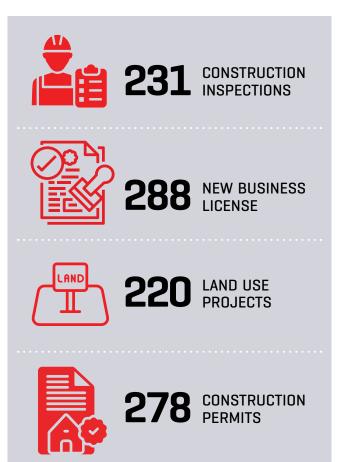
The Fire Marshal's Office collaborates with our member cities to provide various development services. CRR personnel provide analysis and guidance to new businesses through pre-construction application, construction plan review, construction inspections, and comprehensive land use analysis.

FIRE SYSTEM MAINTENANCE & TESTING





Certified inspections are conducted by CRR staff who have completed the Fire Inspector 1 certification. Company-level inspections are completed by on-duty crews in their response area.



FIRE INVESTIGATION

The Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) aims to determine the origin and cause of all non-company level fire investigations. The Investigation unit operates with the intent of documenting and ultimately reducing the occurrence of incendiary and preventable accidental fires through the identification of unsafe/recalled products by utilizing local, state, and national resources.

In 2024, the FIU completed 44 scene investigations.





2024 FIRES BY CITY





DOMESTIC PREPAREDNESS

The Domestic Preparedness program aims to ensure all-hazard disaster readiness for the VRFA and its employees. It collaborates with city, county, state, federal, tribal, and other partner agencies to deliver all-hazards preparedness, response, and recovery services to the VRFA service area. This program consists of one full-time Emergency Management Coordinator.

In 2024, the program was revitalized after being vacant for several years. The newly appointed Emergency Management Coordinator dedicated much of the year to updating the VRFA's practices and laying the groundwork for future initiatives. Significant projects completed during this time include:

- Assisting in the development of a Community Risk Analysis and Vulnerability Assessment.
- Reviewing and updating emergency management policies.
- Analyzing and initiating the process to update the Disaster Plan and Disaster Protocols.
- Researching and beginning the development of a Wildfire Risk Reduction program.
- Implementing and testing a disaster windshield survey damage assessment application.
- Updating food and water supplies for fire station disaster preparedness.







COMMUNITY OUTREACH - PUBLIC INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

The Public Information and Education program provides fire and life safety information and education to schools, businesses, and the community through in-person training, classroom visits, printed publications, social media, and traditional media. The program is comprised of a Lead Community Outreach Specialist, a Community Outreach Specialist and four firefighter specialists.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

In 2024, despite only having two Firefighter/EMT Specialists, we successfully managed an increasing number of visit requests and classroom visits in our school program. We accomplished this by inviting former team members to teach and designating specific "tour days" to handle the growing demand for station tours.

In the spring, we visited 182 classrooms, reaching 4,500 students. For the first time in over two decades, we visited every kindergarten, first, and second-grade classroom in our service area. Additionally, in November, we held Scout Night at the fire station, partnering with Puget Sound Fire Authority to provide two opportunities for scouts to visit a fire station.

2024 COMMUNITY OUTREACH







CARBON MONOXIDE ALARMS

were given or installed for seniors and Low-Income Homeowners.

WERE GIVEN OR INSTALLED FOR SENIORS AND LOW-INCOME HOMEOWNERS.

Costco

World Vision

The Costco Corporation and World Vision provided the smoke & carbon monoxide alarms through a grant.

Energizer

The Energizer Company supplied the batteries through a grant award.

BICYCLE **HELMETS**





We provided 95 bicycle helmets to children and adults in need. The Auburn Area Fire Medic Campaign awarded the

VRFA a grant to purchase the helmets.

ADDITIONALLY

BICYCLE **HELMETS**

We also received 100 helmets from Public Health - Seattle & King County.



Participated in





9 BUSINESSES received fire extinguisher



Elementary School

Classroom Visits



attended Scout Night



Fire Station Tours and/or Engine Visits



PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Community Outreach Specialists manage the website and social media content almost daily and continue to monitor and research new social media sites and trends. They also work with the VRFA Analytics Manager to identify fire and injury trends for targeted messaging.



