Seattle Fire Department
STRATEGIC PLAN
2012—2017

City of Seattle

We are grateful to the men and women of the Seattle Fire Department who work daily to provide emergency care that keeps us safe. I commend the Seattle Fire Department's leadership for the development of their first strategic plan.

—Mayor Mike McGinn

My job is to be as prepared and competent as possible to be able to help people on the worst day of their lives, no matter what the emergency is that day.

—from employee survey

There is a heightened expectation from government that we should be a lot smarter than we used to be five, ten years ago. We need to step up our game.

—Council Member Bruce Harrell

To make an effective fire department you have to be able to say: This is the direction we wish to go, this is the speed I wish to go, follow me!

—Medic One Director Dr. Michael Copass

MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

I'm pleased to introduce the Seattle Fire Department's Strategic Plan. It is both a road map for the Seattle Fire Department and a guide for identifying priorities so we can continue delivering excellent fire, rescue, prevention and emergency medical services into the future.

This five-year plan represents our commitment to good stewardship of the department resources funded by Seattle residents. When residents were surveyed during the strategic planning process, we learned that the majority are very familiar with, and have benefited from, the wide range of emergency and non-emergency services we provide. With a fire station located in every neighborhood we strive to keep our communities safe.

The department had to answer three fundamental questions during the planning process: where are we now, where are we going and how will we get there? The answers helped in developing a framework for the plan that will:

- Promote department policy, operational and budget decisions.
- Maintain a highly trained work force.
- Encourage a work force that is representative of the diverse community we serve.
- Provide a structure to ensure oversight and management of department programs.

We are committed to revisiting our strategic plan at least every two years to ensure the plan accomplishes what it set out to do, and to making adjustments where needed. Our goal is to have a flexible organization that can anticipate and adapt to change.

In closing, thank you to all of the Seattle Fire Department employees who shared their thoughts and ideas through surveys and outreach meetings. Your honest feedback has been invaluable. Thank you also to the residents, elected officials and other key city and community partners who were interviewed as part of our planning process. Your support helped guide us and is critical to the success of this plan.

I invite all members of the communities we serve, along with our partner agencies, to join us in supporting this vision for the future of the Seattle Fire Department.

Sincerely,

Gregory M. Dean

Gregory M. Dean
Fire Chief

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ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

About Us

The Seattle Fire Department became a full time paid professional firefighting organization in 1889, following the devastation of the Great Seattle Fire. Over the past 123 years, the five district fire stations serving a population of about 25,000 residents has grown to a department with 33 stations serving over half a million people. The department is organized into Operations, Fire Prevention, Risk Management and Administrative Divisions that support the delivery of critical fire suppression services and emergency medical care. The department's prehospital care relies on a layered response system. Firefighters trained as emergency medical technicians provide basic life support (BLS) for less serious medical situations and firefighters trained as paramedics provide advanced life support (ALS) for more serious or life threatening situations.

The department's other vital emergency and non-emergency services include:

- Technical teams. This includes technical and heavy rescue, dive rescue, tunnel rescue, marine fire response, and hazardous materials (HazMat) response.
- Fire prevention and public education.
- Fire investigation.
- Mutual aid response to neighboring jurisdictions.

SEATTLE QUICK FACTS

Resident Population:
608,660
8% increase from 2000-2010

Population during the day:
1.5 million

Service Area:
91 square miles

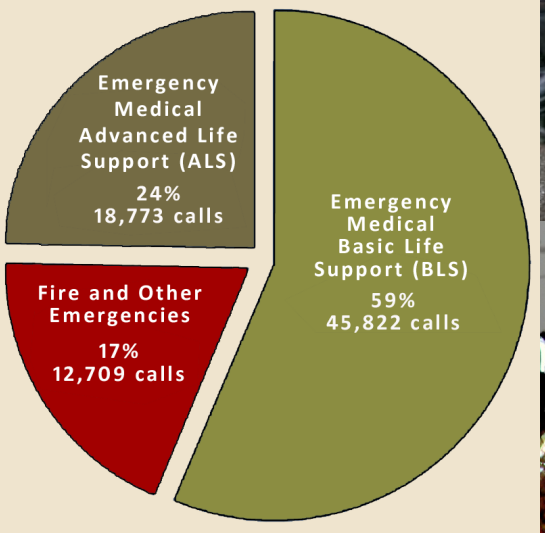
Population Density:
6,688 persons per square mile

