

DURHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN REPORT

April 2001

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Fire Chief**

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past three years, the Durham Fire Department has been in a constant state of change. This change was initiated by a new administration of the Fire Department. Change is difficult for everyone involved but it is necessary to improve our members and our services. A fire department that does not change becomes stagnant, lowers morale and stifles employees.

The goal of this document is to design a strategic plan, which maps out the future direction of the fire department in identifying services and needs of our community. We must identify the type of environment we operate in and determine how we are to achieve our goals and objectives collectively as a team, ensuring the welfare of the customers we serve.

Planning is a continuous process. The challenge we face is to educate our members and the public on why the change is necessary and involve our members and the community in embracing and implementing the change. The key is to incorporate change methodically with true purpose, planning and especially with foresight.

It is our goal within the Durham Fire Department to create an organization that is receptive to change. The fire service must develop into a proactive agency rather than a reactive one. If we do not maintain ourselves on the leading edge, we will fall off into obscurity. We want to create the type of environment where our members thrive on the future possibilities change provides.

The following report will illustrate the strategic plan for the Durham Fire Department. Input into this plan was solicited from all of our members. The ultimate goal is to make this organization the best it can be. We thank everyone who was involved in developing this plan for our future.

MISSION STATEMENT

We, the Durham Fire Department, are an organization of dedicated professionals whose mission is to: Save Lives, Protect Property, Protect the Environment, Provide the Best Services Possible to the Community and Be Nice.

VALUES STATEMENT

We expect high moral and ethical behavior from our members.

We strive to be an exemplary organization based on integrity, teamwork and caring.

Our personnel are our most valuable assets. We must take care of them physically and mentally.

Family issues are a priority.

Customer satisfaction is one of top priorities.

We will utilize all of our resources to provide the finest service to our community.

Keep your sense of humor, work should be fun.

Be nice to everyone we do business with.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following generic goals are designed to form the path on how we will operate, conduct our daily roles, and assist in future planning. These goals were developed to assist us in meeting our mission. These goals are followed by measurable and attainable objectives. Our goals and objectives fall into 6 major categories within the department.

Administration Goal:

To improve the Administrative functions of the fire department through planning, record keeping, resource allocation, budgeting and new technology.

Operations Goal:

To develop a comprehensive Operations program in fire, rescue and emergency medical services designed to ensure a high level of readiness through staffing levels, apparatus, facilities, personnel preparation and planning.

Fire Prevention Goal:

To protect lives and property of the public and emergency personnel through the use of code enforcement, public education, plans review and fire cause determination.

Training Goal:

To develop and implement a Fire Department Training Program to ensure highly trained, efficient and technical expertise for Durham Fire personnel, with an emphasis on safety.

Safety Goal:

To develop an occupational health and safety program, which creates a safe work environment in accordance with NFPA 1500 (Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program).

Facilities Goal:

To maintain and upgrade the existing fire station to meet fire and life safety standards and to create a comfortable and functional work environment for the members of the department. To plan for a future location and design for a new fire station and substation.

TOWN OF DURHAM MASTER PLAN 2000

The Town of Durham initiated the process of updating the 1989 Master plan in 1998. The Planning Board with the support of the Durham Town Council appointed a steering committee of interested citizens to coordinate the process. Subcommittees were formed and the Planning Board adopted the final document in September of 2000. Many citizens as well as Town Staff sat on committees and gave input into this important document.

Accordingly, the Durham Fire Department Strategic Plan incorporates applicable portions of the Town's Master Plan. However, the Durham Fire Department's Strategic Plan is specific to the fire department and entails more detail. Specific components of the Town's Master Plan which involve the fire department are: 1) a safety complex under the Sense of Community and Town Facility chapter and; 2) a detailed overview and history of the fire department in the Public Utilities and Services chapter.

These sections deal with current response trends, merger of the fire department with the volunteer ambulance corps and facility needs. Many of the recommendations can and will be accomplished within the next few years. The fire department is presently reviewing the proposed sites for a new fire station as well as the facility needs for a fire station, which will service the community for many decades to come.

