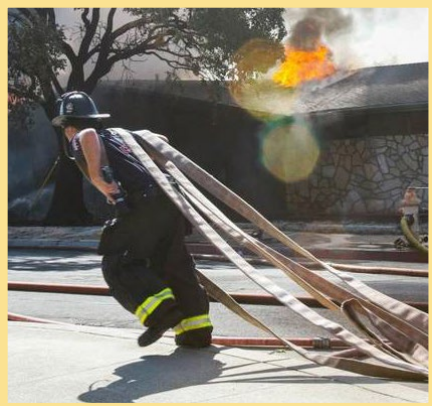




FIRE CHIEF

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA





THE COMMUNITY

San Luis Obispo (SLO) is located in the heart of California's Central Coast, midway between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Encompassing 14.6 square miles, SLO is the largest city in the County, with a population of nearly 50,000, and serves as the County seat. SLO offers an exceptional quality of life defined by access to the outdoors, environmental stewardship, and a strong sense of community. SLO is experiencing thoughtful growth, with targeted densification in some areas, while remaining surrounded by treasured open spaces. Long-standing investments in the greenbelt and an expanding trail system reflect the community's commitment to preserving natural areas and recreational opportunities. The City maintains more than 4,000 acres of open space and natural areas and over 66 miles of hiking and biking trails, providing year-round recreational opportunities for all ages.

The community balances respect for its history with a forward-looking outlook, guided by core values that include civility, sustainability, inclusivity, partnership, and resilience. San Luis Obispo is committed to fostering a community where everyone feels valued and supported. We celebrate diversity, embed inclusion and equity into policy, and work hard to ensure that San Luis Obispo is a place where all can thrive.

San Luis Obispo is the regional center for education, innovation, and commerce, anchored by California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) and Cuesta College. Cal Poly's 9,200-acre campus borders the City, and a significant portion of its 22,000+ students live and engage within the community.

The City's economy is supported by growing technology, medical, and

specialty manufacturing sectors, complemented by a rapidly expanding regional airport that provides convenient access to major metropolitan hubs. Downtown San Luis Obispo offers a vibrant mix of restaurants, retail, galleries, and community events, including the nationally recognized Thursday Night Farmers Market, now in its fifth decade. Residents enjoy a rich cultural environment featuring local theatre, symphony, museums, and visual arts, along with strong volunteerism and nonprofit engagement. From coastal beaches and wine country to mountain trails and historic landmarks such as Hearst Castle, San Luis Obispo offers unmatched access to the Central Coast's most celebrated destinations, often just minutes from home.

CITY GOVERNMENT

In 1856, the City of San Luis Obispo became one of the first incorporated cities in California. Now a Charter City, it operates under a Council–Mayor–City Manager form of government. The Mayor and four City Council Members are elected at large, with the Mayor serving a two-year term and Council Members serving staggered four-year terms. The City Council appoints the City Manager and City Attorney.

San Luis Obispo is a full-service city organized into nine departments delivering a wide range of municipal services, including police, fire, water, wastewater, parks and recreation, streets, planning, building, and other essential services. The City employs approximately 490 full-time and 300 part-time staff who work collaboratively to advance the community's quality of life.

The City is one team unified in our commitment to serving the community. That means showing up with shared expectations for how we communicate, collaborate, and hold ourselves accountable in service to the community. The team nurtures trust and fosters understanding to create a supportive workplace that addresses challenges and celebrates successes together.

The City Council has established Major City Goals for 2025–2027 that guide organizational priorities and investment, including:

- Cultural Vitality, Economic Resiliency, and Fiscal Sustainability
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Homelessness Response
- Housing and Neighborhood Livability
- Infrastructure and Sustainable Transportation
- Open Space, Climate Action, and Resilience

Major initiatives such as the City's Climate Action Plan, Vision Zero, and the expansion of multimodal transportation networks underscore the interconnected nature of these goals and highlight the Fire Department's integral role in advancing safety, resilience, and sustainability citywide.

