

Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department



Strategic Plan
2011-2016



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Preface

In August 2010, we began the development phase of a strategic plan for Wadsworth Fire/EMS. We solicited input from the fire officers of the department, members of the department, elected officials and community members through the use of surveys both mailed and online. We also felt it important to interview members of the administration to include the Mayor and the Director of Public Safety.

The survey of the officers and members had a 29% return, and the community online survey had 91 responses with 183 people viewing the survey. We encouraged the community to take the survey through the use of our website, WCTV community page and by mentioning at meetings of City Council and the Public Safety Committee.

The purpose of the plan will be to provide direction for the next five years, as well as a framework for planning beyond this initial five-year period time frame. This strategic plan may very well be a "first" for our Department due to the fact that it was completed within the department using input from all members, administration and community.

We all acknowledge the fire service is changing and believe we are obligated to review our department's response to change on a periodic basis. The calls for service have evolved over the past several years with the materials we are faced with and the technology of the newer equipment we use. The basics have remained the same with the old adage: "Put the wet stuff on the red stuff," but the application has changed due to the man-made materials. EMS is also a driving force of our service as approximately 85% of our calls for service are EMS related.

Some of the items we looked at were how to deliver the services our community demands and needs for the short and long term. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to establish a specific direction to allow the Fire/EMS Department to continue to improve its operations and to maintain the exceptional standards that our residents have come to expect.

We revised our mission statement, a vision of what we want our department/service to look like in five years, and core values to guide our behavior. We also spent considerable time making an honest, in-depth assessment of how we can improve internally such as personnel development, policy formulation and operational practices. External assessment was also important so that we could continue to provide a quality product to our customers.

This strategic plan will need to be periodically reviewed and updated as time and events warrant. We attempted to answer the questions: "How do we get better, and what direction are we going?" We took a comprehensive look at all aspects of our organization and service, and discussed and proposed ways to improve and achieve our vision.

A *SWOT* [strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats] analysis was conducted, which provided valuable input into our goal development. We set long- and short-term goals that will serve as the basis for our planning, budgeting and assignment of resources, etc. We built our plan based on projected trends of "customer" needs and the four pillars of our service: Medical, Prevention, Suppression and Training. Strategic planning must begin at the highest levels of the Department and should be viewed as responses to the forces of change. Much time was spent developing the mission, vision and values. These variables provide us with a basis to guide our behavior, plan effectively and set goals.

I applaud the officers and members of our department for their ongoing dedication by setting a vision to make the Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department a world-class organization.



Vision

The vision of the Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department is to be recognized by the community and our peers:

- As a model of excellence in providing fire protection, EMS and related services
- As a department dedicated to continuous improvement to every detail of the services we provide
- As a department that promotes an environment of tolerance, trust and involvement
- As a department responsive to the community's needs and concerns

Mission Statement

To deliver to our residents, businesses, visitors and neighbors the highest quality of fire prevention/protection, emergency medical service and any other emergency service necessary to prevent the loss of life or property.

Core Values and Philosophies

What type of person and what qualities are needed to perform this life-saving service? Public servants are held in high esteem by the customer with lofty expectations of service delivery. These people are life and property savers and are entrusted by society to react instantly, unselfishly, compassionately and professionally to a person's emergency. Society expects these responders (organizations) to be selected and their actions/priorities guided by certain principles to ensure their excellence. Hence, a statement of values: We believe that our people are our most important asset. We as members embrace these core values:

- **Professionalism:** To conduct ourselves in a professional manner at all times, with the citizens that we serve and with our coworkers.
- **Pride:** Have pride in the department and yourself. Accomplishments have been many; both individually and as a department, reflect those accomplishments.
- **Integrity:** To have honest and ethical behavior at all times, remembering that the citizens place their trust in us.
- **Commitment:** To providing the highest quality of service our citizens deserve. In addition, be committed to departmental and personal growth.
- **Compassion:** Try to relieve the suffering of others during and after their time of emergency.
- **Camaraderie:** Being friendly to your coworkers and respecting their opinions even though you may not always agree.
- **Concern:** Have an interest in what is happening within the department and the community. Assist in solving issues, instead of allowing others to do it for you.
- **Caring:** Have empathy for others. Respect the feelings and attitudes of others.
- **Tradition:** Pass down to the next generation the traditions that have made the fire/EMS service what it is today. However, never allow those traditions to get in the way of



making progress in providing a service to the community, departmental changes and personal growth.