Population details:
69.5 % white
30.5% persons of color
11% seniors
20% immigrant & refugee

Source: 2010 Census

Maintaining or improving emergency response times is the core of Seattle Fire Department operations. The department's annual *Emergency Response Report*, published online, measures our performance against national standards for fire and emergency medical calls. The report also tracks fire fatalities and property loss occurring in the city each year.

2011 Seattle Fire Department EMERGENCY RESPONSE TOTALS BY TYPE



Department Facts

SFD Personnel

Uniformed Personnel	1,071
Emergency Medical Technicians	1,071
Paramedics	73
Daily Staffing	207
Civilian Personnel	81

SFD Stations and Apparatus

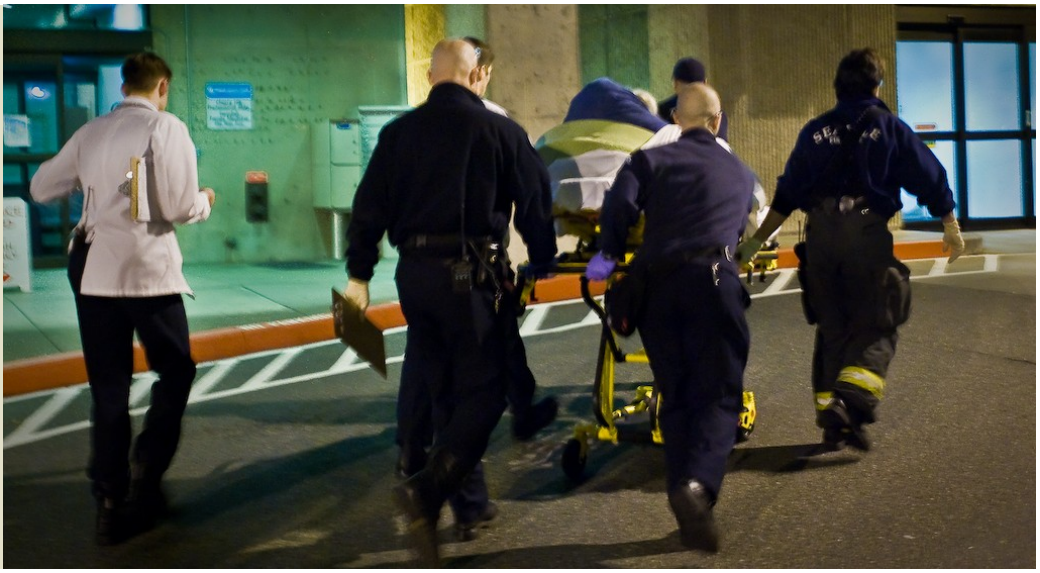
Fire Stations	33
Engines	32
Ladder Trucks	11
Aid Units	4
Medic Units	7
Air Units	2
Fire Boats	4
Hose Wagon	1

MEDIC ONE

Established in 1970 as a joint effort between Seattle Fire Department, Harborview Medical Center, and the University of Washington, the Medic One program combines rigorous training and innovative medical techniques in a two-tiered emergency response system. Paramedics provide direct Advanced Life Support (ALS) services to the citizens of Seattle, which previously could only be performed by a licensed physician. Unparalleled cardiac arrest survival rates and the popular Citizen CPR Training Program (Medic II) have given Medic One a world class reputation, attracting representatives from public safety agencies around the world to study and attempt to replicate the program's success in their jurisdiction.

