

Final

Albemarle County Fire Rescue System

***STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN
September 2013 through August 2016***

*Developed by the Albemarle County Fire Rescue's Strategic Planning Team
Prepared by Strumpf Associates: Center for Strategic Change*

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INTRODUCTION

◆ *“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday’s logic.”— Peter Drucker*

Throughout the first half of 2012, the Albemarle County Fire Rescue System developed a new strategic approach for the next three years. This strategic long-range plan is not intended as a substitute for an operating plan. It does not detail all the initiatives, programs, and activities the organization will undertake in the course of serving its customers, nor can it foresee changes to the underlying assumptions on which key strategic choices were based. Instead, the strategic plan identifies challenges the System is facing and what it must be doing in the future to be successful. This plan is forward thinking and inclusive of stretch goals where work will begin on resource development and implementation. Consequently, the strategic plan implies change--doing new things or doing more or less of current activities to ensure successful and sustainable outcomes.

The greatest obligation of the Albemarle County Fire Rescue System is emergency preparedness and response. Continually, we implement programs, activities and services premised in emergency response. Activities related to fire prevention, training, safety, maintenance, communications, support services and human resources comprise the strategic approach to the overall organizational priorities and emerging trends. There are several trends emerging nationally in the field of fire rescue services.

The National Agenda

- Defining the place of fire rescue services in homeland security as well as the financial future of local systems.

Emerging and Changing Demographic Trends

- The changing demographics of the United States provide emerging opportunities for the fire protection community to market itself to minorities for entrance into the profession. This does not just mean firefighters. It means fire protection engineers and public safety prevention and education professionals.

Comprehensive Fire and Life Safety Prevention and Education

- The emergence of comprehensive fire and public safety prevention and education continues.

The Emergence of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management

- The emergence of disaster preparedness and emergency management as a key area of influence for the fire and life safety agencies is growing.

Public Understanding of What Elements and Measurements Constitute the Quality Standards of a Fire and Life Safety Department

- The growth and reinforcement of quality standards as the bellwether of public and private industry's acknowledgment of what makes a great and responsive fire and rescue department¹.

¹ Adapted from an article in Firehouse Magazine by Ron Moore.
Three Year Strategic Plan
August 2012 Final

These trends are nothing new. They have been growing and evolving over the last five years. The question is how the fire and emergency services will create specific action-plans organizationally and individually to strengthen itself to contribute more effectively to our local communities and our society.

Through this planning process we analyzed the possible impacts of these trends, data related to our own performance, and citizen input. Our analysis led us to the conclusion that we need to increase the consistency and quality of our service delivery by setting delivery standards in a variety of areas that effect systems and processes; increase our ability to recruit and develop our workforce; continue to find innovative ways to work with the community to reduce risk factors; and continue to build a strong, coordinated, and comprehensive system of volunteers and paid employees.

The goals and strategies identified in this plan are meant to ensure our ability to:

- ensure that the system's services and programs are robust, rigorous, deliver quality training, and are linked to community growth,
- ensure that our system has a voice in setting the national agenda,
- ensure that the system is sustainable into the future.

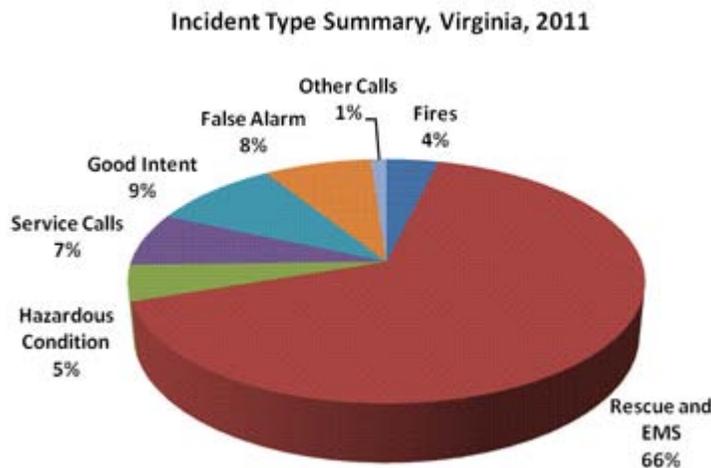
This plan and set of strategic goals and strategies are meant to become the methodology for the system's operations. If it is successful, this process will not have yielded a plan to be placed on the shelf, but will have served as a catalyst for the process of planning strategically at all times and at all levels throughout the organization. The five initiatives in this plan have been thoughtfully established to enhance the service levels commensurate with all hazards within the jurisdictional scope and authority set forth in the Albemarle County Code, Chapter 6: Fire Protection, Article I: Coordinated Fire And Rescue System.

