

March 2022

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2027



Ripon Consolidated
Fire Protection District
Ripon, CA

Prepared by:



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CONSULTANT REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fitch & Associates, LLC was contracted by the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District (RCFPD) to provide a facilitated strategic planning process. The process included a total of three days of onsite meetings, and three virtual interviews with the fire chief, fire district board members, and community stakeholders between October 20, 2021, and January 28, 2022. The agency also hosted a one-day “town hall” style meeting on October 23, 2021, where a ten-member group of internal and external stakeholders completed a strategic visioning process. The process included a review of the value of strategic planning; a review of the community stakeholders’ perception of the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District before and after the facilitated process; an analysis of the agency’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC); an introduction to the Commission on Fire Accreditation International fire agency accreditation process; plus, a review of the agency’s desired strategic planning statements for final inclusion into a strategic plan. At the conclusion of the process, the stakeholders derived three key themes:

1. How do we continue to improve on saving lives, property, and the environment during and prior to emergency events?
2. How do we meet the increasing service demands over the coming years?
3. How do we better explain our services and demonstrate our value to our community?

From these key themes, members of the agency’s command, line and administrative staff developed a list of 12 strategic objectives, 15 outcome measurements and 48 unique supporting goals to prepare the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District to meet the needs and expectations of their community and to communicate performance and progress in a way that would be easily understood by the community.

PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is an intentional process by which an agency or organization surveys the industry trends; evidence-based practices; the customer's needs and wants; the current and future available resources, and the current and future capabilities of the agency to determine performance gaps. Once these gaps are identified, the agency can then determine organizational objectives, supporting goals and critical tasks necessary to close or eliminate the performance gaps. At the completion of the process, the agency will possess a planning document that helps better focus organizational resources towards measurable outcomes to maximize departmental efficiency and effectiveness. The process of strategic planning also provides additional value when a broad array of stakeholders come together to develop consensus on organizational performance gaps and potential solutions. The effectiveness of the team is enhanced through the power of shared vision and goals.



“From outside the fire service looking in, you can never really understand it. From inside the fire service looking out, you can never really explain it” ~ Unknown

METHODOLOGY

Fitch & Associates, LLC was contracted by the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District (RCFPD) to provide a facilitated strategic planning process. The process included a total of three days of onsite meetings, and three virtual interviews with the fire chief, fire district board members, and community stakeholders between October 20, 2021, and January 28, 2022. The agency also hosted a one-day “town hall” style meeting on October 23, 2021, where a ten-member group of internal and external stakeholders completed a strategic visioning process. The process included a review of the value of strategic planning; a review of the community stakeholders’ perception of the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District before and after the facilitated process; an analysis of the agency’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges; an introduction to the Commission on Fire Accreditation International fire agency accreditation process; plus, a review of the agency’s desired strategic planning statements for final inclusion into a strategic plan. At the conclusion of the process, the stakeholders derived three key themes:

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From these key themes, members of the agency’s command, line and administrative staff developed a list of 12 strategic objectives, 15 outcome measurements, and 48 unique supporting goals to prepare the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District to meet the needs and expectations of their community and remain a “value-added” organization into the future.