Seattle Fire Department is the greatest team I could ever play for.

—from employee survey



Key Inputs

The Seattle Fire Department's Strategic Plan was developed by a working group of 14—including chief officers, firefighters, paramedics, and civilian staff—that met regularly between October 2011 and July 2012. During the early phases of the process, all of the nearly 1,100 department employees were encouraged to provide input on the direction and priorities established in the plan. Two surveys were distributed department-wide, and a dozen meetings were held where employees provided valuable feedback.

Input from external stakeholders was vital to the planning process. In all, over a dozen partner agencies were contacted and interviewed. Another survey was also distributed to more than a thousand city residents regarding their knowledge of department services. Residents and partners expressed support and gratitude, but also a strong desire to continue building effective partnerships that provide better service to the community.

The information gathered from internal and external stakeholders was then used to conduct a SWOC analysis, where the department's strengths (S), weaknesses (W), areas of opportunity (O), and potential challenges (C) were identified. The purpose of a SWOC analysis is to provide an open and honest assessment of an organization's positive and negative aspects. It also serves as a benchmarking tool for evaluating the department's success in achieving stated goals and objectives.

Evaluating performance according to those benchmarks is one of the final stages of the strategic planning process. In fact, the plan is only useful so long as it achieves the desired results, and the only way to know if those results have been achieved is through periodic examination and performance measurement.

Strategic plans are typically thought of as living documents, where the planning process is never actually finished, but becomes subject to revisions as circumstances change and new challenges emerge. Review of the Seattle Fire Department Strategic Plan will be ongoing and occur formally at least every two years.

Challenges

Through employee surveys, outreach meetings and a SWOC analysis, we identified key internal and external challenges currently facing the Seattle Fire Department. Acknowledging these challenges and developing ways to manage them is one of the many benefits of going through a strategic planning process.

Internal challenges

Leadership and officer development

In an employee survey, roughly 90 percent of the participants said leadership and officer development training is important to achieving the Seattle Fire Department's mission. Currently the department does not have an established training program in place to develop leadership capabilities. Compounding the issue, 22 percent of the employees (which includes a significant portion of the department's current management) are eligible for retirement, resulting in the loss of key experience and skill over the next five years.

Employee value

Maintaining employee involvement and engagement can be a challenge in an organization that has employees at satellite locations throughout the city, and on four different shifts. When employees were asked if the department does a good job of involving and empowering individuals in terms of decision making, two-thirds of employees responded negatively. They indicated 1) a desire to play a more active role in decision making, 2) a wish for better communication between employees and leadership, 3) more support/recognition for employee accomplishments, and 4) more accountability and consistent application of discipline.

Operations training

A critical component of ensuring a skilled and safe emergency work force is job specific training. The Seattle Fire Department provides a broad range of emergency and non-emergency services so delivering all of the training required by state law and industry standards can be challenging. Our survey of employees indicates areas where the department should prioritize types of training and training locations.

External challenges

Financial constraints

Many government agencies have experienced the effects of the economic downturn. There is a 24/7 need for emergency services but there are other essential city services that must still be provided to the community with fewer dollars to fund them. The fire department has to find ways to leverage existing resources and work within its existing budget. Coordination with partner agencies and leveraging these partnerships becomes even more important in these difficult budget times.

Growth of non-emergency calls

Investments in modern fire and building codes, as well as an emphasis on fire prevention, have changed the nature of a firefighter's job. Eighty percent of the department's calls are now for emergency medical services and a growing number of calls are for non-emergencies. A non-emergency is defined as 1) a call with a patient who does not exhibit an injury or illness that requires medical care, 2) a false fire alarm or 3) an emergency incident that is cancelled. Twenty percent of the fire department's total number of yearly responses are currently non-emergencies. This means valuable emergency resources are being used for non-emergency needs, and in turn may impact the ability to respond to real emergencies.

