



SNOHOMISH COUNTY FIRE DISTRICT SEVEN

2015 - 2017 STRATEGIC PLAN

We are pleased to present our Fire District 7 Strategic Plan for 2015-2017. One of the goals set as a priority was to conduct a straightforward and realistic internal and external evaluation of the organization. This would serve to provide us with a template from which we could improve our operations while maintaining the exceptional standards of service that our residents and visitors come to expect. Not only does this plan set our course for the next several years, the process behind it served as an important opportunity to consider why are we here, where are we going and how we are going to get there.

In order to provide the comprehensive emergency services to our community, Fire District 7 must proactively respond to changes, solve problems, collaborate on issues, assess the needs of the community, and develop viable solutions. To accomplish this goal our organization developed the following Strategic Planning document. This report is designed to provide the organization, the community, and Fire District 7 governance with a living, breathing three year planning document capable of being evaluated, reviewed, and refined on an annual basis dependent on our ability to meet the objectives listed in the plan.

This is not a document that will sit on a shelf. This is the plan we will live by; it will set our policy direction, drive our budget and guide our operational decision-making for the next three years. It is a known fact that fire and EMS services continue to change on a daily basis. With the dynamic nature of the environment, community demands and current economic conditions require fire departments to assume a preemptive stance in planning short, medium, and long term organizational goals. This plan will help us move from being reactive to proactive. It will help us be more adaptive and innovative in these changing times, build more effective regional partnerships, and ultimately provide better service to our community.

However, our work is far from finished. While the plan establishes a path that will lead us where we want to go, it is up to us to chart that path. It will require us to be steadfast and unwavering on our course. We will need to make hard decisions, embrace change and even let go of some things that we care about. We will need to learn what works and what needs to be improved, so that the plan will remain relevant and continue to provide direction in changing times.

This document represents a commitment - on the part of the operational leadership, the commission and union leaders - to the future of the department. As an organization we stand committed to accepting the challenge of cultivating these strategic goals into reality, enhancing the services we offer our community, and meeting our future vision.

Chief Gary Meek - Fire Commissioners - Union Leadership

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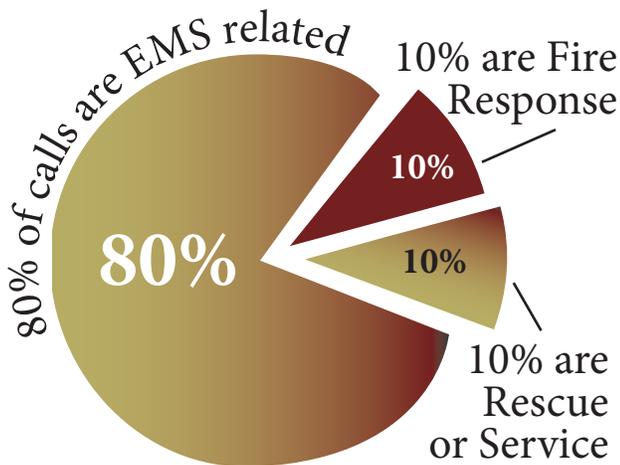


ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

ABOUT US

Snohomish County Fire District 7 provides fire protection and emergency medical services for the community in a cost efficient and effective manner. The Fire District responds to approximately 6,000 incidents annually with nearly eighty percent (80%) of those relating to emergency medical services. Sixty percent (60%) of these emergency medical incidents utilize Basic Life Support (BLS) providers who are certified Emergency Medical Technicians. The remaining emergency medical incidents require an Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider when a patient is in a more critical condition and a Paramedic is required to assist in the treatment of the patient before and/or during transport to the emergency facility.

Annual Response . . .