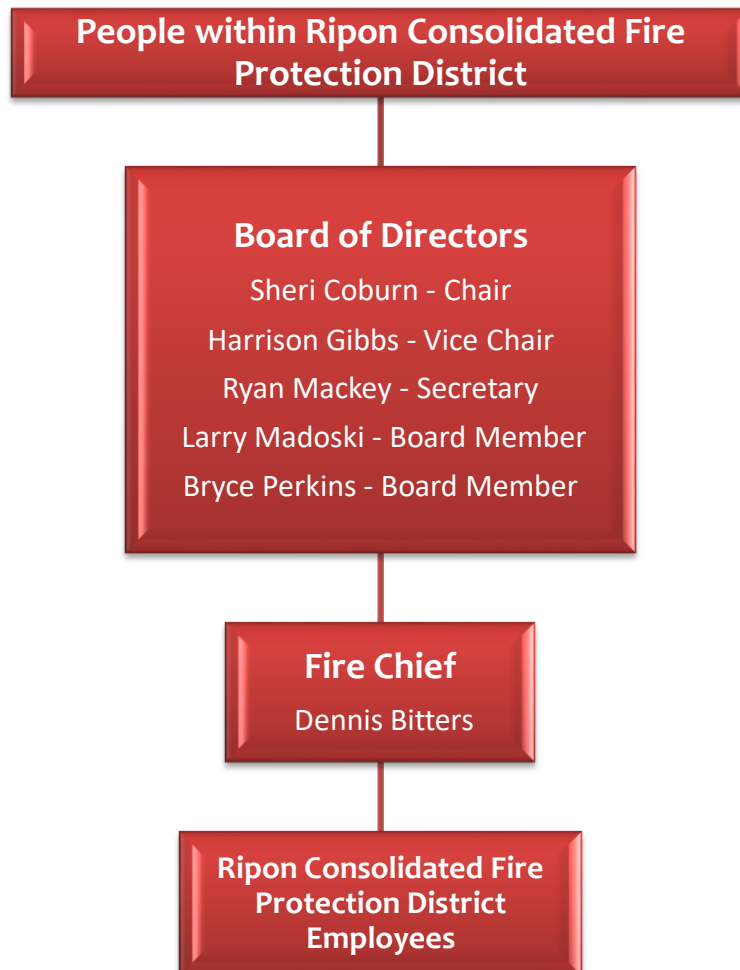
A draft of the proposed strategic plan was provided to the agency to review for errors of fact prior to publishing. The final report also included an internal progress tracking spreadsheet.



GOVERNANCE

The residents of the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District elect five board members from the community as their governing body. Board members are all elected at-large and must reside within the district boundaries during their entire term. All elections are non-partisan. Terms are four years in length, and directors have no term limits.

The Board of Directors selects and appoints the Fire Chief who serves as the chief executive officer of the district. The Fire Chief directs and coordinates the various functions and divisions within the organization, administers the budget, and makes reports and recommendations to the Board. The Fire Chief is an at-will position (under contract) with authority to hire, fire, promote, and transfer all district employees.



FIRE DISTRICT HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

The original Ripon Fire District was created in 1921, under the Fire District Act of 1881, and before the City of Ripon (CA) incorporated. At that time the District consisted of little more than one square mile. The intersection of modern-day Main Street and Stockton Avenue was the original center of the District. A chemical tank mounted on wheels and hand-drawn to fires was donated to the new Fire District and became the District's first piece of emergency fire apparatus. This original equipment is still on display at Station One in Ripon. Over the years, the District continued to grow in both population and area.

Due to growth in the region, in 1940, the Ripon Rural Fire District was formed to provide emergency services to the rural areas adjacent to the Ripon Fire District. At this time, both agencies protected a population of less than 2,000 people.

In 1950, the rural volunteer firefighters built Fire Station Two with donated material from Franzia Winery. In 1963, the two separate fire districts, which had been sharing equipment and personnel already, consolidated to form the Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District (RCFPD).



The RCFPD added an emergency ambulance service in 1974 and became the first ambulance service or fire agency in San Joaquin County to provide Advanced Life Support (paramedics) to their citizens.

In January 2006, the RCFPD dedicated its new four-story fire training tower in memory of Howard and Mary Eichoff, Ripon residents who actively supported the fire district. The tower is the

centerpiece of the Eichoff Memorial Training Center and was constructed at a cost of approximately \$450,000.

In 2021, the RCFPD celebrated its 100 years of service to the community. Over 400 community residents attended the Centennial celebration, where previous fire district personnel and board members were recognized for their service.

Today, a compliment of full-time, part-time, volunteer, and reserve personnel staff the apparatus and protect a total population of approximately 22,500, over a 56 square mile area, including the incorporated City of Ripon. The RCFPD now provides additional services to the community including hazardous material response, water rescue, and technical rescue. The fire station also features a fully equipped classroom complete with all audiovisual needs for class sizes of nearly 50 participants as an additional service to the community. Also of note is the RCFPD is still the longest operating fire-based EMS transport provider within San Joaquin County.

The following is a description of minimum staffing configurations; not including cross-staffed specialty units such as, hazardous material and technical rescue units.

