



Five Year Strategic Plan

for the

Bluffton Township Fire District

2008 - 2013

Executive Summary

The Bluffton Township Fire District's Strategic Plan provides a common sense and realistic approach to effectively guide the District's development and continued provision of excellent fire and rescue services over the next five years.

The strategic plan can only be successful if we have the commitment of our Commission, elected officials, citizens, and our personnel. To maintain consistency and ensure that our plan remains responsive to the needs of all stakeholders it will be reviewed each December and updated as necessary.

The strategic plan was developed by first assessing our community and its current situation in relation to the provision of fire and emergency services. Under this methodology, the community was analyzed to determine its needs in relation to fire and rescue services. The District's current level of service provision was then analyzed to determine its capabilities to meet the needs of the community. Comparing community needs against the District's abilities indicated areas where improvement and development are needed. This report focuses on those areas identified and provides options to develop our services for the future.

Our research indicates that Bluffton is a growing and diverse community requiring full service fire, rescue, and emergency medical services. In the recent past the community has experienced explosive growth. Maintaining our service level in the face of the growth is by far one of the biggest obstacles facing us as administrators in the Fire Department. The Department will potentially see its size nearly double in the next decade. The capital outlay for new stations, fire apparatus, and potentially ambulances will be great. At the same time there will be a need for the personnel to staff these vehicles and buildings. This too, will have a substantial cost component. To meet these needs and challenges will require us all to work together. State and local laws and ordinances limit how our budget grows. These limitations are already placing a strain on our operating budgets. Our department will need to grow at a rate greater than the limitations will allow our budget to grow. This will most definitely lead to some tough decisions down the road, if we don't plan now and find some creative ways to finance our future.

We are a performance driven and results oriented department that focuses on customer service, continuous improvement, and the safety and welfare of our

customers and employees. I believe this strategic plan provides the District with the necessary direction to provide the best possible protection of life, property, and the environment from fire and other hazards over the next five years.

Bluffton Township Fire District Administration

William Barry Turner – Fire Chief

John William Thompson, Jr. – Deputy Fire Chief

John Paul Boulware – Assistant Fire Chief

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Vision

Our vision is to create a model of excellence in fire protection and rescue delivery, to be the leaders in fire protection and rescue for the District and support a customer-directed system to the citizens of our district.

We will pursue our vision in partnership with our associates, citizens, and suppliers. We will develop innovative programs and services to benefit our citizens and enhance the overall quality of life in our community.



Mission Statement

The primary mission of the Bluffton Township Fire District is to plan, evaluate, and implement a range of programs designed to protect the lives and property of the inhabitants and visitors of the Bluffton Township Fire District from the adverse effects of fires, medical emergencies or dangerous conditions created by either man or nature.

At Bluffton Township Fire District, we are committed to providing emergency services and rescue for our District in a courteous, cost-effective and professional manner.



Core Values

Respect

We respect our customers and strive to protect their dignity, choice, and modesty.

Cost

We administer necessary fire protection and rescue services without unnecessary cost to the citizens.

Continuous Improvement

We strive to continuously improve by seeking feedback from our customers, providing fire prevention education, and improving our delivery system through training and professional development.

Leadership

We believe that we must be the leaders in guiding the community toward a fire-free environment.

Service

We maintain an attitude and a commitment of going “above and beyond” in serving our customers.

Trust

We develop a synergistic environment by fostering a climate of trust and cooperation with all team members.

Loyalty

We are loyal to our District and community by word and attitude.

Community Assessment

“Beaufort County has experienced phenomenal growth over the last decade, primarily in the area of the county located south of the Broad River. This growth and its associated pressures on public services, infrastructure and quality of life are anticipated to continue into the foreseeable future (Beaufort County, 2007)”.

As evidenced by the above statement we in Bluffton are living and working in a unique and rapidly developing and changing community which is far different than other communities in the Region. As the community continues to develop it is a logical assumption that increased pressure and demand will be placed upon the public infrastructure to meet the needs of the citizens. The Fire District is going to need to be very proactive over the next ten years to stay ahead of the growth and to maintain the provision of quality, timely, and efficient emergency services.

Historical Development Trends

Historical development trends indicate that since the inception of Planned Unit Developments (PUD’s) in the early 1960’s, several common land use and development patterns have been identified and used in our area. The following patterns are identified in the Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan (SBCRP):

1. Large, amenity based, low density master planned communities make up the majority of development in Southern Beaufort County.
2. Planning of these communities is primarily a private endeavor. The communities maintain good internal road networks, quality services, private covenants, high development standards.
3. Development of the communities has been primarily through the use of the planned unit development zoning tool for greater flexibility for site design.
4. Outside the master planned communities, government has been faced with the challenge of providing roads, infrastructure, and land use regulations to connect the rest of the community together.

5. Many of the region's current transportation inadequacies are a result of poor connectivity between the master planned communities and insufficient land being available for an adequate road network.
6. Development is spreading north and west. Modern development began on Hilton Head Island and is now spreading into Bluffton and moving toward Jasper County, Chechessee, and Hardeeville.

According to the SBCRP 89% of the total land area in Southern Beaufort County is committed to development. The majority of the land, 62%, is scheduled to be used for residential development. Non-residential applications account for approximately 6% of the total land available. Parks and other open recreation spaces account for 19%, while government, schools, and other infrastructure account for approximately 2%. This information tells us that most of the development has been approved, however, in many cases the actual structures have yet to be built or completed. In other words, what we see today is only a precursor to what is about to come.

Residential Density

Fortunately, development has been occurring at what are considered fairly low residential densities. An example of what residential density means can be found by observing Old Town Bluffton. Once all the commercial and unusable land areas are subtracted from the total land area of Old Town, the result is a residential density of 1.28 dwelling units per acre. By modern planning standards this is considered low density. Large PUD's such as Hampton Hall and Sea Pines have residential densities around 1.20 – 1.25 dwelling units per acre. Projections indicate that development will continue into the future at an even lower rate of approximately 1.11 dwelling units per acre.