The City is in good financial standing and operates under a two-year Financial Plan, adopting a balanced annual budget for its General Fund and four enterprise funds (Water, Sewer, Parking, and Transit). The FY 2025–26 General Fund budget totals \$117.6 million, with a total City budget of \$217.6 million.

Long-term infrastructure investment is guided by a 10-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) totaling \$659 million, with \$112 million programmed in the 2025–27 Financial Plan to maintain or replace existing assets and build new ones to meet the needs of a growing and evolving community.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Founded in 1872, the San Luis Obispo Fire Department (SLOFD) is a full-service, all-risk organization with a long-standing commitment to excellence, innovation, and community trust. The Department is staffed by 49 full-time sworn fire personnel and 12 fire prevention and support personnel, operating from four fire stations strategically located throughout the City, with an FY 2025–26 operating budget of \$19 million. The City is currently planning for the development of a fifth fire station to serve the southern portion of the City, and SLOFD provides fire services to Cal Poly through a service agreement.

SLOFD provides comprehensive emergency and prevention services through five divisions: Administration, Emergency Management, Fire Prevention, Training, and Suppression. Together, these divisions support a modern fire department that balances operational readiness with proactive risk reduction and community-focused service delivery.

The Department responds to more than 7,000 calls annually, providing advanced life support (ALS) emergency medical services, fire suppression, technical rescue, hazardous materials response, and coordinated regional assistance. Each front-line apparatus is staffed with at least one paramedic, ensuring a high level of medical capability across all responses.

Fire Station #1 serves as the Department's operational and administrative center, housing executive leadership, Fire Prevention, Emergency Management, Training, and fleet maintenance. It supports a 4-person



ALS truck company, a Battalion Chief, and a Mobile Crisis Unit, the latter reflecting the Department's commitment to compassionate, multidisciplinary response. The Mobile Crisis Unit is staffed by two personnel, including a mental health professional during weekday operations.

Stations #2, #3, and #4 operate ALS engines and quint companies, staffed with 3 personnel, with cross-staffing of specialized resources including a UTV, and Type 3 wildland engine, supporting both local and statewide emergency response.

SLOFD maintains strong regional partnerships and contributes personnel to several specialized and interagency teams, including Urban Search and Rescue, Hazardous Materials Response, Fire Investigation, and the Type 3 County Incident Management Team, supporting extended operations during fires, floods, earthquakes, and other large-scale emergencies. The Department maintains automatic and mutual aid agreements with neighboring agencies, the California Office of Emergency Services, and the Los Padres National Forest.

In addition to emergency response, SLOFD places significant emphasis on fire prevention, code enforcement, and public education, offering inspection services, plan review, fire and arson investigation, and disaster preparedness programs. The department is developing a defensible space program to address the new and increasing needs of Wildland Urban Interface planning and response. These efforts are grounded in inclusive, community-centered strategies that enhance safety while supporting responsible development and community resilience.

With more than 150 years of service, the San Luis Obispo Fire Department remains steadfast in fulfilling its mission with commitment, courage, and compassion. The Department continues to evolve to meet the City's unique risks and expectations, delivering professional, integrated, and forward-looking fire and emergency services to the community it serves.

THE IDEAL CANDIDATE

The City of San Luis Obispo is seeking a Fire Chief who leads by example and inspires others — a visible, engaged, and credible leader who earns trust through presence, consistency, and action. The ideal candidate is both strategic and hands-on: someone who can set a long-term vision while remaining closely connected to the day-to-day realities of the Department and the people who deliver its services.

This is a working director role. The successful candidate will bring direct operational experience that establishes credibility throughout the organization, coupled with a clear understanding of modern fire service leadership. Experience across both operations and fire prevention is highly desirable, particularly in an environment with significant and ongoing development activity. The Fire Chief must be able to effectively interface with developers, City departments, and community stakeholders to support responsible growth while upholding public safety, code compliance, and risk reduction objectives.