In total, RCFPD operates the following response units: (Minimum daily staffing of 5)

- 1 Engine company (ALS)
- 1 Truck company (ALS) (cross-staffed)
- 1 Ambulance (ALS)
- 1 Battalion chief

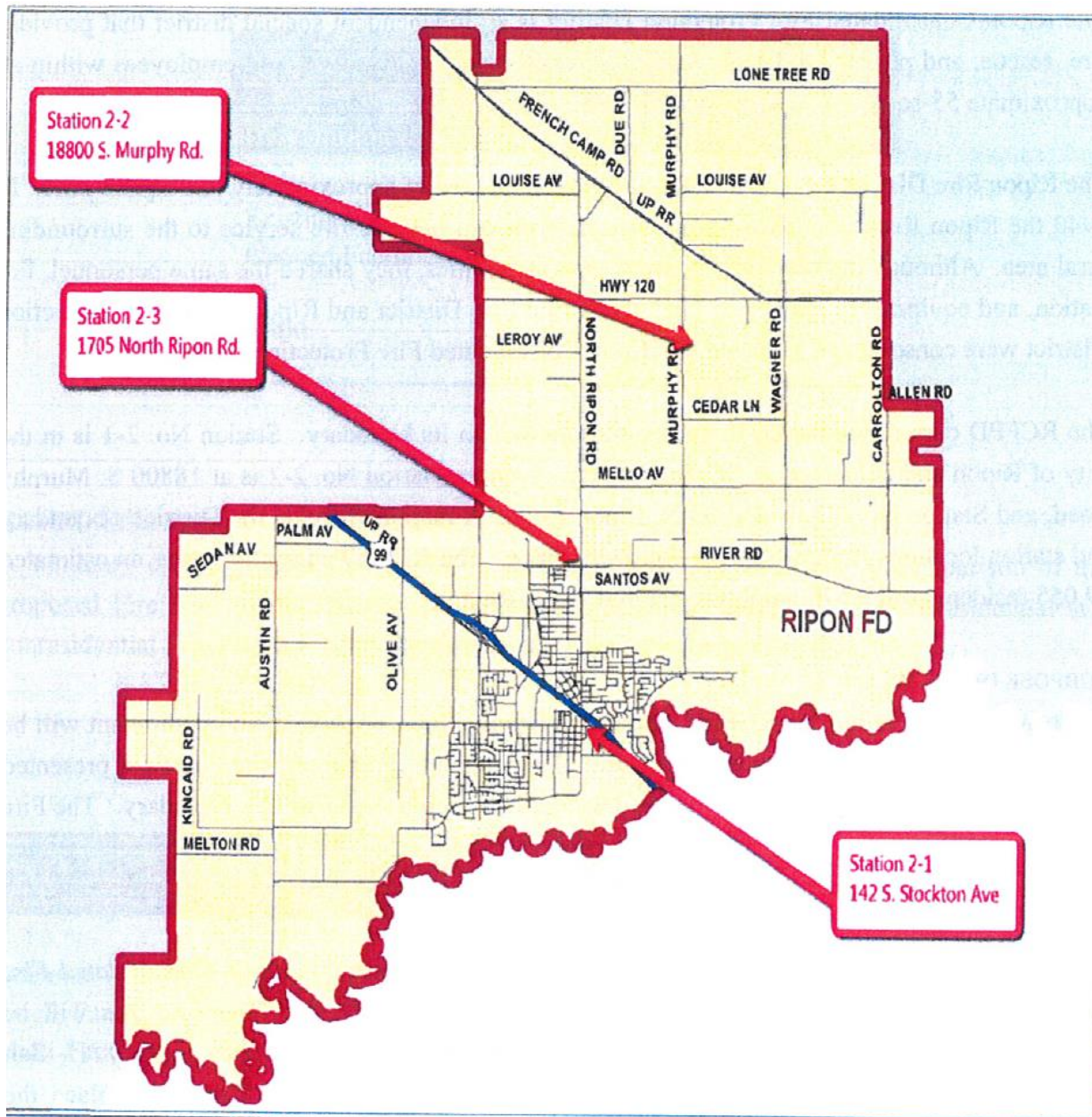
During the project analysis, it was difficult to relate the RCFPD to other comparable agencies in the region since there are no other agencies of relative size and complexity that provide similar services (provides service to a city and emergency medical transport). As such, a rough estimate of efficiency can be derived using a simple cost per capita formula by taking total annual tax revenues, not counting user fees (such as ambulance revenue) or one-time grants, then dividing by the residential population served. A review of somewhat similar fire districts within San Joaquin County resulted in an average cost per capita of \$229.78. **In comparison to this average, and based on the non-transport revenue, it is noteworthy that the RCFPD has a cost per capita of \$108, which is approximately 53 percent lower.** The resulting cost model for RCFPD is very fiscally conservative but may not be sustainable based on the economic factors that influence safety services, and the impacts seen by comparable fire districts that did not address the fiscal sustainability of their services in time.