Introduction

Evaluation of the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department (WFD) has identified areas of concern. To identify these areas, we conducted interviews with the city administration and members of the Safety Committee to ascertain their opinions of the operation and direction they believe the Wadsworth Fire/EMS should be heading. We also surveyed all department personnel, which provided significant information on areas they believe needed improvement and areas they considered to be strengths of our department. Furthermore, a survey conducted of the citizens of the city of Wadsworth was to determine what value the Wadsworth Fire/EMS provides to them and to ask what other services the department could provide.

In addition, to determine the population growth of the city, research of the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census revealed an increase in population of 14.75% with an estimated growth in 2009 of an additional 12.21%. Per the 2000 census, two age groups have seen a significant increase from 1990: age group (10-14) 20.9%, and citizens (65 and older) 20.6%.

Background and History

The Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department is a combination department that consists of full-time and paid per-call staff that provides fire protection, fire prevention and emergency medical services to the citizens of Wadsworth and Wadsworth Township. The department has a 114-year history of providing these important fire services to the city and township. Since 1982, the department has provided top-quality Emergency Medical services to both entities.

The Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department is able to provide to the citizens, businesses and visitors within our response area any type of emergency service necessary to mitigate the need for assistance. With the timely responses of the fire/EMS, it helps to reduce the loss of life and property. This early intervention by the department to an emergency is the key to its success. The most valuable service that the Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department provides is that of prevention, of both injuries and fire.

In addition, within Medina County, every department has the ability to access the "Medina County All Hazards Team" to respond to hazardous material incidents, confined-space rescues, or high-angle rescues. By having a countywide team lessens the cost burden on the department to fund all of the technical rescues needed.

The Wadsworth Fire/EMS has well-qualified personnel to meet the needs of our citizens. Sixty-seven percent of the firefighters for the department are certified at the FF-2 level, and fifty-one percent of the personnel running EMS are trained at the paramedic level. This high percentage of highly qualified personnel guarantees that the personnel are qualified to handle any emergency to which they respond.

The Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department has six fire safety inspectors to conduct the inspections of industrial, commercial, schools, nursing homes, assisted-living facilities, and



foster care facilities. With six inspectors, more facilities will be inspected on an annual basis, which guarantees the safety of the citizens of Wadsworth. In addition, assuring the fire safety of the facilities inspected keeps the tax base intact for the entire city and protects the employment of the citizens.

The fire safety programs conducted in the elementary schools have taught hundreds of students about the dangers of fire and what to do in the event of a fire. Children that have attended these programs tend to go home and inform their parents about the importance of fire safety in the home and have pointed out potential problems.

Demographics and Psychological

The population has increased within the city by 14.75% per the 2000 U.S. Census over 1990 U.S. Census. Per the estimates in 2009 by the U.S. Census, a 12.21% increase in population over the 2000 census.

Breakdown of the 2000 U.S. Census:

- Age group 10-14: largest growth with 20.9% increase
- Age group 65 & older: second largest growth with 20.6% increase
- Age group 15-19: increased 18.7%
- Age group 20-65: increased 17.32%
- Age group 5-9: increased 14.9%

Ninety-eight percent of the population is white, 0.6% is of Asian descent, and 0.4% is African American.

Total number of housing units has increased by 18.32% from 1990. Occupied housing units have increased from 1990 by 17.02%. The number of vacant housing units has also increased by 46%.

Median age of the population per the 2000 census is 37.7 years of age, with the average family size being 3.04. Married-couple families make up 59.5% of the population. Owner-occupied housing units account for 74% of the total housing units within the city. In reference to the education attainment of the population 25 years and older, 88% are a high school graduate or higher, and 26% have a bachelor's degree or higher.

With today's economic issues, families' disposable incomes are down, in turn causing the closure of some small commercial businesses. The unemployment rate, closure of businesses and the number of vacant housing units has caused a decrease in revenue for the city.

Based on information found in the 2000 census report for the City of Wadsworth, as of 1999, the median household income was \$48,605, and the median family income was \$58,850. Poverty status in 1999 was 4.2% for families and 19.2% for families with female householder with no husband present. Of the working population, 35% work in the professional or management occupation, and 25% work in sales and office occupation. Mean travel time to work is 20.7 minutes.