1 - 5 YEAR PLAN

Administration

Define levels of services provided to the community.

Determine public expectations through community outreach programs. (mtgs surveys).

Maintain the utilization of UNH work-study students and increase work-study hours to sixteen per week.

Draft proposal for full-time secretary position.

Research and reformulate the apparatus replacement program.

Develop a National Fire Protection Association Standard 1500 (Occupational Health and Safety Programs for the Fire Service) implementation program.

Implement steps and practices to improve internal communications and relations.

Work with the Town Master Plan to address identified recommendations for facilities, apparatus and services.

Submit an action plan to reduce the Towns insurance rating.

Conduct a Risk Assessment of the Durham/UNH community.

Evaluate the fees assessed by the fire department and update if necessary.

Evaluate and make necessary changes to the employee evaluation process.

Develop public fire safety broadcasts on local cable.

Evaluate the criteria to become an accredited department.

Assist the Town and UNH in determining emergency management needs for the community.

Operations

Add one firefighter per shift to reach six person shifts.

Maintain a state of readiness of personnel, apparatus and equipment.

Develop a uniform set of emergency response procedures.

Work towards completing operations portions of National Fire Protection Association Standard 1500 (Occupational Health and Safety Programs for the Fire Service) to ensure the highest level of safety for fire department personnel.

Develop the guidelines to meet the draft National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710 (Standards for Operations of Full-time fire department organizations).

Evaluate and refine the apparatus and equipment preventive maintenance programs.

Research and plan for the addition of one firefighter per shift to bring shift staffing to one captain and five firefighters.

Evaluate and prepare all resources to deal with better environmental protection and natural disasters.

Outfit all first response apparatus with advanced life support equipment.

Seek to provide paramedic coverage twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Place a defibrillator on all Fire Department vehicles.

Re-evaluate Durham Fire Department/Durham Ambulance Corps merger.

Fire Prevention

Implement the NFPA Risk Watch injury prevention program in the Oyster River Cooperative School District.

Implement the National Fire Protection Association Remembering When educational program for our senior population.

Research and develop a residential sprinkler plan for providing automatic sprinkler protection in all residential occupancies.

Re-visit the consolidation of the Building and Health department under the fire department.

Develop and implement a company inspector/investigator program.

Incorporate a work-study student to assist in fire prevention.

Develop and implement a residential rental property inspection/licensing program.

Develop an Arson task Force with local police agencies.

Use local cable for public education.

Develop plan to inspect all buildings once per year.

Training

Designate an assistant in Training and Safety to assist the Training/Safety Captain with scheduling, Call Firefighter training, updating training bulletins and to train the shifts on a daily basis.

Increase funding to forty-eight (48) hours per year, per member of department wide training.

Train one member per shift to the Technician level of rescue training to assist in these types of emergency situations.

Utilize the NH Fire Academy drill yard for shift training.

Conduct a mutual aid training drill on an annual basis.

Budget for a two-week orientation period for new firefighters.

Have all officers attain NH Fire Academy Fire Officer II level.

Safety

Complete the evaluation and schedule the adoption of the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1500 (Occupational Health and Safety Programs for the Fire Service)

Develop and adopt a risk management plan under the purview of the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1500 (Occupational Health and Safety Programs for the Fire Service)

Develop and implement a health, wellness and fitness program for the department to improve our overall strength and abilities.

Develop policies and procedures for safety issues within the department.

Ensure all policies and procedures incorporate safety and health within them.

Assist with facilities issues with safety and health in mind.

Develop a plan to reduce injuries and illness within the department.

Train members in vehicle accident prevention.

Implement an annual physical ability examination process.

Change hiring practices to hire non-smokers with a certain level of fitness standard.

Facilities

Complete the process of updating offices with new furniture to enhance the work environment.

Create an area within the station for better decontamination of personnel and equipment.