Peer Agency	Population Estimate	General Fund Operating Budget	Calls for Service	Per Capita Cost to Operate	Minimum Daily Staffing	ISO Rating (1 is best)	# of Fire Stations
Escalon Consolidated Fire Prot. Dist.	14,000	\$1,286,000	1,204	\$91.86	3	4/8b	1
French Camp-McKinley Fire Prot. Dist.	28,000	\$3,292,000	1,800	\$117.57	8	4/8b	2
Linden-Peters Fire District	4,000	\$2,806,000	800	\$701.50	3	2/2y	1
Waterloo Morada Fire Prot. Dist.	12,000	\$4,331,000	2,200	\$360.92	5		1
Woodbridge Fire District	15,000	\$5,059,000	2,000	\$337.27	10	4	4
Peer Agency Average	14,600	\$3,354,800	1,601	\$229.78	6	4/8b	2
Ripon Consolidated Fire Prot. Dist.	22,500	\$2,448,000	2,100	\$108.80	4	3/10	1

It is important to note that “cost per capita” is not, in and of itself, a comprehensive measurement of an agency’s performance or value to the community, but rather a broad measurement of how the agency compares to other similar agencies in terms of dollars it charges for services. In other words, cost efficiency does not necessarily equate to operational effectiveness or sustainability.



SERVICE AREA AND FACILITIES

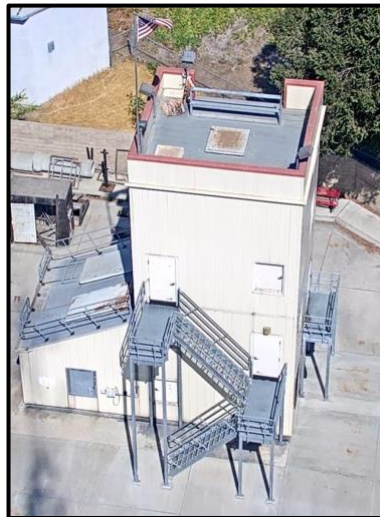


***Note: Only Station 2-1 is staffed.**

Fire Stations and Facilities

Station 2-1 142 South Stockton Ave. Ripon CA 95366

(Headquarters and Eichoff Memorial Training Center)



Station 2-2 18800 S. Murphy Rd. Ripon, CA 95366 (Unstaffed)



Station 2-3 1705 North Ripon Rd. Ripon, CA 95366 (Unstaffed)



“A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit” ~ Greek Proverb

AGENCY MISSION, VISION, VALUES

The Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District has a well-established organizational mission, vision, and list of values.

MISSION STATEMENT

“To protect all the citizens within the Fire District from injury and loss due to natural and man-made disasters. This will be accomplished by providing highly-trained and adequately equipped emergency personnel to respond to incidents of fire, medical and other emergencies.”

VISION STATEMENT

“The Ripon Consolidated Fire Protection District is committed to excellence in the protection of lives, property, and the environment. This is accomplished by being progressive, responsive, and caring to our citizens and staff.”

VALUES

Integrity - We employ the highest ethical standards, demonstrating honesty and fairness in every action we take; without compromising the truth.

Accountability – We accept our individual and team responsibilities, and we meet our commitments. We take responsibility for our performance in all our decisions and actions.

Mutual Respect – We respectfully lead our subordinates and follow those who lead; and we respect all members of the District and the community.

Leadership – We have the courage to lead from the front and shape the future.

Safety- We strive for the highest level of safety by a commitment to consistent and relevant training.

Fairness – We strive to ensure our work and interactions consider the beliefs, desires, rights, and responsibilities of all involved. We strive to offer equal treatment under similar circumstances.

Teamwork – We strive to create an environment in which all parties are able to contribute to, and share in, the benefits that accrue from the pursuit of our mission; we demonstrate that others are valued.

AGENCY STATUS ANALYSIS

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) analysis is designed to help the organization assess itself in order to determine its current state of effectiveness as well as its future competitors, anticipated changes and survival trajectories. Stakeholders were asked to develop a broad list of items from each category, which was then summarized as follows:

Strengths: Things the agency does particularly well, competitive advantages, preparedness investments that are paying off, etc.