The increase in the population has placed an increase in the request for service on the department, especially the senior population. With the increase in the senior population, the number of invalid assist calls for EMS has increased both in the residence and in-group homes.



With the decrease in revenue, the operating budget for the department has also decreased. To help reduce payroll cost, training of the firefighters was decreased to twice a month, making it difficult to accomplish required training. In addition, CPR classes were eliminated to decrease overtime cost. The “American Red Cross” and “American Heart Association” also conduct CPR classes for the public. The need for a third organization conducting the same classes is not necessary.

Of the working population, 35% work in the management or professional field. This class of workers usually does not have the time nor desire to volunteer with the local fire department. In addition, with the mean travel time to work being 20 minutes, workers are not able to respond to calls for service during their work hours. With the increase demands and the number of two-income families, individuals are unable to make a time commitment with their local fire/EMS department.

Strengths

The administration of the department is accountable to all department personnel and to the city administration to assure that the department is operating efficiently and provides a safe work environment for the personnel. In addition, the administration of the department operates within the budget that the members of city administration provides to the department. When additional monies are needed to purchase special equipment or to provide specialized training, we actively pursue grants to cover the cost.

The department is also committed to providing up-to-date equipment and to making sure that such equipment is well maintained. The department contracts with third-party inspection companies to perform quarterly and annual mandated testing of critical equipment such as ground ladders, aerial platform, SCBAs and other vital equipment. Furthermore, the department has a certified emergency vehicle technician who performs the maintenance on all department motorized vehicles and to assure that they pass all NFPA requirements.

The WFD is a strong advocate of advanced training for its personnel to build upon skill levels. The department covers the entire cost for any training that the personnel wishes to attend that will have a direct benefit for the department. If individuals also wish to increase their state certification level, such as becoming a paramedic, the department will also increase their hourly rate of pay. In addition, the department has brought in outside instructors from across the United States to instruct personnel in specialized skills such as “Rapid Intervention” training.

Through the advanced training of the department personnel, quality of the equipment provided and the number of apparatus available, the department is able to respond to any type of emergency or to multiple calls occurring at the same time. In addition, if the department is in need of assistance from other agencies, mutual aid agreements are in place for such assistance. Furthermore, if specialized assistance is needed, such as a hazardous material spill, the department can request such assistance from the countywide All Hazards Team.

The WFD conducts Fire Safety Inspections of the businesses throughout the city of Wadsworth and every school building within our response area. By providing these



inspections assures that every citizen is safe from the dangers of fire while conducting business or attending school within the city. Other benefits of providing these safety inspections are that businesses will not be lost due to fires, providing employment to the citizens and maintaining the tax base for the city.

While the fire safety inspectors conduct their surveys of the businesses they are inspecting, they are also gathering information that will assist the fire department in the event of a fire. This information, known as a preplan, will assist the department in locating shutoffs for the utilities and the location of any hazardous materials in the event of a fire.

The most important strength that the Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department enjoys is that of public support. This support was evident with the passage of the capital improvement levy in 2009 with a overwhelming majority of 75% voting yes. Without its continued support, the department would not be able to meet the mandates of the safety equipment requirements, repairs to facilities or to purchase land for a third station.

Weaknesses

Several areas of weaknesses were identified using the interviews of the city administration, a survey of department personnel and surveys from the public. Areas that were pointed out were inefficient use of time and personnel, communications, community education, aging work force and succession planning.

The Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department does not advertise all of the services that it provides such as: public education, child safety seat installation, carbon monoxide investigations, etc. The City of Wadsworth has a community television channel that the different services offered could be advertised on, along with the city's website.

Forty-three percent of the department's work force is between the ages of 41-65 years of age. The dilemma that this could have the department is that in five years 16% of the personnel could be lost due to retirement. The department should be recruiting younger individuals now to prepare for the future of the department.

Another weakness within the department is the lack of succession planning. We believe that the department should begin requiring individuals wishing to become an officer to complete management-type training programs, which would give the individual a better understanding of the job requirements, the operations of the department and the methods for handling conflicts.