Population Projections

Permanent Population

To determine a projected permanent population the county bases its estimate on the number of dwelling units that have been approved for future development through subdivisions, PUD's, and development agreements. As of 2005 the population within the Town of Bluffton was 3359. In the unincorporated areas of Southern Beaufort County the population was 24,889. Therefore, the total

population served by the Bluffton Township Fire District was approximately 28,000 persons. The projected population based upon a total “build-out” situation is 36,035 for the Town of Bluffton and 45,478 for the unincorporated areas of Southern Beaufort County. This indicates a potential total population at build out of 81,513 persons in the Fire District. Based upon the current growth rate of 8.25%, as calculated by the county, the Bluffton area could see build-out as soon as the year 2018, merely ten (10) years from now.

Seasonal Population

Seasonal visitors to the area must also be considered when planning for the future of the District. Although Hilton Head is thought of as the resort hub for the area, Bluffton is closely tied to the success of Hilton Head. In addition, as Hilton Head approaches its build-out in approximately 2020, Bluffton will become even more vital to the tourist industry. Visitors will be using our roads, businesses, and hotels as they come to the area for vacation and business. It is estimated that Southern Beaufort County can currently support a seasonal population of 50,653 (Town of Bluffton, 2007) p. 2-5). By the time build-out occurs, it is estimated this number will increase to 72,038 persons. (Town of Bluffton, 2007, p. 2-5).

Discussion

1. ***Bluffton is a growing, healthy, developing community where people feel safe.***
 - The community is made up of residents from many backgrounds, age groups, and heritages.
 - Residents value their community and the lifestyle it provides.
 - Residents are willing to support the services to maintain the community and the lifestyle. The Fire District is one of those services.

2. ***The residential density of the community is low at an average of 1.11 dwelling units per acre.***
 - Low densities mean there are fewer dwellings to protect with greater separation distances between structures.
 - Lower densities are a result of strict design standards which also include covenants requiring property owners to maintain their residences and grounds.

3. ***Most of the construction in the community is new.***
 - For the most part the major development areas within the District are relatively new having been built within the last 10 to 15 years.
 - Building and fire codes have become progressively more stringent making buildings safer from the occurrence of fire and natural disasters.
 - Enforcement of building and fire codes has become increasingly more consistent and current resulting in safer buildings and a safer community.

4. ***Projected build out of the Bluffton area could occur as early as 2018. The Bluffton Township Fire District is already behind the curve in keeping up with the expected growth.***
 - The potential is real that communities can develop prior to the services and infrastructure needed to support them. Since the developments are privately funded and the services and infrastructure are publicly funded there is always a mismatch in the way development occurs. In most cases the public entities must wait until the tax base is available prior to receiving the funding to grow proportionately with the community. Therefore, services could lag 3 -5 years behind the development placing the community at risk.

- Rapid growth within the community will also bring a need for more schools and other similar institutions. The District views these occupancies as “target” hazards. A target hazard indicates the occupancy has the potential to over-tax the available response resources. A strong relationship with these facilities is required for successful mitigation of incidents.
 - Growth will also see an increase in housing and services for the elderly, which are also target hazards. Manpower requirements for fire emergencies doubles that of which is needed in more routine situations which places a burden on the response system.
5. ***With build out potentially occurring in 10 years, the fire department will need to approximately double in size during this timeframe to maintain services.***
- This will have serious impact at all levels of the organization. With the increase in personnel, equipment, and fixed facilities the budget must also grow proportionately.
 - Supervisory personnel with the necessary experience to lead fire companies will be difficult to find. The training function of the department will be taxed in attempting to develop qualified leaders for the many new positions that must be created. This is a potential safety issue.
6. ***County provided services are not keeping up with the current growth rate. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that those services will get better as the community continues to rapidly develop.***
- The Fire District can expect to take on more of the burden, especially in the EMS area as the community develops.
 - EMS provision requires specialized training and equipment that the District does not currently maintain. (Additional paramedics, ambulances, and monitoring equipment).
7. ***Currently 89% of the usable land in Mainland Southern Beaufort County is approved for development or already has development on it. This leaves little property for transportation networks and new infrastructure to support growth.***
- Available land is becoming scarcer for purchase. This in turn is making the remaining property more expensive to purchase. Acquiring property for new fire stations will become increasingly more difficult and costly.

- Many of the PUD's, subdivisions, and developments have excellent internal road systems. However, the neighborhoods outside of these areas have less sophisticated systems.
 - One of the biggest problems noted in the SBCRP (2007) was the lack of connectivity between the neighborhoods in Southern Beaufort County. Many of the PUD's have private road networks that are not accessible by the general public. This becomes a response issue for the fire department when accesses to large areas of the community are controlled at one or possibly two access points.
 - The Fire District will need to work with Town and County officials to assist in securing property and or funding through development agreements and other means to support the growth of the Fire Department to meet the needs of the citizens.
8. *With community growth, the opportunity is available to plan and strategically develop the fire department to meet the needs of the community.*
- Land uses are already known, even though in many areas construction has yet to begin. This gives the District the advantage to forecast and properly plan for station and equipment locations.
9. *The community supports its fire service. There is a great opportunity to strengthen that support by enhancing public education programs and community involvement.*
- Bluffton is an active community with citizens that enjoy being involved. As the community grows, hopefully, we will see this involvement increase. The Fire District needs to take the opportunity to become more involved.
 - Enhancing public education programs will also help us build a more fire safe community. By starting with the community as it grows, the opportunity is there to reinforce fire safety and prevention.
10. *By understanding the community's development future, there is an opportunity to start budget planning to prepare for the growth of the Fire District.*
- Current projections indicate population growth is occurring at a rate of 8.25%. Call volume for the Fire District is increasing at a rate of approximately 8.7% (averaged over the last five years). Budget growth is limited by state law and is not growing at a rate

sufficient to meet our needs. With this information and other factors available such as the salary market value study, we have the opportunity to plan for the means we are going to use to pay for future growth. If we do not plan carefully now, our budget will not be able to support our operation in the future.