This strategic long-range plan represents a compass the organization will use to guide its work over the next three years. Each year of its life, the plan will be updated based on experience or new circumstances or as new opportunities or challenges emerge. It is our hope that this plan captures the new environment expected to exist in a rapidly evolving world. We are committed to making this investment in our collective future.

NATIONAL AND LOCAL DATA SNAPSHOTS

Our commitment is to anticipate, understand and meet or exceed the expectations of our internal and external customers. The Albemarle County Fire Rescue Strategic Planning Team initiated an Environmental Scan which involved conducting a comprehensive review of the constantly changing operating environment. This review yielded trends, clues, and indications of events, or factors, that could impact the successful execution of our Strategic Plan. Collectively, the Planning Team pooled their knowledge of external trends at the Federal, State, Regional, and Local Area levels in addition to their observations and experiences within the organization to identify strategic challenges the System is likely to face over the next three years. From these challenges evolved the strategic goals that set our direction over the next three years. Below are some of the data “snapshots” the team used to identify trends and challenges.

- In 2009², Virginia’s fire death rate was 9.4 deaths per million population compared to the national fire death rate of 11.0 deaths per million population.
- **2011 VFIRS Data Quick Facts***



- Fire departments in Virginia responded to an average of **1,875** incidents per day in 2011; one incident occurred every **46 seconds**.
- Rescue and EMS calls accounted for **66%** or two-thirds of the total incidents in Virginia in 2011; fires only made up **4%** of the calls.
- The total fire dollar loss associated with fires in Virginia in 2011 was **\$239 million**.
- One civilian was killed or injured by fire in Virginia every **16 hours** in 2011.³
- On a per capita basis, fire death rates are declining, partially due to an increase in the U.S. population and an overall decline in the numbers of reported fires and fire deaths. In the case of fire deaths, fire death rates are measured by deaths per million population. Trends in fire death rates are computed to show how the rates have changed over time by smoothing fluctuations or variations in the data from year-to-year. Overall, the 10-year trend in the fire death rate per million population decreased 20 percent from 2000-2009⁴.
- Findings from a new report from the U.S Fire Administration, *Civilian Fire Injuries in Residential Buildings* (2008-2010) include:

² U.S Fire Administration, FEMA

³ Virginia Department of Fire Programs

⁴ U.S. Fire Administration, Trend in Overall Fire Death Rates (2000-2009)

- Seventy-six percent of all civilian fire injuries occurred as a result of fires in residential buildings.
- Cooking (30 percent) was the primary cause for residential building fires that resulted in injuries.
- Thirty-five percent of civilian fire injuries in residential buildings resulted from trying to control a fire followed by attempting to escape (26 percent).
- Seventy-nine percent of injuries resulting from residential building fires involved smoke inhalation and thermal burns.
- The leading human factor contributing to injuries in residential building fires was being asleep (55 percent).
- Bedrooms (35 percent) were the leading location where civilian injuries occurred in residential building fires
- In 2010, there were **1,331,500 fires** reported in the United States. These fires caused 3,120 civilian deaths, 17,720 civilian injuries, and \$11.6 billion in property damage.
 - 482,000 were structure fires, causing 2,755 civilian deaths, 15,420 civilian injuries, and \$9.7 billion in property damage.
 - 215,500 were vehicle fires, causing 310 civilian fire deaths, 1,590 civilian fire injuries, and \$1.4 billion in property damage.
 - 634,000 were outside and other fires, causing 55 civilian fire deaths, 710 civilian fire injuries, and \$501 million in property damage⁵.