Changing demographics

Seattle residents are not only aging, but the population is becoming more diverse. Seattle is home to some of the most diverse neighborhoods in the country. The department has to adjust to the unique and changing needs of each of these different communities. Providing quality service to everyone becomes even more important. Employees may have to overcome cultural and language barriers, which can be especially challenging in high-pressure emergency situations.

All Seattle Fire Department employees are guided by the mission, vision and values. The mission is the core purpose for why the Seattle Fire Department exists. The vision is the description for where the department strives to be in the future. It should inspire and motivate. Values are the guiding principles for the organization. These are the essential and enduring tenets.

MISSION

The mission of the Seattle Fire Department is to save lives and protect property through emergency medical service, fire and rescue response, and fire prevention. We respond immediately when any member of our community needs help with professional, effective and compassionate service.

VISION

The Seattle Fire Department: a national leader in responding to and preventing emergencies with a commitment to excellence and teamwork.

VALUES

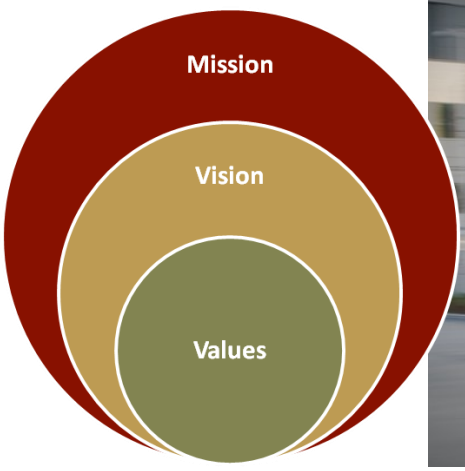
Integrity—We are honest, trustworthy and accountable. Honor guides our actions.

Teamwork—We each bring our own skills and experience, yet we recognize that we are better together. We support and depend on each other to achieve our goals.

Compassion—Caring is part of our job. We could not do what we do without a deep and motivating empathy for those we serve.

Courage—We show fortitude and determination in a crisis.

Diversity— We respect the different identities, experiences, and perspectives of those that we work with and the community we serve.



GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS

Strategic Plan Framework

The Seattle Fire Department Strategic Plan revolves around six goal areas. Each goal is supported by and accomplished through a series of high level strategies and more specific action steps. In the context of this strategic plan, goals are defined as overarching visionary statements that guide the future direction of the department. The strategies listed beneath each goal outline a plan of action for achieving the goal. Below each strategy is a set of action steps which are concrete, specific tasks designed to help implement the strategy and ultimately reach the stated goal.

The parameters used by the work group in the development of the goals, strategies and action steps included the requirements that they be:

- **Aligned with the department's mission, vision and values**—the six stated goals must line up with and move the organization forward in fulfilling its mission, vision and values.
- **Achievable**—current economic realities dictate that the goals be practical and focused so that they can be accomplished within the department's current budget.
- **Built on consensus**—shared agreement among the department's key stakeholders, which includes employees, leadership, labor, the Mayor and City Council, on what is important to the department's future.
- **Measurable**—each goal area and the accompanying strategies and action steps must be measurable so it is possible to objectively determine whether the goal is being achieved.

Due to the intentionally ambitious nature of the plan, the goals and strategies may need to be accomplished in phases over a period of time. They will be reevaluated at least every two years as part of an overall review of the plan. As the external and internal environment in which we operate changes, the strategic plan should remain a map for the department's future.

STRATEGIC GOALS

The following goals, strategies and action steps are equally important and are not listed in order of priority.

Leadership

Develop the leadership abilities of Seattle Fire Department employees at all levels.

Employee Development

Create an employee development program to give employees and supervisors tools for improvement.

Health and Safety

Provide for the health and safety of all Seattle Fire Department employees.

Diversity

Ensure that diversity, inclusion and cultural competency are integral to the way the department functions, both internally and externally.

Community Outreach and Partnerships

Foster community outreach and agency partnerships to strengthen department services.