11. *The slowing of the economy is already having an impact on the County's ability to fund services.*
 - Emergency medical services provided by the county will definitely be impacted. The fire department needs to be ready to provide these services to maintain a safe community.
 - This is a tremendous opportunity to supplement the budget for growing the department.
12. *The threat exists that the fire department will not be able to grow at an acceptable rate to keep up with development.*
13. *With the current growth rate, there will be an increase in school buildings, nursing facilities, and other such types of institutions placing a greater demand on emergency services. This is a threat to public safety if the department is not fully prepared and staffed.*
14. *There is the possibility that development agreements can be renegotiated over time. This could potentially result in higher residential densities requiring additional consideration when planning for services. Ultimately this will result in more cost to the District.*
15. *State mandated property tax caps will potentially impact our future operating budget. The budget may not be able to increase in a manner that supports the growth of the area.*

Fire Department Assessment

The Bluffton Township Fire District was formed by the Beaufort County Council in 1978 to provide fire and rescue services to all areas of Beaufort County, south of the Broad River not to include Hilton Head and Daufuskie Islands. The Department is governed by a Board of Commissioners appointed by the County Council. The original department started with one small station manned by volunteers in downtown Bluffton. The single station provided coverage to the entire Fire District, an area of approximately 246 square miles. Although the land area of the Fire District has not changed since the department's inception, the population, density, and type of structures needing protection have changed. The District is becoming more commercial and the department is growing and changing to meet this need.

The current fire department consists of five divisions. Those divisions are Administration, Emergency Services Operations, Fire Prevention, Maintenance and Training. The five divisions coordinate and work together to provide the structure and support necessary to operate the fire department. Each division is described in detail below.

Administrative Division

The Administrative Division consists of the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Human Resources Director, Director of Finance and the Information Technology (IT) Administrator. The Fire Chief coordinates closely with the Bluffton Township Fire District Commission and creates the direction for the fire department.

The Deputy Fire Chief supports the Fire Chief and coordinates closely with the other divisions to insure the necessary planning and direction is provided so the department can operate smoothly and efficiently.

The Administrator of Human Resources supports the operation of the department by maintaining the payroll system, employee benefits, personnel records, and other human resource related issues.

The Administrator of Finance supports the operation of the department by maintaining the fiscal budget, maintaining the department's finances, providing budget reports, receiving and paying debts, and providing direction on the

procedures to be used for the purchasing of materials and resources required to support the department.

The IT Administrator supports the operation of the department by providing and maintaining the necessary computer resources (hardware and software), telephone systems, and other related information systems to insure the proper technical exchange of information between all portions of the organization.

The Administrative Division is supported by one part-time Administrative Assistant.

Operations Division

The Operations Division is the largest Division of the department and consists of the Assistant Chief of Operations, the Shift Battalion Chiefs, Company Officers and Firefighters. The District Training Officer is also assigned to the Operations Division. The Operations Division is responsible for preparing for and responding to emergency incidents that may occur within the Fire District.

The Assistant Chief of Operations provides day to day oversight and direction for emergency service provision. The Assistant Chief of Operations coordinates closely with the Deputy Fire Chief and Training Officer to insure operations are meeting the overall goals and objectives of the department. The Assistant Chief of Operations directly supervises the Shift Battalion Chiefs and monitors work progress of all employees providing emergency service delivery to determine areas needing improvement and further development.

Each shift is commanded by a Battalion Chief who assigns and monitors the work of the shift. The Battalion Chief also serves as Incident Commander on incidents involving more than one emergency apparatus or crew. The Battalion Chief serves as the liaison between the response staff and the administration. The Battalion Chief directly supervises the Company Officer's assigned to the shift.

The Company Officers (Lieutenants and Captains) take direction from the Battalion Chief and directly supervise their crew of firefighters. Company Officers are the first line supervisors within the department and have the most direct contact with the public we serve. The Company Officers are also responsible for insuring their personnel are properly trained, equipped, and

prepared to perform their job duties at any given time. Current services provided by the Operations Division include:

- Fire suppression
- EMS first response and treatment
- Specialized rescue services (extrication, trench, and confined space)
- Hazardous materials response and mitigation
- Urban search and rescue
- Community service and support calls (trees in road, lift and assist, bike teams for large events, etc.)

The Operations Division is supported by one full time Administrative Assistant who is assigned primarily to the Training Division.

Fire Prevention Division

The Fire Prevention Bureau is made up of the Fire Marshal, Assistant Fire Marshal, Public Education Officer, two Deputy Fire Marshals and an Administrative Assistant. The Fire Prevention Division is committed to providing the highest level of expertise and professional service to our customers. The Division supports the needs of other departmental divisions, by reducing the hazards and complications that emergency personnel may face when responding to emergency situations. This is done through education, engineering, and enforcement. The Division has four core responsibilities:

- Fire and life safety Inspections (code compliance issues)
- Plan Examination and Review
- Fire origin and cause Investigations
- Fire and Life Safety Education

Fire and Life Safety Inspections (Code Compliance)

Inspectors for the Fire Prevention Division conduct annual code compliance inspections. These inspections include, but are not limited to:

- New and existing commercial structures
- Industrial facilities
- Multi-family dwellings
- Public assembly occupancies
- Hospitals/Nursing Homes
- Schools
- Hotels
- Fire/life safety systems and equipment

- Business License Inspections for the Town of Bluffton
- Aboveground tanks

Inspections to assist Beaufort County's Building Department are available upon request and generally include Certificates of Occupancy inspections and Sprinkler-Alarm System Installation inspections.

