

To: Mayor and Council
From: Paul Gipps, CAO

Meeting Date: July 8, 2025
Meeting Type: Regular Council Meeting

Prepared by: Darren Lee, Fire Chief
Department: Protective Services

Title: Paid-On-Call Firefighter Compensation Policy and Fire Department Smartphone Stipend
Description: To consider a Paid-On-Call Compensation Policy and new Fire Department Technology Stipend

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Paid-on-Call Firefighter Compensation Policy 222, 2025 be adopted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POC Wages: Staff researched Paid-on-Call (POC) compensation in comparable communities located within the Okanagan Valley. Staff are recommending adoption of a Paid-on-Call (POC) Firefighter Compensation Policy that will increase to POC wages, over the next three years. This policy will help the District of Lake Country (District) remain wage competitive with comparable communities and respect the time and efforts of its POC Members.

Staff are proposing an increase in mid 2025 of \$2.25 to POC Recruit wages, a \$2.00 raise to Firefighter, Lieutenant and Captain wages and the implementation of a new Driver-Operator rank and wage. Staff are proposing subsequent \$1.00 raises for all POC Members in 2026 and again in 2027. To ensure the District remains wage competitive, staff will conduct follow-up reviews of the proposed policy and recommend amendments to Council as required.

Fire Department Technology Stipend: The District currently supports exempt and various union positions cellular device use through various policies. Unfortunately, the existing policies are not good fit for some fire department personnel and POC Members. While these individuals are not enrolled in existing District programs, they continue to use their personal devices to fulfill essential job-related duties.

Staff are proposing an amendment to the existing Administrative Cellular Device Policy 179, 2020 that outlines a new Fire Department Stipend that would support the current use of personal devices for job-related duties by providing \$100.00 per year to eligible fire department personnel and POC Members. This modest investment supports operational readiness and acknowledges the contribution of eligible fire department personnel and POC Members, who need to be electronically connected to serve the community in the digital age. The amendment to the existing Cellular Device Policy 179, 2020 is an administrative change and therefore Council approval is not required for adjustments to Policy 179.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Staff engaged with fire service managers across the Okanagan Valley to assess POC compensation in comparable communities and similar fire service agencies. This research informed the development of the proposed Paid-On-Call Firefighter Compensation Policy (see attachment 1) and the amendment to the Cellular Device Policy.

POC Wages: In 2024, total actual POC wages for training, public education, and emergency response amounted to \$566,300. The proposed wage increases are estimated to cost an additional \$26,000 or an approximately 4.5% increase based on 2024 actual POC payroll. The projected costs for subsequent \$1.00 per hour increase in 2026 and again in 2027 is estimated at an additional \$26,000 for each year. Pay increases will be effective July 1, 2025, January 1, 2026 and January 1, 2027. The per hour pay rate for POC firefighter ranks is indicated in the table below:

Rank	2024	2025	2026	2027
Recruit	\$18.75	\$21.00	\$22.00	\$23.00
Firefighter	\$21.00	\$23.00	\$24.00	\$25.00
Driver Operator	n/a	\$24.00	\$25.00	\$26.00
Lieutenant	\$23.00	\$25.00	\$26.00	\$27.00
Captain	\$25.00	\$27.00	\$28.00	\$29.00

Members of the SD23 Fire Academy are considered under the Unpaid Work Experience Program and are not eligible for compensation under this policy. Reimbursement rates for deployment to BC Wildfire Services (BCWS) are governed by the BC Interagency Operational Procedures and Reimbursement rates. The 2025/2026 rate for Wildfire Deployment is \$56.00

Fire Department Cellular Device Stipend: The annual estimated costs of enrolling approximately seventy individuals in the \$100.00 Fire Department Cellular Device Stipend are approximately \$7,000 per year. This investment supports operational readiness and acknowledges the contributions of specific fire department staff and POC Members who need to be connected electronically to serve the community in the modern fire service environment.

Impacts on infrastructure, services or staff capacity

Some impacts to staff capacity, related to payroll administration, are anticipated in Q3 of 2025. Once adjustments are in place, staff capacity should return to normal.

Consultation and Communication

Staff will communicate any financial and process changes to eligible fire department personnel and POC Members when appropriate.

Applicable legislation, bylaws and policies

- BC Employment Standards
- BC Interagency Operational Procedures and Reimbursement Rates

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

☐ None ☐ Budget Previously Approved ☒ Other (see below)

The estimated total increase to annual fire department operating budgets is \$33,00 in 2025, an additional \$26,000 in 2026 and an additional \$26,000 in 2027. Staff will make future operating budget supplemental request as required.

Staff from the Fire Department, Finance and Administration, Corporate Services and Chief Administrative Officer worked internally on the development Paid-On-Call Compensation Policy and the Fire Department Technology Stipend.

ALTERNATE RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. THAT the Paid-on-Call Firefighter Compensation Policy 222, 205 be referred to staff for further discussion and analysis.

Respectfully Submitted.

Darren Lee, Fire Chief

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Paid-On-Call Wages Policy and Fire Department Technology Stipend.docx
Attachments:	- Paid-On-Call Firefighter Compensation Policy 222, 2025.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Jul 3, 2025

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Paul Gipps, Chief Administrative Officer - Jul 3, 2025 - 7:10 AM

Makayla Ablitt, Legislative & FOI Coordinator - Jul 3, 2025 - 9:55 AM