Opportunities

As revealed in the research of the demographics for the City of Wadsworth, the senior citizen population increased by 20.6% from the 1990 census. Furthermore, research of EMS calls in 2009 revealed that 78% of the fall victims that EMS responded to were over the age of 60. This provides an opportunity for the department to conduct Home Safety Inspections for the senior citizens, upon request, to make recommendations to prevent injuries from a fall. While conducting the home inspections to prevent injuries, a



fire safety inspection of the home could also take place to make additional recommendations to prevent a fire.

These Home Safety Inspections could also be conducted in other citizen's homes, upon request, to make recommendations to the occupant(s) to help prevent fire. Fire and Injury Prevention are the two most important activities that a department could conduct.

Threats

Several threats must be analyzed if we do not adapt to the changing needs of the department and the community. If we fail to increase our fire prevention/inspection activities, the number of calls will go up, thus taxing our current staffing methods of a combination department, which would create the need for full-time staffing at higher costs than we are currently experiencing. This may also create job losses within the community, which would lead to decreased revenues and tax base.

Public education is also a very vital function we must continue to work on. Without this, the community will suffer not only from the fire aspect but also from EMS-type emergencies due to falls, accidents in the home, etc.

It is also very important that we continue on the capital equipment replacement schedule as outlined at the end of this strategic plan. The technology has advanced tremendously in the services we provide, and if we don't keep up with these changes, we will be unable to provide the level of service to which our community has become accustomed. Another very important reason to continue this process is to maintain or improve our existing ISO (Insurance Service Office) rating, which dictates primarily commercial insurance rates in the community.

Goals and Objectives

Below is a list of goals and objectives that we will strive to accomplish between 2011 and 2016.

1. Home Safety Inspection program:
 - To reduce the number of injuries to senior citizens from falls
 - To reduce the number of fires in the residential structure
 - This will provide additional community involvement by members of the department
2. Community Education Programs:
 - Conduct more community education programs
 - Provide information to the citizens on fire and injury prevention
 - Continue to be a presence at community events
 - Continue the fire safety education programs to the children and senior citizens residing in Wadsworth
3. Communications:



- Promote department services on the community channel and city website
 - Inform personnel of important information through effective communication means to include electronic and written postings
 - Investigate other forms of mass media to disseminate information to personnel and the public
4. Capital improvements:
- Conduct a needs assessment by an outside agency for location and staffing needs of Station 3 and training center
 - Build a third station/training center to help reduce response times to areas and also allow for improved training
 - Replacement of 1985 Pierce Arrow Pumper Engine (Engine 4)
 - Continue with the replacement schedule of out-of-date safety equipment:
 - Self Contained Breathing Apparatus
 - Turnout Gear
5. Joint Staffing and Joint Response Areas
- Enter into talks and agreements for joint staffing of stations with other communities to reduce personnel costs for all involved
 - Look at multiple jurisdictions participating when planning Station 3 and training center for staffing and equipment
6. Training of Fire Personnel:
- To train all firefighters in the proper operation of the pumps on the apparatus
 - To train all firefighters in Rapid Intervention techniques
7. Training of EMS personnel:
- To assist personnel in meeting state-required continuing education
8. Succession planning:
- To develop future leaders of the department
9. Evaluations of the Paid-per-Call personnel:
- To acknowledge excellent performances
 - To correct problem areas
10. Obtain national accreditation:
- To improve administration and operations of the department
 - To increase professionalism



Action Plan

Recommendations	Approval	Target Date	Responsible Party
1. Home Safety Inspection	Chief	01/01/12	Asst. Chief & On-Duty Personnel
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop checklist to follow for fire safety inspection of residential structures • Develop checklist to follow for injury prevention of senior citizens in the home • Train personnel to conduct fire and injury prevention surveys • Advertise Home Safety Program on community television station and city website 			
2. Community Education Programs	Chief	02/01/11	On-Duty Personnel
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with school programs • Develop program to present to adults about fire safety • Develop program to present to senior citizens about injury prevention in the home • Advertise the programs to the service clubs and senior citizen facilities 			
3. Communication	Chief	01/01/11	Chief & Asst. Chief
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop list of services provided by the department available to the public • Advertise services on the community television channel • Advertise services on the department's web page • Present important information to all staff in departmental meetings 			
4. Build third station and training facility	Safety Director	12/2016	Safety Director & City Council
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the need for a third station/training facility using an outside consulting agency to conduct a feasibility study • Develop list of requirements and training props desired for the training facility • Develop plans for the training facilities: live fire building, Search & Rescue building and driving course • Conduct needs assessment to determine the best location for a third station • Purchase land to accommodate station and training facility with future expansion possibilities • Site improvements • Build new station and training facility 			



