



NORTH WHATCOM FIRE AND RESCUE



# STRATEGIC PLAN

FY 2016—2021



I am very pleased to present the North Whatcom Fire and Rescue Strategic Plan for 2016-2021. The Strategic Plan is a key foundational document that serves as a blueprint to build and improve our organization. It is designed to focus our attention and guide our decision making as we continue to transform the District into an agency of exceptional quality and best industry practices. This plan is the result of collaborative effort between all members of our organization and is intended to begin where the previous strategic plan concluded. Information for this plan was gathered in both group settings and individual meetings with employees of the District.

A foundational theme throughout the Strategic Planning Document is the need for developing improved communications and relationships at all levels of the organization. We must forge new and open communication that encourages our internal and external relationships. A cooperative and energized environment that encourages employee feedback and participation is the overriding goal.

The North Whatcom Fire District is a full-service, community-based emergency services provider which is funded through property taxes, ambulance transport revenues, and serves approximately 45,000 residents. The District's 189-square-mile service area includes a diverse blend of suburban, rural, and agricultural communities in Whatcom County. The Fire District proudly serves the communities of Blaine, Birch Bay, and unincorporated Whatcom County.

The Fire District is governed by a Fire Board comprised of five elected commissioners who serve staggered six year terms. The Fire Board appoints the Fire Chief to serve as the Chief Administrator for the Fire District. The Fire Board meets monthly to perform the required fiduciary duties. The Fire Board's continued authorization of resources has enabled District personnel to continue delivery of critical life safety and response functions to serve our communities in preventing loss of property and life, and made numerous improvements and achievements possible. Given the resources, this organization has continually exhibited highly skilled determination and character to meet the needs of our communities. We continue our efforts towards achieving excellence in providing emergent and non-emergent community safety programs.

This plan contains 15 initiatives with goals and objectives that can only be accomplished with the commitment and combined effort of our Employees, Board of Commissioners, Management Team and Union Leadership. I believe this dynamic organization is motivated and encouraged by our significant accomplishments to date and is prepared to move to the future with vigor. I am confident that the members of this great organization will embrace the challenges contained within these pages. We will be successful in seeing this vision through, over the next five years.

*"Semper Paratus"*

William Pernet  
Fire Chief

# Governance & Leadership

## District 21 Board of Commissioners

Rich Bosman, Chairperson

Larry McPhail, Vice Chairperson

Dean Berkeley, Board Member

John Crawford, Board Member

Bruce Ansell, Board Member

## District 4 Board of Commissioners

Harry Andrews, Chairperson

Mary Beth Neal, Vice Chairperson

Steve Ness, Board Member

## Executive Staff

William Pernet, Fire Chief

Henry Hollander, Division Chief—Logistics

## Professional Association

Chuck Shipp

Danny Jensen

# Mission & Ideals

## Who We are (mission statement)

To protect the lives and property of our community through innovation and compassionate care.

## What We Believe In (declaration of our values)

Trust, Integrity, and **A**ccountability form the foundation of North Whatcom Fire & Rescue. Strong **L**eadership brings forward effective **T**eamwork, **C**ommunication, and **R**espect, which are the pillars of our organization. As our capstone we serve with **H**umility and value **L**oyalty and **C**ompassion.

## Want We Want To Be (Vision)

Striving to be an innovative organization we are driven to be a leader in our community and profession, while honoring our values and accomplishing our mission through fiscal responsibility.



# Organizational Pillars

## Building our Future through organizational values

As a representation of our organizational principles and values this diagram includes a foundation, four pillars, and a roof. This is understood as a basic framework for a home or building. It is widely accepted that a home is only as strong as its foundation. This truism applies equally to an organization and reinforces the need to strengthen trust, accountability, and integrity within our organization and the community that we serve.