- Great customer service
- Good community relations
- Good fire and EMS equipment
- Good facilities
- Highly trained staff – lots of specialty skills
- Healthy organizational culture
- Strong relationships with mutual aid partner agencies
- Efficiency with staffing model/delivery of service
- Healthy ISO grading for the city and district areas
- Value added service due to ambulance revenue assisting fire/rescue capabilities
- Higher than average Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC) for cardiac events due to paramedic staffing
- District has a fire training tower, which provides greater flexibility and reliability for training but also provides Insurance Services Office (ISO) points for the community

Weaknesses: Things that the agency doesn't do particularly well, competitive disadvantages, blind spots, not prepared for, liabilities, etc.

- Lack of formal succession planning policy and procedures
- Water deficient areas
- Lack of staffing to address growing severity and frequency of emergency events
- Retention of staff
- Lack of funding from city for value added services provided such as hydrant maintenance
- Lack of fire investigation capabilities
- Percentage of property tax revenue as compared to other CA fire districts
- Poor history of tax measure increases
- Need to develop better communications between city/county and the district regarding new development and associated impacts
- Need better support from County EMS dealing with high frequency users of the EMS system

Opportunities: Opportunities the agency should explore that would improve its mission, service delivery, efficiencies, reputation, survivability as an organization.

- Shared services agreement with neighboring fire agencies
- Clarify fire hydrant maintenance between the city or county water purveyors. Possibly charge for this service or turn maintenance back over to the agency having responsibility.
- Explore enhanced staffing models to provide incremental improvement to staffing levels during times of highest demand
- Explore additional revenue opportunities
- Expand public education program

Challenges: Things that threaten to undermine the agency mission, service delivery, efficiencies, reputation, survivability as an organization.

- Maintaining service levels over time
- Call concurrency over 26%
- Adequate levels of funding
- Unfunded mandates and liabilities
- Aging building stock/unreinforced construction
- Employee recruitment and retention
- Limited ability to provide public education
- Communicating service level impacts to the community

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

How Do We Continue to Improve on Protecting Lives, Property and the Environment Before and During Emergency Events?

1.1 Improve Survivability for Victims of Fire, Hazardous Material Release, Entrapment, or other Crisis Events

Outcome Measurements

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 80 percent of the time (City)

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 70 percent of the time (Rural)

Zero civilian deaths due to fire (structure fires/accidental/unintentional)

Rescue victims of entrapment within 10 minutes from patient contact, 90 percent of the time (emergent calls, patient contact to patient extricated, in assistance to local hospital ER trauma unit accreditation standard)

Supporting Objectives

- First suppression unit arrival at structure fires, hazardous material releases, and other crisis incidents, within the City of Ripon, requiring the use of personal protective equipment within 8 minutes, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, 911 verification of address at VREC to unit arrival)
- First suppression unit arrival at structure fires, hazardous material releases, and other crisis incidents, within the rural areas, requiring the use of personal protective equipment within 12 minutes, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, 911 verification of address at VREC to unit arrival)
- Ensure emergency 911 calls for service are processed within 90 seconds, 90 percent of the time (VREC - alarm handling)
- Turnout time for fire/rescue calls within 1 minute and 50 seconds, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, unit alert to wheels rolling)
 - Monitor and report turnout time performance quarterly (rolling 90 and 365-day, by member or officer)
 - Explore fire station alerting systems
 - Implement “shot clocks” in the station
- Measure and report growth rate of structure fire instances in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of structure fires lower than the percentage of the population growth year over year)

- Inspect 100% of all commercial fire protection systems annually
- Inspect 100% of high-risk occupancies annually
- Inspect 100% of State mandated occupancies annually
- Inspect 99% of moderate and low-risk occupancies annually
- Prepare for the 2018 Fire Code update
- Develop strategies to improve quality and quantity of incident data reporting by officers and paramedics
 - Time stamp “water on the fire”
 - Time stamp “primary search complete”
 - Time stamp “extrication complete”
 - Time stamp “at patient side/victim side”
- Keep annual Unit Hour Utilization percentage below 30% for all units (annually)
- Develop a Standards of Cover document
 - Review response modes to fire alarms, low acuity medical calls, lift assists, etc.

1.2 Improve Survivability of Patients Experiencing Acute Medical Emergencies

Outcome Measurements

Maintain a cardiac survival rate at or above the national average (ROSC avg.)