Provide central climate control for the station.

Utilize the Town Master Plan to identify a suitable site for a new fire station.

Initiate the planning process and committee necessary to assist designing a new fire station.

Construct storage shelving in the rear of the apparatus bays to reduce overcrowded conditions.

Continue on a maintenance schedule with UNH to maintain the appearance of the fire station.

Continue to upgrade the station for use as the community's emergency operations center.

5 – 10 YEAR PLAN

Administration

Start accreditation process.

Full-time secretary to assist the Administrative Assistant and coordinate the work study student(s).

Overhaul computers and MIS systems. Integrate more fully with Town/UNH entities.

Explore regionalization of fire services in the seacoast/Strafford County area.

Re-examine strategic plan for sub-station location.

Examine all jobs with job descriptions and consider re-titling those, which need it.

Evaluate response data and develop ways to reduce needless responses.

Update technology to provide better customer services

Operations

Add one firefighter per shift to reach seven person shifts.

Conduct community outreach programs. (Flu shots, pub-ed, visits to elderly units)

Merge Durham Fire Department and Durham Ambulance Corps.

Half-time Emergency Medical Service Coordinator, full-time if merged with the Durham Ambulance Corps

Full-time Maintenance Coordinator &/or Mechanic.

Increase services to cover disaster management.

Increase services to cover water rescue in tidal waters.

Work towards compliance of the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710 (Standards for Operations of Full-time fire department organizations)..

Review DFD operations during large events. Consider EMS bike patrols.

Fire Prevention

Increase minimum educational requirement for Fire Marshal to a Bachelors Degree.

Re-classify the Fire Inspector to Assistant Fire Marshal, commensurate with job duties.

Increase minimum educational requirement for Assistant Fire Marshal to an Associates Degree.

Add a second staff car to the FPB.

Develop a fire protection rehabilitation schedule for all Town and University buildings.

Merge Building and Health office under the Fire Prevention Bureau. Rename the bureau.

Develop a residential sprinkler plan.

Run fire safety programs, canned and live on local cable.

Training

Increase department wide training to sixty (60) hours per member, per year.

Explore with UNH offering Fire Science courses through the Thompson School with additional courses offered towards Bachelors degrees and above.

Run NH Fire Academy courses in Durham on a regular basis.

Train personnel and budget for them to participate in western forest fire details to enhance their knowledge of forest fire fighting and incident command.

Conduct mutual aid drills on rescue situations specific to Durham.

Increase probationary firefighter orientation to four weeks.

Consult new fire station committee in incorporating training facilities into the new structure and site.

Train personnel for new programs offered by the fire department. (rescue in tidal waters, dealing with natural disasters.)

Safety

Mandatory annual physical ability test for all personnel.

Continue efforts towards NFPA 1500 completion.

Negotiate use of UNH health/wellness facilities use for DFD members.

Half-time Assistant Training/Safety Officer.

Facilities

Purchase site for new fire station.

Organize committee for developing criteria for new fire station.

Develop a request for purchase for architectural/engineering services for a new fire station.

Continue to maintain and upgrade existing station.

Review local space alternatives for expansion of existing fire station. (added staff, classroom, fitness room, offices)

Start process to finalize sites for future substation.

10 – 15 YEAR PLAN

Administration

Propose Assistant to the Fire Chief position.

Update community risk management plan.

Re-examine services provided to the community.

Update Fire Department Strategic Plan.

Continue to evaluate response data and develop goals to reduce needless responses.

Continue to evaluate alternative funding sources for Fire Department operations.

Evaluate accreditation status and make necessary upgrades.

Assist in regionalization of area departments

Operations

Add one firefighter per shift to reach eight person shifts.

Incorporate a Lieutenants position on shift.

Update the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1710 (Standards for Operations of Full-time fire department organizations) implementation plan.

Develop criteria for multi-station response.

Develop job description and training program for lieutenants' position.

Merged Fire/Rescue/EMS department with three transport ambulances.