Plan Examination and Review

The Plans Examiner for the Fire Prevention Division is responsible for verifying compliance of construction with applicable codes and standards. Fire Prevention examines these plans to assure:

- Proper emergency access
- Building complies with the Fire Code
- Proper fire flow can be met
- Needed fire protection features (FDC, Hydrant, etc) are properly placed

Fire Origin and Cause Investigations

The Fire Prevention Division strives to reduce the number of accidental fires and injuries by identifying origin and cause(s) of all fires and educating people on these determinations. The Division is committed to providing the time and resources for assisting law enforcement agencies on suspicious fire investigation scenes which may lead to a suspect's arrest. Fire origin and cause investigations are also used to establish a database of causes of accidental fires so the District may monitor patterns and structure public education programs and press/media releases to address known fire causes.

Fire and Life Safety Education

The Fire Prevention Office identifies education as the primary objective of this Division. The Public Education Coordinator oversees Fire and Life Safety Education for the Fire District. The coordinator is responsible for planning, directing, managing, supervising, preparing, and presenting programs of instruction intended to educate and inform the public regarding fire and life safety issues. The Public Education Officer is also responsible for facilitating case management of identified fire-setters for assessment, education, and reference purposes.

The Fire Prevention Division provides training and literature to any interested group or organization as part of our Public Education efforts.

Essential Duties of the Fire Prevention Division

The Division is also responsible for approving the following list of permits. These permits may include:

- Residential Burn Permits
- Commercial Burn Permits
- Fireworks Permits
- Tent Permits and Inspection

The Fire Prevention Division also assures quality control of pre-incident plans in regards to ISO specifications for commercial occupancies, as well as provides and ensures quality control of all inspection reports to include data entry, tracking, facilitation of case logs, missing or incomplete reports.

Maintenance Division

The Maintenance Division is made up of the Maintenance Supervisor and one full time mechanic. The Maintenance Division provides vehicle maintenance services to the fleet used by the Fire District. Maintenance provides both mobile and fixed services as needed with two fully equipped service vehicles. The fixed facility (garage) is located in the Black Diamond Business Park and is large enough to contain one fire apparatus and one vehicle simultaneously.

Services currently provided by the Maintenance Division include:

- Periodic maintenance (oil changes, fluid checks, visual inspection of all components, etc.) on all District vehicles
- Routine maintenance (tire changes, brakes, hoses, belts, lights, etc.)
- Engine work (diesel and gasoline)
- Minor body repair (installing components, mounting equipment, etc.)
- Small equipment maintenance (saws, mowers, blowers, etc.)
- Electrical repair (electrical systems and components, etc.)
- Building maintenance as needed.

The Maintenance Division utilizes the software package "FleetPro" to generate work orders, track repairs, inventory, and other management functions.

Maintenance personnel are in the process of obtaining national vehicle technician

certifications through the Emergency Vehicle Technician Commission. Maintenance is currently not supported by an Administrative Assistant.

Training Division

The Training Division consists of the District Training Officer and a part time Medical Training Officer. The primary mission of the Training Division is to provide all employees with the educational and training opportunities to achieve and maintain proficiency in their assigned job. In addition, the Training Division is responsible for insuring that all Federal, State, and Local laws, codes, certifications, and ordinances are followed. Training provides a wide array of opportunities including:

- Entry level skills training and evaluation
- Company officer training
- Medical training
- Driver/operator training
- Company level training (drills and exercises)
- Promotional and advancement testing

Stations, Facilities, and Equipment

**Fire Station #30 – 2 Bridge Street
Bluffton Old Town
Fire Prevention Bureau
Engine 320
Reserve Engine
Beaufort County EMS 6
Constructed in 1980**



Station 30



Engine 320

Station 30, located in the heart of Old Town Bluffton is the oldest facility owned and operated by the Fire District. The station is home to Engine Company 320 and also houses a reserve apparatus. Station 30 is the busiest fire station in the

district and responded to 1130 alarms (30% of the District total) in 2007. The station's reliability factor for 2007 was 92% indicating there is adequate equipment and staffing in the station to meet the response needs of the area it serves.

The station is in need of updating and serious repair. The building has more than served its purpose and as the department has grown so has the need for additional space. Currently, the engine company shares quarters with Beaufort County's EMS 6. In addition the Fire Prevention Bureau occupies space in the station as well. In addition, the station is in serious need of a new back up power generating system.

Engine 320 is a 2005 Pierce. The truck is capable of pumping up to 1750 gallons of water per minute. The truck carries 750 gallons on board. The truck is equipped with the necessary equipment to meet current Insurance Services Office (ISO) requirements. The vehicle is in very good condition with a life expectancy of at least 12 years.

**Fire Station #31 – 178 May River Road
Pritchardville
Engine 321
Tanker 341
Constructed in 2003**



Station 31



Engine 321

Station 31 was built in 2005 and provides service to the Pritchardville Community. The station houses Engine Company 321 and Tanker 341. There are several areas in the station's service



Tanker 341

area that are not yet hydrated. Tanker 341 provides a portable water supply for these areas. The station is in very good condition and has fixed back-up power in place. However, it is lacking in storage space and ample physical fitness training areas. Engine 321 is a 2003 Pierce Saber “all-steer” apparatus with the unique feature of being able to steer with both the front and rear wheels. This allows the vehicle to access narrow streets and tight areas such as those found in the Village at Palmetto Bluff. Engine 321 is equipped with a 1500 gallon per minute fire pump and carries 750 gallons of water on board. Engine 321 was actually purchased for the Palmetto Bluff station and is in currently service at Station 31 awaiting the construction of the Palmetto Bluff station. The estimated service life for Engine 321 is 12 years.

Tanker 341 is 2001 Volvo water tender. The truck carries 3000 gallons of water for firefighting purposes. The estimated service life for tanker 341 is 15 years.

**Station #32 – 155 Callawassie Drive
Okatie, SC
Engine 322
Beaufort County EMS – 9
Constructed in 1998**



Station 32

Station 32 is located just outside the Callawassie Plantation gate and serves the northern most part of the Fire District. The station is owned by the Fire District with space rented out to Beaufort County EMS for the housing and response base for EMS – 9. The station contains Engine 322 which is a 2002 Pierce Saber capable of pumping 1500 gallons of water per minute. The truck carries 750 gallons of water on board for firefighting purposes if needed. The life expectancy of Engine 322 is approximately 10 years.