Resource Management

Maintain quality equipment, apparatus, facilities and technology to meet the mission of the department.

Develop the leadership abilities of Seattle Fire Department employees at all levels.

Strategy 1:
Incorporate leadership training throughout all levels of the organization.

Action Steps

1. Develop and deliver leadership training relevant to chief and company officers with measurable outcomes and defined expectations.
2. Develop leadership training for all department employees with measurable outcomes and defined expectations.

STRATEGY 2:
Enhance department resources for leadership training and mentoring.

Action Steps

1. Prioritize leadership development opportunities.
2. Partner with professional leadership groups to provide education.
3. Incentivize the development of leadership skills as part of the promotional process.

STRATEGY 3:
Delegate decision making authority at the appropriate level in the organizational structure to empower and include all employees.

Action Steps

1. Evaluate business processes to identify areas of authority and responsibility that can be delegated and provide a formal report.
2. Review delegated areas of authority for effectiveness and revise policies and procedures as necessary.
3. Seek employee ideas on cost reduction, service improvement, and problem solving.

STRATEGY 4:
Ensure the Discipline Policy is applied equally and consistently.

Action Steps

1. Establish regular training on discipline policy and procedures.
2. Provide safe and secure access to employee history and previous decisions to ensure consistent decision making.
3. In partnership with unions, review and amend discipline policy.

GOAL: EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Create an employee development program to give employees and supervisors tools for improvement.

STRATEGY 1:
Develop a comprehensive training model for all department employees.

Action Steps

1. Re-establish a standing training advisory committee to produce an annual training plan that meets department needs.
2. Identify and prioritize annual training to meet department identified areas of emphasis.
3. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and provide a formal report.
4. Analyze current skills sets and identify areas for cross-training and/or advancement training.

STRATEGY 2:
Deliver training that is effective, efficient, and accessible.

Action Steps

1. Identify complementary or alternative methods for training delivery, evaluate their effectiveness, and provide a formal report.
2. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of training delivery and provide a formal report.

STRATEGY 3:
Evaluate and revise department policies, materials, and procedures to promote individual employee development.

Action Steps

1. Update and consolidate policies, procedures, training, reference materials, and company libraries to reflect current standards and practices.
2. Ensure that departmental policies and practices are clear, consistent, and well communicated.

STRATEGY 4:
Promote personal accountability, growth and development, and the meeting of workplace expectations for all employees.

Action Steps

1. Provide on-going personnel management training for supervisors.
2. Design a voluntary mentorship program.
3. Partner with Local 27 and Local 2898 to create options for performance evaluation of uniformed members.
4. Evaluate individual accountability through performance evaluations.

Provide for the health and safety of all Seattle Fire Department employees.

STRATEGY 1:
Enhance the health and fitness of all department employees.

Action Steps

1. Develop a comprehensive health and fitness program with an emphasis on education.
2. In partnership with Local 27 and Local 2898 establish performance objectives and evaluate the fitness levels of uniform members.
3. Provide fitness incentives for members to maintain and improve fitness.
4. Establish baselines for time loss to determine whether participation in a health and fitness program reduces time loss for illness and injury.
5. Partner with other agencies to promote the health and fitness of department members.

STRATEGY 2:
Reinforce health and safety practices to reduce safety related incidents.

Action Steps

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of the pre-incident planning program and make recommendations for improvement.
2. Educate firefighters regarding their health and safety responsibilities and emphasize the importance of injury prevention.
3. Support members' successful disability rehabilitation to meet applicable city, state, federal and fire department standards.
4. Develop recommendations to identify, reduce, or eliminate firefighter safety hazards.

STRATEGY 3:
Establish and maintain programs that promote and sustain the health and fitness of all Seattle Fire Department uniformed members to reduce the likelihood of firefighter injury and death.