Ambulance arrival on EMS calls within 8 minutes, 90 percent of the time (urban zones, emergency calls, 911 verification of address at VREC to unit arrival, per county contract)

Ambulance arrival on EMS calls within 20 minutes, 90 percent of the time (rural zones, emergency calls, 911 verification of address at VREC to unit arrival, per county contract)

Supporting Objectives

- Ensure emergency 911 calls for service are processed within 90 seconds, 90 percent of the time (VREC - alarm handling)
- Turnout time for EMS calls within 1 minute and 30 seconds, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, unit alert to wheels rolling)

- Measure and report growth rate of EMS calls in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of emergent medical aid calls lower than percentage of population growth year over year)
- Explore developing a process to start measuring cardiac survival using agency specific CARES data
- Develop a CPR fraction rate measurement (i.e., Maintain a CPR fraction rate of at least 90 percent, for 90% of cardiac arrest incidents)
- Develop a Standards of Cover document
- Keep Unit Hour Utilization percentage below 30% for all units
- Explore strategies that measure and improve definitive patient care
 - Example: Recognize and transport medical alerts (STEMI, stroke, trauma) within 10 minutes, 90 percent of the time (at patient side to transport)
- Develop a bystander CPR participation rate target
- Partner with community agencies to offer CPR training

1.3 Improve Firefighter Safety and Survival

Outcome Measurements

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 80 percent of the time (City)

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 70 percent of the time (Rural)

Zero firefighter Line of Duty deaths

Maintain annual employee injury rate below 20 percent of total allocated staffing (less than 3 reportable industrial injuries per year)

Supporting Objectives

- Measure and report growth rate of structure fire instances in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of structure fires lower than the percentage of the population growth year over year)
- Inspect 100% of all commercial fire protection systems annually
- Inspect 100% of high-risk occupancies annually
- Inspect 100% of State mandated occupancies annually

- Inspect 99% of moderate and low-risk occupancies annually
- Prepare for the 2018 Fire Code update
- Develop a Standards of Cover document
- Analyze security of all agency facilities (station hardening)
- Analyze equipment and inventory security for all fire apparatus (apparatus hardening)

1.4 Improve Agency Resiliency During Crisis-Level Events

Supporting Objectives

- Develop a Standards of Cover document
- Develop a policy that limits the provision of auto or mutual aid during resource drawdown

How Do We Meet the Increases in Service Demands Over the Coming Years?

2.1 Reduce Financial and Legal Risk/Liability to the District

Outcome Measurements

Zero firefighter Line of Duty deaths

Maintain annual employee injury rate below 20 percent of total allocated staffing (less than 3 reportable industrial injuries per year)

Zero substantiated cases of harassment/discrimination

Zero cases of requiring formal disciplinary action (action above written reprimand)

Supporting Objectives

- Provide liability reduction/ harassment prevention training to all employees and board members annually
- Develop a Standards of Cover document
- Update and maintain a two-year training plan
- Update succession planning/professional development policies
- Improve quality and accuracy of report writing by officers, paramedics and EMT's.
- Develop system to review/update all policies every three years

2.2 Improve Efficiency within the Current Budget Process

Outcome Measurements

Maintain Workers' Compensation costs below 4% of annual budget

Supporting Objectives

- Measure and report growth rate of structure fire instances in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of structure fires lower than the percentage of the population growth year over year)
- Measure and report growth rate of EMS calls in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of emergent medical aid calls lower than percentage of population growth year over year)
- Develop a list of comparative agencies within the region (compare levy rates, staffing, workload, outcomes, etc.)
- Develop a policy related to a reserve funding target for the District
- Purchase sufficient fire apparatus to ensure fleet health complies with apparatus replacement plan
- Pursue grant opportunities with a positive return in investment
- Strategic planning group will meet at least annually to review progress and updates

2.3 Prepare the Agency for Future Economic Downturns

Supporting Objectives

- Develop an operational cost and service “step down/cost cutting” plan that will provide progressive rate of savings within one year of implementation
- Invest in station improvement projects that provide economic savings measured in lower ongoing maintenance or utility costs
- Invest in high quality equipment/apparatus that can withstand deferred replacement when necessary

2.4 Prepare for Population Growth within the Jurisdiction

Outcome Measurements

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 80 percent of the time (City)

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 70 percent of the time (Rural)

Maintain a cardiac survival rate at or above the national average (ROSC avg.)