The station is in good condition and is located as centrally as possible to cover its response area which is the largest in the District. The addition of a fire station on the Oldfield tract will drastically reduce the response area but will do little to address the issue of response times into the remote areas of Callawassie and Spring Island. Short of building an additional station within Callawassie, this will continue to be an issue for the District.

**Station #33 – 12 Buckingham Plantation Drive
Moss Creek, Jenkins Island, Buckingham Areas
Engine 323
Ladder 373
Constructed in 1993**



Station 33

Station 33 is located just off of Fording Island Road and serves the Jenkins Island, Wilton Graves Bridge, Buckingham and Moss Creek, areas. The station houses Engine 323 which is a 2007 Sutphen Monarch pumper. Engine 323 is the newest truck in the District's fleet and is capable of pumping 1500 gallons of water per minute. Ladder 373 is also housed at Station 33 and is a 1997 Pierce Dash "quint". Ladder 373 can pump 1500 gallons of water per minute and carries a 75 foot aerial device. Ladder 373 serves as the District's reserve aerial apparatus.

The building is in relatively good condition. The station's generator was recently replaced with a portable diesel model that has the capacity to power the entire station in the event of power loss. The generator can also be disconnected and transported with the District in the event of hurricane evacuation. As with all District fire stations space and storage areas are very limited.

**Station #34 – 25 William Pope Drive
Sun City Area
Engine 324
Beaufort County EMS-8
Constructed in 1996**



Station 34

Station 34 is located just outside the main gate for Sun City. The station is shared with Beaufort County's EMS-8. The building is actually owned by the County and the District provides one-half of the utilities and operating supply for the station. The station houses Engine 324 which is a 2006 Sutphen Monarch pumper capable of pumping 1500 gallons of water per minute. The engine is in very good condition and has an expected service life of 10 – 12 years.

Since the building is owned by the County, the District has little input into its maintenance. It is a goal of the District to work with the County to have more input into the maintenance and upkeep of the Station. However, the building is very small with little to no storage area. Work-out space is also very limited. Due to recent construction in the area, the drainage pattern for the area has changed. During periods of heavy rain the parking areas at the rear of the station flood. In the event of a hurricane or strong tropical storm, it should be expected that flood waters will enter the building and possibly make it unusable. Back-up electrical power is limited at the station as well.

Station #35 – 357 Fording Island Road
Headquarters Fire Station
Engine 325
Truck 375
Utility 365
Constructed in 2002



Station 35

Station 35 is located centrally in the Fire District and serves as the Headquarters station. The building is in very good condition and houses Engine 325, Truck 375, Utility 365 and the administrative offices for the Fire District. Engine 325 is a 2000 KME “rescue” pumper. The truck is capable of pumping 1500 gallons of water per minute and carries additional rescue equipment for motor vehicle collision extrications, trench rescues, confined space rescues, and other specialized type rescues. The truck is one of the oldest in the active fleet and is in need of replacement or serious upgrade.

Truck 375 is a 2006 Sutphen SPH 100 tower ladder. The truck is equipped with a 100 foot boom, aerial platform and 2000 gallon per minute water pump. The truck also assists Engine 375 by carrying specialized rescue equipment. Truck 375 was implemented as a staffed company in December 2007. The crews of the truck are still learning their jobs and responsibilities. The hazards and make-up of the District have evolved to indicate a fully staffed truck company is required to provide safe, efficient, service. Truck 375 has a projected life expectancy of fifteen years.

Utility 365 is a Ford panel van truck equipped with a cascade unit for breathing air, tools, and other salvage equipment. The vehicle responds to all working fires

or other incidents as needed. The vehicle is typed by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) as a "service" vehicle meaning it responds with additional tools and support to prevent property loss at the scene of a structural fire.

Of all the District's fire stations, Station 35 is the largest and best designed for the purpose of housing fire companies. The station is broken into two primary areas. The first area houses the administration of the District including the Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief, Battalion Chief, Training Officer, Financial Director, and Human Resources Director. The second area of the station houses the personnel on duty. The Station includes an adequately sized kitchen area, dayroom area, training room and individual sleeping areas.

The only two administrative functions not currently housed at Station #35 are the Maintenance function and the Fire Prevention Bureau. Plans are underway to look at the feasibility of bringing these functions to Station #35 as well.

Current Response Staffing Levels

Currently the Fire District has six fire stations, with three full time shifts, 103 full time paid employees and an additional 15 volunteer firefighters. Each shift is assigned one Battalion Chief, seven Company Officers and 22 Firefighters for a total of 30 personnel at full staffing. However, due to vacation, sick leave, school, and other approved leave the department rarely operates at full staffing. The lowest number of firefighters required to operate the department is 24 per shift. We refer to this number as "minimum staffing." Under minimum staffing most engine companies are staffed with three personnel. The only exception to this rule is Station 32 at Callawassie which is always staffed with four personnel. Station 32 is extremely remote and time frames for back up assistance are close to 10 minutes. For this reason the station is maintained at four personnel. Another specialized staffing situation occurs at Station 31 where Tanker 341 is always manned with a driver. Response policy dictates that Tanker 341 respond with Engine 321 on all structure fires in Station 31's first and second due response areas due to the lack of permanent water supplies in much of the response area. Tanker 341 delivers 3000 gallons of additional water for firefighting operations. The tanker also responds to brush fires, large motor vehicle collisions, and other situations throughout the District where a permanent water supply may not be readily accessible.

Staffing on emergency incidents may be supplemented by off-duty and volunteer response but this is not considered a reliable resource. The majority of the firefighters have been issued pagers for use on and off-duty. However, many of the firefighters fail to carry the pagers off-duty. Since our stations do not have individualized tones, a single tone system is utilized to notify personnel of the need for an emergency response. Therefore, members wearing pagers hear all calls, twenty four hours a day. The number of calls requiring an off-duty response is less than 10%. As a result, personnel turn their pagers off once they leave the station. The administration is exploring ways to alleviate this issue by adding an "off-duty" response tone to the pagers.