Action Steps

1. Establish the SFD Occupational Health and Fitness advisory committee as a standing committee.
2. Task the Health and Fitness committee with creating a health and fitness plan in conjunction with the department's comprehensive health and fitness program.
3. Annually evaluate the effectiveness of the health and fitness plan.
4. Annually evaluate the Peer Fitness Trainer Program.

GOAL: DIVERSITY

Ensure that diversity, inclusion and cultural competency are integral to the way the department functions, both internally and externally.

STRATEGY 1:
Ensure a workplace environment that welcomes and supports diversity among its employees.

Action Steps

1. Encourage diversity and inclusion effort at the highest levels of leadership.
2. Increase employee awareness regarding the benefits of a diverse workforce and how to create and maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect.
3. Provide education to ensure employee awareness of the value of diversity.

STRATEGY 2:
Support members in delivering services within Seattle's multicultural community.

Action Steps

1. Provide opportunities for members to develop a high level of cultural competency in working with multicultural communities.
2. Promote the department's Race and Social Justice Initiative annual work plan.

STRATEGY 3:
Promote the recruitment of men and women of diverse backgrounds.

Action Steps

1. Develop and implement an ongoing, targeted recruitment effort that effectively maintains diversity.
2. Increase educational and community outreach activities to underrepresented communities in Seattle.
3. Review the firefighter application process with the Public Safety Civil Service Commission to identify barriers to recruitment of a diverse applicant pool.
4. Encourage individuals of diverse backgrounds to seek promotions.

GOAL: COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

Foster community outreach and agency partnerships to strengthen department services.

STRATEGY 1:
Promote Operations Division involvement in community outreach.

Action Steps

1. Develop a community outreach plan, to include regular department participation at neighborhood and community meetings.
2. Prioritize established Operations time commitments to allow for community outreach.
3. Maintain a central coordinating system for tracking community outreach and report on outreach activities on a regular basis.
4. Designate a community outreach contact for each battalion with clear expectations of their role.

STRATEGY 2:
Cultivate partnerships with other organizations to support department services.

Action Steps

1. Evaluate current agency partnerships for effectiveness and increased opportunity and provide a formal report.
2. Establish a regular, frequent communication mechanism with partner agencies.
3. Create new agency partnerships where a mutually beneficial goal can be identified.
4. Utilize partnerships to solve problems, expand services, and inform decision-making.

STRATEGY 3:
Conduct research to identify the opinions and priorities of the community, and their awareness and support for current and proposed department programs.

Action Steps

1. Conduct community surveys.
2. Use survey results to better inform our community outreach efforts.

GOAL: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Maintain quality equipment, apparatus, facilities and technology to meet the mission of the department.

STRATEGY 1:
Create a long term technology plan.

Action Steps

1. Form a planning team to define expected outcomes and priority areas.
2. Conduct inventory and needs assessment of technology.
3. Develop a plan that includes a roadmap for optimal technology investments.

STRATEGY 2:
Plan for long term asset sustainability.

Action Steps

1. Develop a comprehensive life cycle replacement schedule for personal protective and other equipment.
2. Develop a plan to ensure quality apparatus.
3. Develop a quality maintenance plan for facilities.

STRATEGY 3:
Conduct periodic evaluations of the deployment model and revise the model as needed.

Action Steps

1. Establish a standing committee to review and annually evaluate the deployment model.
2. Establish and prioritize deployment outcome objectives such as reducing response times, and optimizing coverage to high risk areas and target populations.
3. Compile historical data, perform trend analysis and forecast deployment workloads.

STRATEGY 4:
Effectively manage responses to non-emergency calls for efficient use of department resources while maintaining quality service delivery.

Action Steps

1. Establish a group to define non-emergency events and collect historical data to use in the analysis.
2. Survey other jurisdictions and document alternative strategies for reducing non-emergency calls.
3. Conduct analysis and develop a specific process to reduce non-emergency calls.