# Organizational Health

## How are we doing (survey)?

It is widely accepted that a service oriented profession requires a strong internal support structure that is embraced by its members. More simply stated, what happens on the inside (employee assessment) is what we can expect to happen on the outside (service delivery). As part of the strategic planning process the district conducted a S.W.O.T survey. This anonymous survey received a 33% response rate. The survey collected information about our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

**Top results can be found below and addressed throughout the strategic initiatives in this plan.**

## Top Strengths (internal)

Employee Skill, compassionate, knowledgeable, strong core, problem solvers, customer service

## Top Weaknesses (internal)

Volunteer program, recruitment, accountability, communication with leaders—elected officials— chief officers

## Top Opportunities (external)

Mergers, Regional fire authority, EMS Levy, special team development, collaboration with other agencies

## Top Threats (external)

Financial—Budget, rising call volume, potential for lower service levels, loss of personnel to other departments

**When thinking of our vision, goals, objectives and strategies we must ask these questions:**

How can we use each strength?

How can we Improve each Weakness?

How can we Maximize each Opportunity?

How can we Mitigate each Threat?

# Strategic Plan 2016—2021

Following a review of the past strategic plan and survey results the planning group made up of stakeholders from each functional area began to formulate ideas for the future growth, development and direction of North Whatcom Fire Rescue. After identifying the needs of the district the next logical step was to preform a gap analysis; looking at where we are versus where we want to be, and identifying a roadmap to getting there.

The focus of the planning group was to focus on both short and long term goals for the planning period. Accordingly, the key strategic issues that were identified are directed over a five year period.

After a lengthy discussion , The Strategic Planning Group collectively identified the following fourteen key initiatives on which the District will focus its' efforts in 2016—2021:

- Budget
- Communications technology
- Developing relationships with outside agencies
- Equipment, facilities, fleet maintenance
- Leadership, communications
- Organizational structure
- Policies and procedures
- Progressive fire district, culture
- Recruitment, retention, expansion, succession planning
- Regional fire authority, merger, consolidation
- Specialty teams
- Staffing, rising call volumes
- Training
- Volunteer program
- Fire Prevention / Public Education / Community Outreach / Fire Marshal

# Strategic Plan 2016—2021

It was agreed that these strategic issues were all of extreme importance, thus are not intended to be in any priority order. As can be seen in the following associated action plans for each issue, some will be addressed in a shorter time frame, while others may be longer term or ongoing.

It will be appropriate for the groups and the Commissioners to evaluate these issues on an ongoing basis, particularly during the annual budgetary process. Based on the fiscal status of the District, the feasibility of implementation of various components of the key issues will be adjusted as necessary.

This Strategic Plan is created as a general “road map” for the future direction of the North Whatcom Fire & Rescue District. Its’ general effectiveness can be measured by our ability to remain focused on improving our efforts within these key areas, with the overall goal of improved service to the residents and community we serve.

The attached action plan worksheets have been designed by staff to identify the necessary goals and objective for addressing these key strategic issues.





# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Budget

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** To review and revise current fire district budgeting process; investigate new revenue sources, long term forecasting, and tying budget to strategic plan.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Develop budget review process to include budget study sessions with commissioners
- Investigate new revenue sources and financial opportunities and threats
- Forecast future budgeting needs including personnel, capital equipment, and examination of trends.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** B Williams (Chair), W Pernet, R Bosman, H Hollander, D Jenson, E Courage

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Financial support
- Personnel
- Legal consultation

**TIMEFRAME:** August 2016—December 2020

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of new budget review process that incorporates division heads and commissioners; completion of plan to forecast revenue opportunities and threats; completion of a plan that allows for the forecasting of budgetary needs based on analytics.

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Communications Technology

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** To improve internal communications; create a replacement plan for computer hardware; improve fire data management; improvements in radio communication hardware.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Digitalize forms, move to web-based repair request software, determine possibility for advanced communications equipment for training room
- Move towards mobile data method for patient reporting, daily reporting, inspections
- Standardize fire reporting management system with EMS solution
- Investigate possibility of improving connectivity in the field for data between units and hospital
- Create a replacement plan for computer hardware

**RESPONSIBILITY:** H Hollander (Chair), E Courage, W Sanders, T Kettman

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Financial support
- Personnel
- Technical support

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2019

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of all tasks

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Developing Relationships with Outside Agencies