Current Training Levels

Basic Firefighter Training

All firefighters are trained and certified to the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) Firefighter 2 level. All new firefighters who cannot show proof of IFSAC certification attend seven weeks of training (known as recruit school) at the South Carolina Fire Academy (SCFA). The SCFA is considered one of the premier firefighter training facilities in the United States. In addition to the IFSAC Firefighter I and II certifications, new firefighters also receive training and certification to the Operations level in Hazardous Materials while in recruit school. Upon completion of the SCFA recruit school employees meet all the requirements for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and National Fire Protection Association as a firefighter. New employees also undergo an intense orientation program over their first year to acclimate to the department, the procedures, and the methodologies of operations of the District.

Company Officer Training

All Company Officers are trained and certified to at least the IFSAC Fire Officer I level. Lieutenants and Captains receive specialized training in incident management, strategy and tactics, and leadership development. Battalion Chiefs receive the same training as the Lieutenants and Captains and are required to attend at least one National Fire Academy Course prior to promotion. All company officers are also required to attend quarterly training on subjects directly related to their jobs and the management of their personnel. Attendance at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland is also strongly

recommended for all company officers. The company officer training program is currently under review by the Training Division.

Medical Training

Prior to February 1, 2008, all response personnel were required to obtain and maintain certification as medical first responders. On February 1, 2008 the standards were upgraded to require all new employees to obtain certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT). South Carolina uses the National Registry of EMT's training and certification program as its training program. Personnel who successfully complete the training are certified by both the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) and the National Registry. Currently the department has 35 employees certified as EMT's. The department also has 14 personnel certified as Paramedics (advanced EMT's). Paramedics are permitted to perform skills above and beyond those of the basic EMT's. These skills involve advanced life support skills such as cardiac monitoring, defibrillation, intravenous (IV) therapy, and drug administration. As with basic EMT's all paramedics are certified by the National Registry and DHEC.

All personnel regardless of their certification participate in a rigid In-Service Training (IST) program offered by the department. IST consists of two hours of training per month on medically related skills, subjects, and issues per member. The IST program is certified by both DHEC and the National Registry and the training conducted in the program qualifies for re-certification continuing education units. Although medical training is currently sufficient for the needs of the department, as we grow and the department moves more toward an EMS provision agency, the IST program will have to be reviewed and assessed for its viability.

Specialized Training Programs

The department supports several specialty teams. Those teams are:

- Bluffton/Hilton Head Island Hazardous Materials Response Team
- Bluffton/Hilton Head Island COBRA (WMD) Basic Response Team
- Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)Regional Response Team 4
- South Carolina Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 1 Response Team
- Bluffton Township Fire District Confined Space Rescue Response Team

Personnel serving on these teams undergo training above and beyond that required for the other firefighters. Personnel have attended training at such institutions as:

- National Energetic Materials Research and Test Center (NEMRTC), Socorro, NM.
- US Army Chemical/Biological Research and Test Center, Anniston, AL.
- Bechtel Corporation Radiological Research Facility, Las Vegas, NV.
- Texas A&M Extension Service (TEEX), College Station, TX
- Louisiana State University Emergency Response College, Baton Rouge, LA.

In addition to attending the specialized off-site training, personnel on specialized teams also drill together on a regular basis locally. In the recent National Guard exercise (Vigilant Guard 2008) our teams were recognized as some of the best in the state. Because of the amount of training required to provide these services, personnel on specialized teams will continue to have to attend training programs off-site not only in the immediate future, but for years to come.

Advanced Education – College Degrees

The District is interested in assisting its members to achieve a college degree to enhance their career. Minimum entrance requirements currently do not require a degree for employment. However, the position of Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Assistant Chief of Operations and Battalion Chief indicate a bachelor's degree or higher is desired. Credit is given year for year for experience to those employees who do not have a degree (4 years experience above and beyond the normal experience requirement for a position qualifies for a Bachelor's Degree). An additional requirement of National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program participation and/or completion is also listed as desirable for Deputy Chief and Fire Chief. Currently there are four employees with Associate Degrees, six employees with Bachelor's Degrees, and one employee with a Master's Degree. One employee is currently enrolled in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. The department currently provides no tuition reimbursement or other assistance to those pursuing a degree. This is an area the department is investigating for enhancement in the future to encourage more of its personnel to develop professionally with fire service associated degrees.

Response Statistics

Response statistics are commonly used by fire departments nationwide to measure performance and effectiveness. The most commonly used statistics are:

- Incident statistics
- Response times and associated parameters
- Injury/fatality statistics (Firefighters and civilians)
- Occupancy and inspection statistics

Like all progressive modern fire departments the Bluffton Township Fire District maintains such statistics. Statistics are analyzed to determine trends and identify potential needs and areas for improvement. The community's need for our services is continuing to grow. Maintaining statistics will continue to be a priority for the department. Currently the District derives its statistical data from a variety of sources including:

- *Firehouse Records Management Software* – Fire service reporting and data management software.
- *Quicken Bookkeeping Software* – Financial management.
- *FleetPro* – Vehicle maintenance management software
- *Beaufort County* – Planning documents, growth estimates, development information, financial information, etc.
- *Town of Bluffton* - Planning documents, growth estimates, development information, etc.

There are a myriad of additional sources of information the District consults each day to support its operation. The sources listed above are the most commonly used.

Incident Statistics

Incident statistics provide valuable information on how many times, for what types of emergencies, and where the department is responding. Incident statistics include such items as:

- Types of incidents to which the department responds.
- Number of incidents to which the department responds.
- Alarm distribution figures based on a normal day, week, and month.
- Property saved versus property threatened values.