The ideal candidate will prioritize developing a deep understanding of the organization — its strengths, operational needs, cultural dynamics, and commitment to public service — and will take the time to build meaningful relationships with employees at all levels. They will be relatable, respected, and inspiring, with a leadership style grounded in integrity, accountability, and adherence to organizational values. This leader will elevate morale, foster pride in service to the community, and create an environment where people feel supported, heard, and responsible for delivering excellence. They will support initiatives that promote fitness, behavioral health, work-life balance, and long-term career sustainability, and will cultivate a culture where wellness and ethical service are essential to operational readiness and public trust.

A collaborative partner by nature, the Fire Chief will work seamlessly with the City's executive leadership team and colleagues across the organization, embodying and promoting the City's One Team approach to leadership. High emotional intelligence, low ego, and a strong sense of self-awareness and curiosity are essential. This leader seeks to understand how others do their work, asks good questions, and looks for opportunities to connect, support, and add value across all departments.

The successful candidate will bring a proven history of building and sustaining positive labor relationships grounded in trust, transparency, and mutual respect. As a generous and effective communicator, they will engage openly with staff, labor partners, elected officials, developers, and the community, conveying expectations clearly while listening with intention.

The Fire Chief will be visible in the community, approachable, and genuinely engaged, with an enthusiasm for the profession and the organization that is both authentic and contagious. Experience working in environments that combine urban, suburban, and wildland-urban interface risks is strongly preferred, reflecting the City's unique geography and hazard profile.

Equally important, the next Fire Chief will embrace their role as a mentor and developer of talent, welcoming the opportunity to influence young careers, prioritize succession planning, and strengthen the Department's leadership bench. A demonstrated ability to build morale, develop future leaders, and sustain a healthy organizational culture will be critical to the Department's continued success.

This position requires at least five years of fire management experience and a bachelor's degree in Fire Science, Fire Technology, Business or Public Administration, or related field. A master's degree is preferred.



Application & Selection Process

The closing date for this recruitment is **11:59 pm on Sunday, March 29, 2026**. To be considered for this opportunity, upload a compelling cover letter, resume, and list of six professional references using the "Apply Now" feature at www.tbcrecruiting.com. This is a confidential process and will be handled accordingly throughout the various stages of the process.



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TERI BLACK & COMPANY, LLC

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Following the closing date, applicants with the most relevant qualifications will be granted preliminary interviews by the consultants. Candidates deemed the best qualified will be invited to participate in additional interviews in San Luis Obispo. The City anticipates making an appointment in a timely manner, once negotiations, background, and reference checks are completed. Please note that references will not be contacted until mutual interest has been established.

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

The annual salary range for this position is \$208,208- \$260,286. A three (3%) percent cost-of-living adjustment will be provided in July 2026. The City also offers a highly competitive benefits package that includes the following:

Retirement: CalPERS Classic members 3% @ 55; CalPERS new members 2.7% @ 57. Classic members pay the full employee 9% contribution and New members pay 50% of the normal cost of the CalPERS contribution (currently 17.5%). In addition, this position pays an additional 3% toward the employer portion of retirement costs with no Social Security deduction.

Insurance: Employees receive a monthly health flex contribution towards medical insurance. Cash back (\$200) is available for employees who opt out of medical. Dental and vision are paid for by employees.

Deferred Compensation: The City contributes one percent (1%) of salary toward a 401(a) plan and there are several 457 plans offered.

Vacation: Employees can accrue up to 160 hours per year depending upon public sector years of service.

Sick Leave: Accrues 8 hours per month.

Administrative Leave: The City provides 80 hours annually.

Holidays: The City provides 13 paid holidays (11 fixed and 2 floating at 8 hours each).

Uniform Allowance: \$1,300 annually.

Vehicle Assignment: City provided vehicle.

Relocation: Relocation assistance is offered for candidates relocating over fifty miles to San Luis Obispo County during their first year of employment.

Other Benefits: Flexible spending accounts, life insurance, long term disability, bilingual pay.