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Provide for joint training, sharing of resources, and development of private public partnerships; develop common terminology; foster command level relationships.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Develop program for cooperation among agencies to include joint training programs; sharing of resources
- Investigate public and private partnerships that are beneficial to the community
- Work towards common terminology among all agencies
- Foster command level relationships

**RESPONSIBILITY:** D Berkeley (Chair), W Pernet, M Neal, S Paige

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Financial support
- Personnel
- Agency support

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2021

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of all tasks

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Equipment, Facilities, Fleet Maintenance

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Provide a plan for the future replacement of district apparatus and facility maintenance.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Develop a comprehensive data based replacement program for apparatus and vehicles
- Investigate funding sources and planning for future apparatus and facilities maintenance
- Incorporate capital improvement plan in developing a facility maintenance plan
- Evaluate current buildings for maintenance issue and future needs

**RESPONSIBILITY:** H Hollander (Chair), E Courage, H Andrews, D Berkeley

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Financial support
- Personnel
- Agency support

**TIMEFRAME:** December 2018

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of all tasks

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Leadership / Communications

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Improvement in interagency communication and development of a district leadership development program.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Create a structure for improved district communication
- Provide for improved communication with outside agencies
- Provide for improved communication between elected officials and the organizations' employees
- Develop a leadership program including mentorship

**RESPONSIBILITY:** K Freeman, W Sanders, S Brown, L McPhail, J Vander Veen

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Finance
- Personnel
- Agency support

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2019

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of all tasks

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Organizational Structure

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Propose an organizational structure that accounts for a clear balance of resources and organizational function with emphasis on future growth.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Evaluate current organizational chart for effectiveness
- Evaluate district overhead resource needs including future positions such as shift battalion chiefs
- Taylor organizational structure to strategy and vision of the organization

**RESPONSIBILITY:** C Shipp (Chair), R Davidson

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Finance
- Management
- Labor

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2019

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of updated organizational structure plan

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Policy and Procedures

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Provide for comprehensive policy and procedures.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Create “policy on policy development”
- Research and develop approved policy format
- Create policy development and review process
- Updated policy manual on Extranet
- Procedure development
- Directive development

**RESPONSIBILITY:** W Pernet (Chair), R Bosman, S Ward, K Biery, J Vander Veen

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Personnel
- Management
- Labor

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2020

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of comprehensive policy manual, review process, and development process.

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Progressive / Culture

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Provide annual employee conference, revision of existing annual performance evaluation process, create formal awards and recognition program/event, maintain communication with employees, and create career path for promotion.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Implementation of annual employee conference with motivating theme
- Overhaul existing performance evaluations
- Provide for recognition program for service and merit
- Provide district information to employees via, social media, website, and newsletter
- Formalize training programs and career development paths

**RESPONSIBILITY:** J Hollstein (Chair), K Bruch, R Briskin, J Sand

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Personnel
- Management
- Labor
- Financial
- Other Fire Departments

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—January 2020

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of all tasks



# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Recruitment, Retention, Succession Planning

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Creation of district succession planning program, develop programs for recruitment and retention of career and volunteer employees.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Research other agencies succession planning programs
- Update current job descriptions
- Develop NWFR career path with focus on educational and experience based requirements
- Research resources and create recruitment / retention plan

**RESPONSIBILITY:** J Noonchester (Chair), J Crawford, K Freeman, L Johnston

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Personnel
- Management
- Labor
- Financial
- Training

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—January 2020

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of all tasks

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** RFA, Mergers, Consolidation

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Exploration of mergers and consolidation with neighboring agencies, evaluation of current merger between fire district 21 and 4, provision for exploration of auto aid agreements.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Identify the pros and cons of current and future merger or consolidation efforts
- Focus on District 21 and 4 consolidation and potential for addition to ballot for approval
- Explore regionalization with county public safety partners including automatic aid agreements
- Explore the possibility of a future county Regional Fire Authority