This information is used to identify areas in which there may be issues related to fire protection in the community. Historical data is collected and compared to

identify trends. Public information and education programs can then be developed to address the needs identified. Using the same logic, trends may also indicate areas where improvement is needed on the suppression side of the organization. This can indicate the need for new or additional equipment and staffing, increased training, new or revised policies, and response changes.

The District records incident statistics in nine categories. The categories are:

- Category 1: Fire
- Category 2: Rupture/Explosion with No Fire
- Category 3: Rescue and EMS
- Category 4: Hazardous Conditions with No Fire
- Category 5: Service Calls
- Category 6: Good Intent Calls
- Category 7: False Alarm and False Call
- Category 8: Severe Weather and Natural Disasters
- Category 9: Special Incident Types

These categories follow requirements established by the Federal Government under the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). Information collected is used at the local level, but is also submitted to the State of South Carolina for compilation with data from other departments. Eventually the information is grouped with data from across the nation to help identify the overall fire problem in the United States.

As expected a careful review indicates our call volume is increasing. A ten year historical look at call volume indicates an increase since 1998 of approximately 200%. In 1998 the department responded to 1260 incidents while in 2007 the department responded to 3765 incidents. The current flattening of the economy is having an impact on growth in the area and indications are this trend may continue for the next one to two years. Call volume in 2007 was only 3.4% higher than that in 2006. The Administration believes maintaining a conservative growth estimate for the next five years is an acceptable practice. The tables below indicate the effects on call volume based upon a 4%, 5%, and 6% increase in the volume of our calls for service.

4% Increase in Call Volume

Category	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1	200	208	216	225	234	243
2	12	12	13	13	14	15
3	1668	1735	1804	1876	1951	2029
4	73	76	79	82	85	89
5	168	175	182	189	197	204
6	827	860	894	930	967	1006
7	513	534	555	577	600	624
8	7	7	8	8	8	9
9	297	309	321	334	347	361
Total	3765	3916	4072	4235	4405	4669

5% Increase in Call Volume

Category	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1	200	210	221	232	243	255
2	12	13	13	14	15	15
3	1668	1751	1839	1931	2027	2129
4	73	77	80	85	89	93
5	168	176	185	194	204	214
6	827	868	912	957	1005	1055
7	513	539	566	594	624	655
8	7	7	8	8	9	9
9	297	312	327	344	361	379
Total	3765	3953	4151	4358	4576	4851

6% Increase in Call Volume

Category	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1	200	212	225	238	252	268
2	12	13	13	14	15	16
3	1668	1768	1874	1987	2106	2232
4	73	77	82	87	92	98
5	168	178	189	200	212	225
6	827	877	929	985	1044	1107
7	513	544	576	611	648	687
8	7	7	8	8	9	9
9	297	315	334	354	375	397
Total	3765	3991	4230	4484	4753	5038

Even at 4%, the total call volume increase is significant enough to warrant careful consideration. Statistics indicate the department will continue to become more heavily involved in EMS. In general, as an area grows there tends to be more stress placed upon the EMS and law enforcement systems rather than the fire suppression system since both services are directly related to the human element

found in the community. The fire department will continue to see an increase in emergency medical incidents because it provides first response medical services.

Response Time

Response time is a measurement of how quickly the District can place personnel and equipment on an emergency scene and deploy those resources to affect a positive result. The measurement of response times has long been a tool used by the emergency services as benchmarks to measure service levels. Response time consists of three components.

The first component is call processing time and dispatch. This time is measured from the time the phone is answered in the Dispatch office until the call is completely dispatched to the emergency responders which in this case is the fire department. The nationally recognized standard for call processing time is a total of 60 seconds, 95% of the time. (NFPA 1710, 2004 edition)

The second component is what is known as turnout time. This time is measured from the time the tones activate in the fire station until the unit is enroute and rolling toward the emergency incident. During this time period firefighters must react to the tones, don the appropriate PPE, board the apparatus, and start the response. The nationally recognized standard for turnout time is a total of 60 seconds, 90% of the time. (NFPA 1710, 2004 edition)

The third component is what is known as travel time. This is the time it takes the engine to drive to and arrive on the scene of a fire or medical emergency. The nationally recognized standard is four minutes or less, 90% of the time for the first truck to arrive and 8 minutes or less, 90% of the time for the entire first due complement of equipment to arrive and deploy. On EMS calls the standard calls for a first responder or higher level person to arrive on scene in four minutes or less, 90% of the time. An Advanced Life Support unit should arrive within 8 minutes or less, 90% of the time. (NFPA 1710, 2004 edition)

The three components added together make up the response time for an incident. Some services record deployment time as an additional measure. NFPA does not recognize this as a benchmark and includes deployment time in the travel time measurement.

Currently the Fire District is dispatched by Beaufort County Emergency Management. As a result the District has little control over the call processing and dispatch time frame.

In addition, the District does not currently track turnout time. This is the time frame between the tone sound in the station and the enroute time. Currently personnel are not entering this time. The time is considered a part of the travel time (see travel time below). As a result, the reporting software is not tracking this time.

The software does track the following times:

- Time enroute to the scene (10-76 time)
- Time of arrival on the scene (10-23 time)
- Time the unit cleared the scene and is available for another call (10-24 time)
- Time the unit is secured back in the station. (Signal 110 time)

The time between the tone sound and the arrival time on scene is what the District considers its response time. The average response time for 2007 was 5 minutes, 37 seconds. This figure was computed by taking the total number of minutes spent responding for all units and dividing the total by the number of alarms. Although this number sounds relatively low, it can be misleading. The District is diverse and station locations play a large part in the overall response averages. The following data taken from the 2007 Annual Report indicates the diversity in response times across the District

Station	Shift 1	Shift 2	Shift 3	All Shifts
30	05:11/332 calls	06:02/257 calls	05:03/280 calls	05:03/869 calls
31	07:06/92 calls	06:02/87 calls	06:50/70 calls	06:39/249 calls
32	07:41/60 calls	07:13/61 calls	07:26/53 calls	07:27/174 calls
33	04:10/153 calls	04:41/164 calls	04:32/137 calls	04:28/454 calls
34	07:12/218 calls	05:59/123 calls	06:26/163 calls	06:39/504 calls
35	05:37/226 calls	05:20/266 calls	05:35/248 calls	05:30/740 calls
All Stations	05:50/1081 calls	05:22/958 calls	05:37/951 calls	05:37/2990 calls

As is demonstrated by the chart above, an average of response times is just that, an average. A station with a relatively small protection area such as Station #33 (Moss Creek) has a respectable response average of 4 minutes, 28 seconds. While a large districted area such as Station #32 (Callawassie) has a long response time average of 7 minutes, 27 seconds. This is approaching twice the response time of Station #33.