The 2010 U.S. Fire Loss Clock

- A fire department responded to a fire every 24 seconds.
- One structure fire was reported every 65 seconds.
- One home structure fire was reported every 85 seconds
- One civilian fire injury was reported every 30 minutes.
- One civilian fire death occurred every 2 hours and 49 minutes.
- One outside fire was reported every 50 seconds.
- One vehicle fire was reported every 146 seconds⁶.

Emergency Workforce

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects that an additional 69,000 EMS workers will be needed by the year 2014, taking separation and replacement of workers into account. Given that BLS data excludes volunteers, it is likely that this is an underestimate of future workforce demand, particularly in rural areas.⁷
- Census data indicates an aging population, which will result in increased demand for services. The pool of younger people, a traditional recruitment pool for EMS, is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Targeted recruitment of racial and ethnic minorities is needed for an EMS workforce that is both large enough and diverse enough to meet the population's needs⁸.

Over thirty individuals participated in focus groups as part of the environmental scan. Focus group participants included volunteers, various county department employees, and citizens. Analysis of information from the focus groups and some of the statistics identified above, the Team identified the following challenges as priorities to drive the work of strategy development.

- Managing and maintaining standards with regard to regulatory requirements, certification, training needed, and advocacy to influence standards setting processes.

⁵ National Fire Protection Association

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ EMS Workforce for the 21st Century: A National Assessment , Final Report, June 2008, National Traffic Highway Safety Administration

⁸ Ibid.

- Membership of both career and volunteers; retention and recruitment, and changing demographics of the organization's workforce.
- The need to become more systems oriented:
 - System demands increase time demands on volunteer leadership
 - Support of the volunteer system
 - Balance between system needs and autonomy.
- Increasing demands for service:
 - Internal expectations
 - Risk management (high risk construction; zoning)
 - EMS preventative care
 - Changing community demographics
 - Urbanization of rural areas
 - Keeping pace with population growth.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

- VISION:** We envision a community where well being is promoted and the quality of life for our citizens is continuously enriched.
- MISSION:** We will provide the highest quality of services to protect and enhance the lives, property, and environment of our community.
- VALUE PROPOSITION:** Our value creation system of volunteers and career employees contributes to the safety and security of our community and exponentially expands our ability to limit risk in the community.
- CUSTOMERS:** Our *primary external customers* are those who receive services delivered by the Albemarle County Fire Rescue System
- Our *internal customers* are all system personnel - career and volunteer
- ROLE:** The System will play several roles in furtherance of our vision and mission:
- We will be **stewards** of the public's trust in our services.
 - We will **foster partnerships** throughout the system between volunteers and career employees and with our stakeholders to meet their needs at the highest level of proficiency and quality.
 - We will **strategically invest** in innovation.

**ORGANIZATIONAL
CORE VALUES**

Our Common Values:

We believe in the following shared principles, beliefs and priorities....

INTEGRITY We believe in honesty and doing the right thing for our customers and always honoring our commitments.

INNOVATION We believe in embracing on-going innovation, creativity, and change for achieving continuous improvement and results in our jobs, our organization, and our community.

STEWARDSHIP We believe in our role as stewards of the public trust and responsible management of all the county's human, environmental, and financial resources.

LEARNING We believe in ongoing learning and improvement of our community, our personnel, and our organization.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal One: Improve relations among systems partners (e.g., Career and volunteer, station to station, county, etc)

Key Strategies:

- 1.1 Establish and implement effective 2-way communication methods
- 1.2 Establish a newsletter to be published monthly
- 1.3 Create a common 'new employee/volunteer' orientation process
- 1.4 Establish a sense of community throughout the system through regular and ongoing social/recreational activities
- 1.5 Deliver joint training
- 1.6 Establish and deploy internal customer service standards.