Add urban search and rescue to Durham Fire Department's operational mission.

Continue community outreach programs.

Fire Prevention

Evaluate the need for a fire protection engineer on staff.

Create a position to oversee the combined fire prevention, engineering, building and health department.

Add a third staff car to fire prevention.

Regionalization of fire prevention services with smaller adjacent communities.

Training

Conduct combined training at the NH Fire Academy with mutual aid towns.

Incorporate line officers into the seacoast Incident Command System.

Update minimum qualifications for any member of the department to Bachelors degree in a related field.

Train officers/members in a specific rescue discipline to be used as a team leader.

Conduct a needs assessment and site evaluation for Durham Fire Department Training facility.

Safety

Add part-time fitness coordinator to staff.

Develop use of new technology to eliminate firefighter injuries. Include the use of robotics.

Update the National Fire Protection Association Standard 1500 (Occupational Health and Safety Programs for the Fire Service) program.

Facilities

Identify site for sub station and propose funding source for sub station site in the capital improvement plan.

Organize committee for development of building needs for sub station.

Work with Training Division on site location and needs for a training facility.

FIRE CHIEF SUMMARY

Trying to predict the future is difficult and challenging. Now that we have a strategic plan, one could say that we are done for a while. Not true. We are only just beginning. The strategic plan is a living document, which evolves as the department evolves. Our fire department must continue to change as the needs of the community change. Although we are in good economic times, the taxpayer continues to front the majority cost of municipal services.

Our fire and emergency activity remains consistent. With the predicted growth of the Town and University, calls for service will increase. We will continue to provide high quality services to our customers while seeking out new funding sources and operating as efficiently as possible. Our employees continue to meet the increased demands placed upon them by myself, and the community. They do so without asking for praise. They do so because they are dedicated to the mission of the Durham Fire Department.

I have a vision of what the Durham Fire Department can be to this community. The Durham Fire Department will continue to provide the best- trained fire, rescue and emergency medical force with the funding provided to us. We will continue to pursue the goals within this document. Along with that comes a price. We will pursue these improvements through the proper format of annual operating budgets, capital improvement plans and the Town's Master Plan, all with appropriate justification.

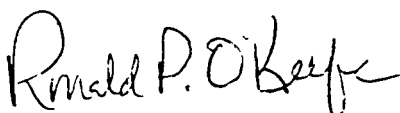
A major part of a Fire Chief's job is to identify significant issues and trends. The next step is to plan and make recommendations to the Town Administrator and Town Council explaining the level of risk associated with each issue. The last step in this process is to secure the resources to deal with these issues, knowing that the Town's administration has the final say as to the levels of service the community can afford.

The purpose of this plan is to identify the needs of the organization and outline a process on how to meet these needs. This strategic plan blends with the Town's Master Plan and creates the road map for the department to follow. It has given us the opportunity to reflect upon ourselves and the services, which we provide. We know and understand the issues that we face. We also realize that we are but one piece of the overall pie, which comprises the Town of Durham.

It is now our duty to educate the community on the future needs of the Durham Fire Department. Our intent is to improve the quality of services in which we provide to our community. We hope that this document has provided the reader with an understanding of the Durham Fire Department and how we intend to look to our future. We look forward to a more stable leadership from the Town's administration. We will continue to develop productive and professional relationships with Town and University departments. We look forward to continued positive and supporting relationships with future Town Councils and administrators. I would like to personally thank the community for its continued support of the Durham Fire Department and myself.

I as Fire Chief, hold the members of the Durham Fire Department in the highest regard. Their performance, attitude and energy are what make this department what it is. They are the true reason why we have such an outstanding organization. What they accomplish on a daily basis does not go unnoticed by this administration or the public. We as an organization must inform the community of the resources necessary to achieve our mission. We must have the courage to publicly defend the needs of the department in a positive manner. This plan is the first step along this path.

Respectfully submitted;

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald P. O'Keefe". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ronald P. O'Keefe
Chief of Department