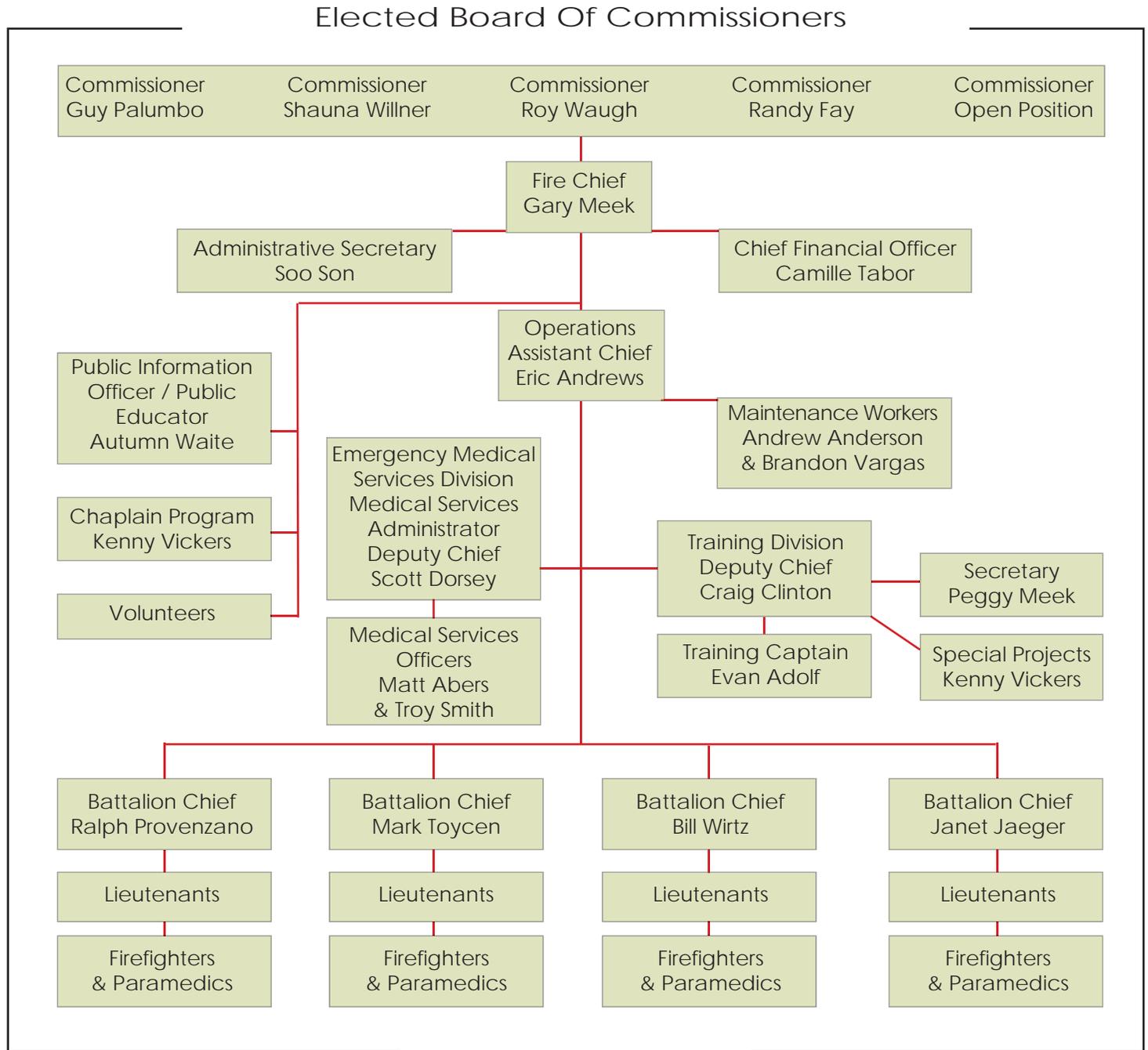
Today, the population of the Fire District is upward of 77,000 residents and growing. We operate out of six fire stations with Station 76 located in and serving the city of Mill Creek under a contract for service. Stations 71 and 72 are located in the heart of the Fire District and operate in the communities of Clearview and Fernwood respectively. The Maltby and Bear Creek communities are a combination of both residential and light industrial neighborhoods that are protected by Stations 73 and 74. In 1998 in an effort to accommodate our continued growth and improve our level of service in the community of Gold Creek, Station 77 was built. The Fire District employs 110 personnel including firefighters, administrative staff and chief officers that are responsible and accountable for delivering service to our community.

Fire District 7 uses a 6 year financial planning model that allows the evaluation of impact from anticipated changes in revenues and expenditures. The planning model helps to inform decision makers on the long range consequences of changes in revenue streams, hiring, and other types of expenditures. Property tax revenues are the Fire District's most significant source of revenue where the bulk of the taxes are received in and around April and October. For more specific information regarding the current operating budget for Fire District 7, please review on the department website: www.firedistrict7.com.