Goal Two: Establish and implement consistent and accurate data collection and analysis systems to drive performance

Key Strategies:

- 2.1 Develop and implement centralized, user friendly methods to reduce redundancies in data collection and to capture essential data that is used to drive performance
- 2.2 Establish key performance indicators
- 2.3 Educate the system on the value of a common data system
- 2.4 Train individuals on how to use and ensure ongoing and appropriate usage.

Goal Three: Establish and begin to implement common standards across the system

Key Strategies:

- 3.1 Establish a process to identify standards in the following areas:
 - Standards for response
 - Standards for comprehensive trainings
 - Standards for optimization of resources
 - Standards for coverage
 - Standards for maintaining facilities and equipment
- 3.2 Set standards in stages by taking one area at a time and for each take the following steps:
 - Examine standards currently utilized
 - Examine existing data to evaluate current performance against the standards
 - Collect additional data required to help define standards
 - Benchmark against other areas
 - Gather internal and external feedback on the potential standards
 - Set standards
 - Develop an implementation plan
 - Deploy
 - Measure process of implementation and effectiveness
- 3.3 Develop a process, methods, systems, and procedures required to assist the system in attaining the standards.

Goal Four: Ensure methods are in place for community risk reduction

Key Strategies:

- 4.1 Use data to define the risk in the community (e.g., HVA)
- 4.2 Conduct community meetings to gather citizen and stakeholder input on risk factors in the community
- 4.3 Identify strategies to reduce risk in the identified areas
- 4.4 Conduct a campaign in the community that promotes the reduction of risky activities.

Goal Five: Improve methods to recruit, develop and retain both volunteer and career staff.

Key Strategies:

- 5.1 Sustain a county-wide recruitment campaign
- 5.2 Develop an incentive plan to attract and retain volunteers
- 5.3 Create professional development opportunities for individuals working in the System
- 5.4 Develop and implement a succession plan for system wide leadership positions
- 5.5 Map career pathways for each station.
- 5.6 Develop a system to implement the training standards identified in Goal 2.

OUR OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The following principles define the way the System operates with regard to the goals and strategies identified. The core processes employed by the organizational system to accomplish the goals will operate in the following fashion.

- We strive to balance system-wide consistency in areas that matter for the citizens of the county and a level of individuality within the system.
- We seek to collaborate and to build strategic alliances around all of the goals, strategies and tasks we are engaged in.
- We seek to collaborate and engage stakeholders systemically in all service approaches.
- We will continuously ensure our strategies meet changing needs and expectations of our customers and the community.
- We will use data-driven decision-making approaches in all systems and processes.
- We deliver service excellence through all our products, processes and services.
- We work continuously to strengthen organizational effectiveness and to build capacity through a systems approach to our processes and practices.
- We use technology to its fullest extent to reduce redundancies and to increase efficiency.
- We seek to stretch beyond our reach.

DESIRED OUTCOMES OF THE STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

As a result of Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 at the end of three years the Albemarle County Fire Rescue System will:

MEASURE: Increase and sustain customer satisfaction.

Indicator: X% of each customer group reports being satisfied with FR services.

Data Collection

Method: County Climate Survey administered every 18 months

MEASURE: Reduce the turnover rate of both career employees and volunteers

Indicator: Reduce the number of career employees and volunteers that leave the System by X% over the 3 year period

Data Collection

Method: Tracking system of the number of career employees and released volunteers that leave the Albemarle County System.

MEASURE: Increase the number of enrollees into officer development programs.

Indicator: Increase the number by X% over the 3 year period

Data Collection

Method: Tracking system of the number of enrollees and comparing the increase from year to year.

MEASURE: Increase the number of volunteers recruited and trained.

Indicator: Increase the number by X% over the three year period

Data Collection

Method: Tracking system of the number of volunteers recruited and trained system-wide and comparing the increase from year to year.

MEASURE: Continuously release volunteers to keep up with demand.

Indicator: Release X% of volunteers every 12 months.

Data Collection

Method: Tracking system of the number of volunteers released each year.