Implementation Process

To hold ourselves accountable to deliver on the Strategic Plan, the Fire Chief will appoint Seattle Fire Department Leadership Team members to oversee its implementation. Key performance measures and timelines will be established to monitor whether strategies and action steps are being accomplished. Employees and other stakeholders will be kept updated on the progress of the plan. In this way, we hope to demonstrate the kind of accountability our partners and the public expect from the Seattle Fire Department.

NEXT STEPS

All of our programs require resources, and consideration of the goal areas will need to be incorporated into our budget process as a guide for how limited resources are allocated. With that in mind, the Seattle Fire Department will take the following specific actions to implement this plan:

1. The Fire Chief will assign an overall program manager who has responsibility to ensure accountability in monitoring the plan and the plan's implementation.
   a) The Fire Chief will assign each of the six goal areas in the plan to a specific Leadership Team member. The Leadership Team member will be responsible for creating a smaller working group. Each working group will have at least one strategic plan core group member who will serve as a project manager to help coordinate, monitor and move the goal area forward. The Leadership Team member will regularly report back to the Leadership Team on progress.
   b) Leadership Team meetings will include regular progress reports on the plan. This includes acknowledgement of any problems that may arise and a willingness on the part of leadership to help resolve those problems.
2. Seattle Fire Department leadership will clearly show a commitment to the plan's implementation.
3. Employees will receive informational updates about the progress of the plan and how it relates to any changes and operational decisions.
4. The strategic plan core working group will meet again in the first quarter of 2013. The purpose of this meeting will be to assess the progress on the implementation phase of the plan.
5. Along with ongoing review, the plan will be formally updated in 2014.

APPENDIX

Strategic Planning Working Group

Erik Brennis, Firefighter

Tricia Connolley, Administrative Staff Assistant

Tricia Ellermeier, Deputy Finance Director

Helen Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of Staff, Committee Chair

Paul Foerster, Captain

Michael Gagliano, Captain

Jay Hagen, Deputy Chief

Bryan Hastings, Deputy Chief

Roberto Jourdan, Lieutenant

Patti Mann, Firefighter/Paramedic

Tamalyn Nigretto, Battalion Chief, Local 2898

Lenny Roberts, Director of Information Systems

Kenny Stuart, Lieutenant, Local 27 President

Lisa Van Horn, Public Education Manager

Cindy Hutchings, Staff Support

Shannon Qian, Research and Evaluation Assistant

Evan Ward, Research and Evaluation Assistant

Glossary of Terms

The following terms and acronyms are essential to Seattle Fire Department's practices and procedures, and are found in the 2012 Strategic Plan:

ALS	Advanced Life Support	Critical or life threatening emergency medical calls staffed by firefighter paramedics. Skills include administering drugs, opening airways and performing more technically advanced medical care
BLS	Basic Life Support	Emergency medical calls staffed by firefighters trained as emergency medical technicians.
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation	Emergency procedure performed to keep blood and oxygen flowing to the brain and heart.
EMS	Emergency Medical Services	Pre-hospital, urgent medical care
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician	Certified provider of emergency medical services.
RSJI	Race and Social Justice Initiative	City of Seattle resolution intended to heighten awareness of institutional racism and social disparities.
POG	Policies and Operating Guidelines	Defines the rules, regulations and procedures of the Seattle Fire Department.
SFD	Seattle Fire Department	Public agency providing emergency services to the City of Seattle

External Stakeholders Interviewed

Office of Mayor Mike McGinn

Seattle City Councilmember Sally Clark, Council President

Seattle City Councilmember Bruce Harrell, Public Safety Chair

Seattle City Councilmember Tim Burgess,

Government Performance and Finance Committee Chair

Dr. Michael Copass, Medic One Director

Seattle City Budget Office

Public Health – Seattle & King County

Seattle Police Department

Seattle Office of Emergency Management

King County Healthcare Coalition

Seattle Housing Authority

Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) of Seattle

Port of Seattle

Port of Seattle Fire Department

American Medical Response

www.seattle.gov/fire