Recommendations	Approval	Target Date	Responsible Party
5. Firefighter Training Pump Operators Class	Chief	05/2011	Line Officers & Fire Instructors
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with lead instructors about conducting a Pump Operators class for all department members • Meet with all instructors to discuss the plan • Purchase training manuals for all members • Develop a training and instructor schedule • Develop a proficiency test to be conducted after the training sessions are completed • Conduct the training • Conduct a proficiency test to determine who is qualified to operate the apparatus • Post a list of qualified operators 			
6. EMS Training	Chief	01/01/13	Asst. Chief, M. Kollert & EMS Instructors
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with EMS instructors & M. Kollert, SUMMA WRH EMS Coordinator • Develop list of state required continuing education credits needed • Develop training schedule for EMS • Conduct the required training 			
7. Succession Planning	Chief	10/31/13	Asst. Chief
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop educational requirements • Develop Policy stating education requirement for the different ranks of officers • Obtain approval from the chief • Obtain the approval from the safety director • Develop a line item in the budget for the cost of the education 			
8. Employee Evaluations of Paid-per-Call Staff	Safety Director & Chief	12/01/11	Chief, Asst. Chief & Line Officers
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Evaluation Form • Obtain approval from Safety Director of the change to percentage of pay rate increase based on evaluations • Obtain approval from Safety Committee for a pay rate percentage change based on evaluations • Obtain approval from City Council of the pay rate structure change • Write a Policy to explain the evaluation process • Instruct Line Officers on how to perform the evaluations • Conduct the evaluations • Discuss evaluations with paid per call staff 			



Recommendations	Approval	Target Date	Responsible Party
9. National Accreditation	Chief	12/2016	Chief & Asst. Chief
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain accreditation information • Develop action plan to accomplish the accreditation • Conduct self-assessment • Prepare documentation needed for the audit team • Request audit team 			

Summary

The Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department 2011-2016 Strategic Plan was developed with input from the administration of the city, department personnel and, most importantly, the citizens of Wadsworth. Goals and objectives that this plan has incorporated are:

- Home Safety Inspections
- Community Education Programs
- Communications
- Capital Improvements
- Training of Firefighters
- Training of EMS Personnel
- Sucession Planning
- Evaluations of Paid-per-Call Personnel
- National Accreditation of the Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department

This strategic plan serves as a guideline for the Wadsworth Fire/EMS Department to follow to ensure the continuous improvement of the department, in order to provide the services in which the community deserves. The strategic plan shall be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that the plan is moving forward and achieving the goals and objectives as outlined within it.



Proposed Replacement Vehicles and Gear 2011-2016

Vehicle Year	Vehicle	Original Cost	Projected Cost	Replacement Year
1985	Engine 4	\$164,000.00	\$576,685.46	2014
1993	Hummer Quik Attack	\$80,000.00	\$55,000.00	2008
1994	Truck 7 (Pickup)	\$10,025.00	\$16,050.35	2006
2002	Minivan (Inspection)	\$20,520.00	\$26,024.32	2014
	Scott 4.5 SCBA (30 units)	\$6,000.00	\$180,000.00	
	Coat (30)	\$1,000.00	\$30,000.00	
	Pant (30)	\$650.00	\$19,500.00	
	Helmet (30)	\$275.00	\$8,250.00	
	Boots (30)	\$250.00	\$7,500.00	
TOTAL			\$925,010.13	

Additional Capital Vehicle Replacements 2018-2031

Vehicle Year	Vehicle	Original Cost	Projected Cost	Replacement Year
1992	Ladder 1	\$504,000.00	\$1,681,740.95	2023
1995	Engine 3	\$273,106.00	\$835,990.11	2020
1997	Tanker 5	\$275,707.00	\$951,493.55	2027
1998	Rescue 6	\$220,041.00	\$703,955.71	2025
2006	Engine 2	\$345,000.00	\$984,130.17	2031
2006	Durango (Chief)	\$29,159.00	\$36,980.66	2018
2008	Explorer (Inspection)	\$24,500.00	\$31,071.92	2020
TOTAL			\$5,225,363.07	Over 16 years