Organizational Structure

Snohomish County Fire District 7 operates under a “Scalar” organizational structure. The Fire District’s authority is centralized at the top with five elected fire commissioners, each serving a term of six years. Decisions are directed down from the top of the structure through intermediate levels (division and company officers) to the base (firefighters). Information in turn is transmitted up from the bottom through the structure to the positions at the top.



OUR VISION, GOALS AND VALUES

OUR VISION, GOALS AND VALUES

VISION

Fire District 7 –

A trusted leader serving the community with a commitment to innovation and improvement.

SLOGAN

Earning Trust through Action

GOALS

- Plan for technology improvements and maintenance to meet the operational needs of the district.
- Develop and expand on existing partnerships to build trust and explore collaborative opportunities.
- Deliver excellent service while focusing on innovation and improvement.
- Exercise sound financial judgment and plan for fiscal sustainability.
- Develop and manage infrastructure to support operations and innovations now and for the future.
- Hire, develop, take care of and promote the best people.
- Build community trust and resilience through education and engagement.

VALUES

Continuous Improvement

- We seek feedback and learn and improve from experience.
- We are willing to take risks and make changes in order to improve service.
- We are committed to doing the work, and continuously improving the way work gets done.

Integrity

- We are open, transparent, and accountable to the public we serve.
- We acknowledge that public trust matters – and strive to be worthy of it.
- We are respectful, effective and humble.
- We do what's right for the right reason.

Teamwork

- We work cooperatively with one another to achieve our goals.
- We strive for open and honest communications and value differing opinions.
- Our managers coach, mentor and develop a strong team culture.

Compassion and Service

- We treat our customers with respect and dignity.
- We appreciate the importance of caring for people in the most challenging of circumstances.
- We are not here for ourselves, but for the community we serve.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

KEY INPUTS

Developed over a period of twelve months, this plan incorporates input from leadership, employees and other key stakeholders to ensure a robust, well-informed set of goals and strategies. Key inputs to the process include:

- Facilitated employee conversations. All employees were invited to participate in facilitated conversations at their station about the strategic plan. The response was considerable, with many employees participating. Key themes from the conversations were instrumental in drafting the values, objectives and strategies in the plan.
- Strategic planning team. A core team of Fire District 7 staff from across the organization, including commissioners, senior leadership and front-line staff met regularly to provide input to the strategic planning process. See below for more information about the strategic planning team's process.

THE CORE PLANNING TEAM

The strategic planning team was at the heart of the planning process. The planning team was responsible for synthesizing information from the various sources, providing organizational insight from their own experiences and expertise, and ultimately brainstorming the objectives and strategies contained within the plan. The planning team participated in the following activities as part of the planning process:

- Development of an updated vision for Fire District 7.
- Review of other strategic plans and identification of desirable plan features.
- Development of planning assumptions.
- Review of organizational values.
- Generation of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis for the organization to confirm the organization's core purpose and identify key issues and opportunities for growth and change.
- Development of objectives and strategies for the plan.

The planning team also provided input into a strong implementation plan that provides for measurement and accountability going forward.



PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

The planning assumptions are current environmental factors or trends over which the fire district has little control and on which everyone agreed. They include demographic factors that could dramatically affect business as well as basic assertions about the state of the district today.

In the future, the district will periodically revisit these planning assumptions. If certain assumptions are no longer true or have dramatically changed, it will be a sign that the district may need to re-examine and revise certain aspects of the strategic plan.

Planning Assumptions:

- 1.** The cost of doing business is only going to increase.
- 2.** While the budget may fluctuate, the fire district must live within its means.
- 3.** Disasters and hazards will continue to affect the world we live in, although their nature and level of complexity may change.
- 4.** Demands for service, primarily in the form of call volumes, will increase. However, the nature of those calls will inevitably change.
- 5.** Annexations are a reality both within the district and surrounding areas and will have an impact on service delivery.
- 6.** The field of emergency medicine will change as a result of broader changes to our health care delivery system.
- 7.** Employees, managers, leadership and commissioners want Fire District 7 to be an exceptional place to work.
- 8.** There will be both career and legislative turnover, as a result of retirements and other factors.
- 9.** The community expects and relies upon Fire District 7's expertise in fire and injury education, prevention and emergency response.
- 10.** Building and maintaining a positive public image will continue to be integral in our success.
- 11.** Technology – in the form of IT, as well as equipment, buildings and infrastructure – is going to change.
- 12.** Cultural diversity in the community will change.
- 13.** The population of the community Fire District 7 serves will increase. However, we will also see even more definition between rural and urban populations.
- 14.** Mergers and consolidations of fire departments will continue to be contemplated as an option.
- 15.** Infrastructure, both in the community and that of the organization, is aging.
- 16.** Attracting and retaining a quality workforce will require new and creative strategies.

Key next steps after the release of the strategic plan will be to engage the community as well as our external customers including the city of Mill Creek, and Brightwater treatment system to (a) make them aware of the strategic direction and commitments of the department, and (b) solicit their feedback on the priorities and goals in the plan. Through the planning process a list of interested stakeholders was compiled, which will serve as the initial basis for conversations.

OBJECTIVES and STRATEGIES

The following objectives and strategies will guide the operations and decision-making for District 7 over the next three years. Objectives and strategies are numbered for ease of reference, not to reflect prioritization.

OBJECTIVE 1:

Plan for technology improvements and maintenance to meet the operational needs of the district.

Strategy 1.1 Pursue regional partnerships for system integration, such as a single source public safety access point system.

Strategy 1.2 Continuously and proactively assess IT system infrastructure from a global, system-wide perspective, and update accordingly.

Strategy 1.3 Create and regularly update standard operating procedures for technology and provide basic training for programs, applications and data use.

Strategy 1.4 Invest in equipment that supports getting the data when you need it.

Strategy 1.5 Proactively look ahead to new software opportunities and evaluate whether or not they could help the department work more efficiently.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Develop new and expand on existing partnerships to build trust and explore collaborative opportunities.

Strategy 2.1 Continue collaborative efforts with other fire districts and departments, contract cities and other customers, such as training partnerships.

Strategy 2.2 Increase the frequency of interactions with local, state and regional partners at all levels, including elected officials, leadership and staff.

Strategy 2.3 Increase awareness of what the department does and why it matters, including new and innovative approaches to community outreach and public engagement.

Strategy 2.4 Build on strong relationships with union partners, ensuring frequent and proactive interactions and clear, transparent communication.

Strategy 2.5 Make investments to actively reach out to other fire departments and organizations to learn about best practices and new ideas.



OBJECTIVES and STRATEGIES

OBJECTIVE 3:

Deliver excellent service while focusing on innovation and improvement.

Strategy 3.1 Develop a plan to redefine the fire department role and the patient experience within the new framework for the Affordable Care Act.

Strategy 3.2 Continuously evaluate deployment models, station locations and response standards to meet the changing needs of our customers and evolving regulations.

Strategy 3.3 Create a framework and methodology to ensure that after each engagement we are asking the question “was the right service provided?”

Strategy 3.4 Ensure that improving service delivery - through training, problem solving and new approaches and tactics – is part of everyone’s job.

Strategy 3.5 Maximize the safety of our own people.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Exercise sound financial judgment and plan for fiscal sustainability.

Strategy 4.1 Continue and codify financial policies for fund balances and reserves to ensure continued sustainability.

Strategy 4.2 Manage the district’s assets and capital investments in a way that maximizes their productivity and value.

Strategy 4.3 Partner with other fire departments and cities to advocate for regional, state and federal resources.

Strategy 4.4 Partner internally on a collaborative budget process to ensure sustainability as well as forward thinking investments.

OBJECTIVE 5:

Develop and manage infrastructure to support operations and innovations now and for the future.

Strategy 5.1 Assess current facilities and create a comprehensive replacement and update plan with specific timelines for remodeling, relocation and expansion.

Strategy 5.2 Implement and regularly evaluate equipment and apparatus replacement plans.

Strategy 5.3 Identify options for a training space, including partnership opportunities.

Strategy 5.4 Incorporate community engagement as part of facilities planning.

OBJECTIVE 6:

Hire, develop, take care of, and promote the best people.

Strategy 6.1 Develop an approach for succession planning to ensure transfer of knowledge and skill development.