Supporting Objectives

- Measure and report growth rate of structure fire instances in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of structure fires lower than the percentage of the population growth year over year)
- Measure and report growth rate of EMS calls in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of emergent medical aid calls lower than percentage of population growth year over year)
- Inspect 100% of all commercial fire protection systems annually
- Inspect 100% of high-risk occupancies annually
- Inspect 100% of State mandated occupancies annually
- Inspect 99% of moderate and low-risk occupancies annually
- Prepare for the 2018 Fire Code update
- Develop a Standards of Cover document

How Do We Better Explain Our Services and Demonstrate Our Value to Our Community?

3.1 Promote a Positive Agency Reputation within the Community

Supporting Objectives

- Explore a “Fire Ops 101” program for interested community leaders and media
- Review and update Department website quarterly
- Provide public speaking/presentation to community groups
- Explore a customer/patient satisfaction survey program
- Develop a list of community stakeholders for future strategic planning efforts
- Develop a community engagement plan
- Explore expanding social media outreach strategy
- Facilitate an annual Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) that centers on all-risk, all-hazards training courses
- Hold bi-annual open house events when feasible. (i.e., pancake breakfast, happy birthday event for the fire district)

3.2 Mitigate Fire Related Damage to Allow Occupants to Remain in the Impacted Structure after Suppression Operations

Outcome Measurements

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 80 percent of the time (City)

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 70 percent of the time (Rural)

Save at least 80% of the value of property and contents threatened by fire (values saved versus values lost, including exposures)

Prevent displacement for 95% of occupants impacted by fire (occupants return to home within 24 hours of fire)

Supporting Objectives

- Measure and report growth rate First suppression unit arrival at structure fires, hazardous material releases, and other crisis incidents requiring the use of personal protective equipment within 8 minutes, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, 911 verification of address at VREC to unit arrival)
- Ensure emergency 911 calls for service are processed within 90 seconds, 90 percent of the time (VREC - alarm handling)
- Turnout time for fire/rescue calls within 1 minute and 50 seconds, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, unit alert to wheels rolling)
- Measure and report growth rate of structure fire instances in comparison to annual population growth rate (percent of structure fires lower than the percentage of the population growth year over year)
- Inspect 100% of all commercial fire protection systems annually
- Inspect 100% of high-risk occupancies annually
- Inspect 100% of State mandated occupancies annually
- Inspect 99% of moderate and low-risk occupancies annually
- Prepare for the 2018 Fire Code update
- Develop a Standards of Cover document

3.3 Provide Downward Pressure on Fire Insurance Costs within the Community

Outcome Measurements

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 80 percent of the time (City)

Contain structure fires to the room of origin 70 percent of the time (Rural)

Maintain or improve current Insurance Services Office protection ratings for the City and District

Supporting Objectives

- First suppression unit arrival at structure fires, hazardous material releases, and other crisis incidents requiring the use of personal protective equipment within 8 minutes, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, 911 verification of address at VREC to unit arrival)
- Ensure emergency 911 calls for service are processed within 90 seconds, 90 percent of the time (VREC - alarm handling)
- Turnout time for fire/rescue calls within 1 minute and 50 seconds, 90 percent of the time (emergency calls, unit alert to wheels rolling)
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- Inspect 100% of all commercial fire protection systems annually
- Inspect 100% of high-risk occupancies annually
- Inspect 100% of State mandated occupancies annually
- Inspect 99% of moderate and low-risk occupancies annually
- Prepare for the 2018 Fire Code update
- Keep annual Unit Hour Utilization percentage below 30% for all units (annually)
- Develop a Standards of Cover document
- Identify cost-efficient measures to improve or maintain ISO protection classes
- Review ISO rating process in September 2024

3.4 Provide Value to the Community Beyond the 911 Call

Outcome Measurements

Maintain or improve current Insurance Services Office protection ratings for the City and District

Supporting Objectives

- Provide fire safety education in all elementary schools and develop a junior safety group
- Partner with the High School to provide HS students community service opportunities at the fire stations
- Partner with local community colleges to provide fire trainee opportunities, especially with fire prevention efforts
- Recruit new employees from the local community
- Develop a CERT cadre
- Identify cost-efficient measures to improve or maintain ISO protection classes
- Review ISO rating process in September 2024