**RESPONSIBILITY:** S Ness (Chair), H Andrews, M Neal, B Ansell, J Crawford, C Shipp

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Personnel
- Management
- Labor
- Financial
- Outside agencies
- Public

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2021

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** All Tasks thoroughly investigated and vetted

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Specialty Teams

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Identify needs and development of special rescue and response operations at North Whatcom Fire & Rescue.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Identify rescue discipline priorities
- Prioritize and select training levels
- Establish equipment needs
- Policy and procedure development
- Identify potential funding sources
- Organizational structure and implementation including regionalization

**RESPONSIBILITY:** W Pernet (Chair), S Ness, K Jorgenson, J Geleyse, T Kettman, R Davidson

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Personnel
- Management
- Labor
- Financial
- Outside agencies

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2020

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Identification of the type of specialty rescue and other technical response needed based on target hazards and community needs. Initiation of a plan that addresses the development, organization, training, equipment, and service levels of specialty rescue and other emergency technical response at NWFR. Address funding, regionalization, and policy and procedures for the successful implementation of specialty rescue and response teams at NWFR.

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Staffing

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Revise and update standards of cover to address minimum staffing, volunteer staffing, Long term deployment, and positional staffing.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Develop plan to account for future growth and call volumes
- Identify how volunteers will fit into the staffing model
- Identify future administrative and suppression positions
- Develop plan to address an extended deployment of personnel

**RESPONSIBILITY:** A Smith (Chair), B McPhail, D Riehl, J Geleynse, T Kettman

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Personnel
- Management
- Labor
- Financial
- Outside agencies

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2020

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of all tasks

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Training

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Review our current training division and update to meet organizational needs meeting our current mission, vision, and values

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Research other agencies programs to review efficiencies
- Examine WAC 296-305 2014 and NFPA 1001
- Conduct needs assessment to determine courses and training needed to achieve District goals

**RESPONSIBILITY:** J Noonchester (Chair), D Riehl, K Biery, S Ward

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Personnel
- Management
- Labor
- Financial
- Outside agencies, Snohomish 1, 7, Monroe, Kent, State website, interviews

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2019

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** When we have established a training program that is applicable to all levels of experience and expertise and captures the requirements of state, NFPA, and department standards

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Volunteer Program

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** Evaluate existing volunteer program and make recommendations for changes in program structure, training standards, accountability, mentorship, and retention.

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Review current volunteer program structure and make recommendations for improvement
- Provide for realistic training standards based on WAC standards and NWFR position requirements
- Provide volunteer training that is well prepared and challenging
- Develop plan to improve volunteer accountability and mentorship program
- Develop volunteer retention program that provides emphasis on loyalty programs
- Provide for continued support of volunteer groups and conduct needs assessment
- Investigate benefits of hiring a volunteer coordinator

**RESPONSIBILITY:** L Johnston (Chair), J Noonchester, B Williams, L Renskers, S Ooms

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Training
- Management
- Financial
- Outside agencies

**TIMEFRAME:** Current—December 2018

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Evidenced by greater quality and number of retained volunteer firefighters at the end of the evaluation period. Positive feedback from mentorship program. Successfully balanced training program and standards that encourages volunteer participation and success. Overall increase in volunteer members.

# ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

**STRATEGIC ISSUE:** Fire Prevention / Public Education / Community Outreach / Fire Marshal

**GOAL/OBJECTIVE:** To develop, fund, and staff an active Community Services Division including fire prevention / public education / community outreach

**TASKS TO BE COMPLETED:**

- Evaluate educational needs based on grade levels
- Revise curriculum in partnership with area schools
- Expand program to all local schools
- Perform community risk assessment
- Develop community partnerships
- Identify activities for community outreach program
- Develop fire prevention budget
- Develop Community Services division including Fire Marshal

**RESPONSIBILITY:** L Smith, J Ahrenholz, B Ansell, Committee members

**NECESSARY RESOURCES:**

- Financial support
- Personnel

**TIMEFRAME:** December 2020

**MEASURE OF SUCCESS:** Completion of comprehensive plan to develop a community services division which will oversee fire prevention and education, community outreach programs, and fire marshal duties