26,000 users visited the VRFA website



367,438 post views on Facebook



192,635 number of times tweets appeared in newsfeeds



31,909 number of times posts appeared in LinkedIn newsfeeds



109,062 newsletters mailed



41,681 post views on Instagram



13,918 post views on the Neighbors app



145,198 number of times posts appeared in NextDoor newsfeeds



1,978 number of times videos appeared in YouTube newsfeeds





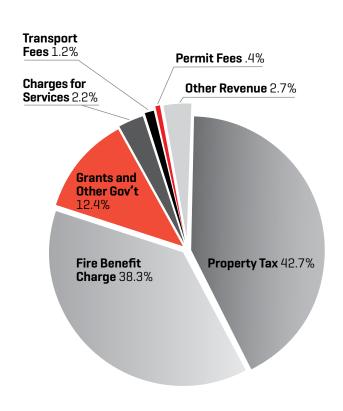
FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION

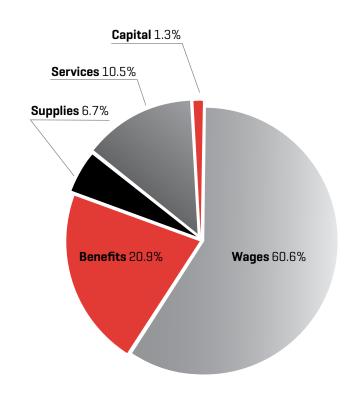
FINANCE

The VRFA Finance team is committed to our core responsibilities including budget development, financial audits, and resource availability.

2024 REVENUE

2024 EXPENDITURES





HUMAN RESOURCES

The Human Resources team supports employees by providing access to benefits, programs, and resources while maintaining policies and best practices that serve to limit organizational risk. In 2024, the Human Resources team achieved the following:

- Recruited and hired 15 employees, including four entry-level firefighters, Community Outreach
 Specialist, Human Resource Specialist, IT Services
 Technician, Care Navigator (Grant Position), Peer
 Care Navigator (Grant Position), Project Manager
 (Temporary Position), Administrative Assistant
 Community Risk Reduction, Battalion Chief Health,
 Safety, & EMS (Internal Recruitment), Battalion Chief
 Support Services (Internal Recruitment), Battalion
 Chief Operations Promotion (Eligibility List), and
 Captain Promotion (Eligibility List).
- Facilitated six [6] civil service tests and established eligibility lists for Respiratory Specialist, Medical Program Specialist, Ladder Specialist, Public Information Education Specialist, Entry Level Firefighter, Captain, and Battalion Chief.



SUPPORT SERVICES

FACILITIES

The facilities maintenance program provides all employees with safe and appropriate working environments and conditions. In 2024, Facilities completed the following:

- Renovated the ventilation prop located at Station 35.
- Supported the Station Design Committee, CRR Deputy Chief, and designers and architects for future groundbreaking for stations 36 and 38.
- Additional office spaces were created for additional staff at Station 35.
- Completed preventative and reactive maintenance at each VRFA facility.

FLEET

The fleet program exists to increase the longevity of the fleet to maintain a high level of reliability and in-service time. In 2024, Fleet completed the following:

- Received new brush truck.
- Tracked order process of three Pierce Fire Engines and one Pierce Tender.
- Received a 2023 Chevrolet 2500 truck and added an uplift to place in service as Swiftwater Rescue 333.
- Surplused two aid cars, a boat, a boat motor, and a boat trailer.
- Evaluated a plan to improve our non-operations fleet of vehicles.
- Transported the 1938 Pirsch fire engine for repairs with an expected completion date of early 2025.

LOGISTICS (TOOLS & EQUIPMENT)

The logistics program provides operations' crews with the necessary tools and equipment to accomplish their mission. This includes the budget and selection of new tools, repair, and maintenance of existing tools, and the surplus of tools that have reached the end of their lifecycle. In 2024, Logistics accomplished the following:

- Outfitted the new brush truck.
- · Tested all hose and ladders.
- Inspected and cleaned 280 sets of bunker gear.
- Assisted the respiratory team in the purchase, distribution and tracking of the new high-rise packs and apartment bundles.





VALLEY REGIONAL FIRE AUTHORITY

Headquarters Fire Station 31 1101 D Street NE, Auburn, WA 98002 [253] 288-5800