Strategy 6.2 Adapt entry-level training to meet the diverse needs and background of the workforce.

Strategy 6.3 Develop and provide resources for internal career development while also seeking talent outside the organization to ensure competition and excellence.

Strategy 6.4 Support comprehensive employee and family health and wellness through dedicated time, accessible equipment, and on-going availability of physical, emotional and mental health services.

OBJECTIVE 7:

Build community trust and resilience through education and engagement.

Strategy 7.1 Implement and maintain conversations with the community on strategic plan objectives and community priorities.

Strategy 7.2 Build relationships at the station-level through events and outreach, and ensure community members have basic information like their primary response station.

Strategy 7.3 Engage the community in preparing for emergencies by providing training and identifying key response resources.



SPONSORSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to begin successfully implementing the strategic plan, Fire District 7 will take the following specific actions:

- Roll the plan out. The strategic plan will be shared with all staff in the district as well as key partners and stakeholders. Administration and supervisors will be expected to discuss the strategic plan with their teams, including its intended purposes, its contents and provide opportunities for all members to ask questions.
- The Fire Chief will continue to regularly communicate about the strategic plan department-wide. Individual objective sponsors will be expected to reach out to staff as they begin working on implementing the plan and communicating and updating their status to the Fire Chief.
- In order to ensure clear lines of accountability the Fire Chief will identify primary sponsors for each objective area who will be responsible for figuring out how to implement the strategies. This could potentially include coming up with more detailed steps, convening employees and stakeholders, and identifying milestones and/or measures to assess progress.
- The Fire Chief will review the strategic plan progress on a quarterly basis, with specific discussion about challenges sponsors are facing and opportunities to engage employees in the process. This includes clear acknowledgement of barriers or problems and a willingness on the part of leadership to help resolve those barriers.
- The strategic planning committee will meet again within one-year of the launch and distribution of the strategic plan. The purpose of this meeting will be to assess how much progress has been made on the strategic plan in the past year, and to assess whether or not certain elements of the plan need to be changed or identify specific places that require additional attention.
- Subsequently, the plan will be reviewed by either the planning committee or the leadership team on an annual basis to ensure that the objectives are still timely and appropriate, and that the planning assumptions still hold true. Major changes either in the environment or to district priorities may be cause to rethink and potentially change components of the strategic plan.
- Strategic plan progress and performance – either through completed strategies or implementation milestones, or performance measures – will be reported on the Snohomish Fire District 7 Annual Report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to express thanks to the many people who provided input into the development of the Snohomish County Fire District 7 Strategic Plan, 2015-2017. This includes the many staff who participated in station meetings and expressed their ideas throughout the process. In particular, we acknowledge the following individuals who guided the planning process:

STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS

- Commissioner Doherty
- Commissioner Fay
- Fire Chief Meek
- Assistant Chief Andrews
- Deputy Chief Clinton
- Deputy Chief Dorsey
- Battalion Chief Provenzano
- Local 38 Representative A. Waite
- Local 2781 President M. McConnell
- Lt. Lundquist
- Lt. Basta
- Lt. DiMonda
- Lt. Fisher
- MSO Smith
- MSO Abers
- Kendall LeVan Hodson



APPENDIX A: SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

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STRENGTHS

- **A motivated workforce that is always striving to do better.**
- **Strong labor management relationships that are characterized by mutual respect and a willingness to compromise.**
- **Excellent operational management, including handling EMS calls and managing fires.**
- An organizational openness to trying new things.
- A family ethic and small organization culture that means taking care of each other.

WEAKNESSES

- **Managing organizational change and implementing change, specifically navigating roadblocks and creating a sense of urgency.**
- **Keeping up with rapidly changing technology to support operations.**
- Ensuring a common consistent message across four shifts and multiple locations, to preclude rumors and mitigate negativity.
- A pattern of reacting to issues as they come up, as opposed to looking forward proactively.
- Having difficult conversations and ensuring accountability across all groups.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Changing markets and an increasing reliance on EMS for primary care may pave the way for department-based clinics.**
- Seeking out partnerships or collaborations with other departments or organizations.
- Increasing growth in the field of community paramedicine.

THREATS

- **Annexations.**
- The potential creation of regional fire authorities that don't include our district.

KEY: Bold = Very top of the priority list



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