A closer look at these two stations indicates that Station #33 is much busier than Station #32. Station #33's protection area is more heavily populated than Station

#32's. In addition, Station #33 provides services along Fording Island Road (US 278) which also increases its call volume.

Unit Response Reliability

As evidenced above, station location plays a big part in the overall response time and the ability of the District to place resources where it needs them when it needs them. Another factor that is gaining popularity in the emergency services is determining the reliability of a station location. Station reliability basically looks at how many times do multiple calls for service for a particular unit occur?

For example use Engine 320 which is first due out of Station #30. The chart above indicates that Engine 320 ran a total of 869 calls in 2007 with an average response time of 5 minutes, 3 seconds. Engine 320 is the busiest engine company in the District. How reliable is Engine 320? In other words how many times was Engine 320 on a call when another call came in for its response area? Records indicate that Engine 320 is available for calls in its District 92% of the time. Only 8% of the time was there another call in Engine 320's district that another unit had to cover. A reliability factor of greater than 75% is considered acceptable by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI).

This is the benchmark most progressive fire departments strive to meet. If the reliability of a unit drops below the 75% mark, a situation called cueing may occur. Cueing indicates there are numerous times where calls had to be answered by another unit or "stacked" until the primary unit could clear another call to answer them. When this occurs, this indicates the need for another unit in the station to assist with the call volume. Currently none of our stations meet this criterion for requiring additional units.

Station	Unit	Reliability Percentage
30	Engine 320	92
31	Engine 321	95
32	Engine 322	98
33	Engine 323	96
34	Engine 324	91
35	Engine 325	89

Laws, Regulations and Standards

The District must comply with many laws, regulations, and standards. As in any business with employees, the District must comply with all federal, state, and local labor regulations. The largest two areas being that of occupational workplace safety, which is monitored by SCOSHA) and proper calculation and payment of wages for hours worked. At this time the District is in compliance with these regulations.

Information in the Annual Report for 2007 indicated an unusually high number of minor workplace injuries. Since these injuries occurred on duty the result was several hours of lost time for employees and ultimately an increase in our Worker's Compensation premiums. Safety is a primary concern for the administration and steps are being taken to reduce the incidence of workplace injuries.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) publishes consensus standards for all aspects of the fire and life safety industry. Although these standards do not usually carry the weight of law, they are nationally recognized as best practices for fire service delivery, code enforcement, and safety policy. NFPA has input into everything we do from the design of our fire trucks, to the specifications of our protective gear, to the stations from which we operate and the way in which we respond and handle emergencies. As technology changes and time advances so do the standards. The Standards have become increasingly stringent with a resulting increased dollar cost required to achieve and maintain compliance.

The District attempts, like all progressive fire departments, to follow the NFPA standards. The main standards impacting us directly are NFPA 1901: Standard For Automotive Fire Apparatus, NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program, NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments and NFPA 1971: Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting.

Currently the personal protective equipment (PPE) worn by our firefighters meets the requirements of NFPA 1971. A complete set of PPE includes a protective jacket, protective pants, protective boots, helmet, gloves, and protective hood. The cost for a set of PPE is approximately \$1850.00. Like most

equipment, the components wear out, especially under the stresses and conditions in which firefighters work. We estimate a set of gear will last approximately five years if properly maintained. To replace 100 +/- sets of gear in one lump sum is extremely cost prohibitive, especially in the budget process we currently use. Therefore, a replacement plan is under development to replace approximately 1/5 of the members gear each year. At current rates this means approximately 20 sets of new gear each year.

Currently our fire apparatus fleet is designed and specified to meet the NFPA 1901 Standard. However, in 2007, the Standard changed drastically in relation to the power plant used for the apparatus. New diesel engine standards designed to reduce emissions and protect the environment added approximately \$12,000.00 to the cost of a fire apparatus. In addition, several safety upgrades also added cost to the vehicles. The Standard is scheduled for update in 2009. Further safety enhancements and even stricter diesel standards will increase the cost of fire apparatus an additional \$15,000.00. As we continue to grow and need additional apparatus, the Administration will be monitoring closely the changes and cost increases. An apparatus replacement plan is needed to properly plan for costs. At the same time firefighting personnel are being instructed and supervised to maintain the vehicles we currently have in our fleet to increase vehicle life expectancy.

The District attempts to comply with NFPA 1500 and its related standards as closely as possible. However, the document is close to 1800 pages in length and is extremely comprehensive. Very few departments are in full compliance with the document. Most departments attempt to meet the main components of the document such as maintaining a safety program, providing for firefighter physicals and health (this is also an OSHA requirement), on scene accountability and adopting an incident management system. The District is currently in compliance with all of these components. The District's overall safety program is lacking as it is not well documented. In addition, there is not a detailed training plan related directly to safety. These are both issues currently under review by the administration.

As with other NFPA Standards, the District attempts to follow NFPA 1710 as closely as possible. NFPA 1710 deals primarily with the manner in which the District provides service. The standard sets benchmarks for response time, staffing, and operations at fire and EMS incidents. The standard identifies the following benchmarks for paid fire departments:

Staffing	
Engine Companies	4 Persons Minimum
Truck Companies	4 Persons Minimum

Response Guidelines – Fires	
Call Processing Time*	60 seconds or less 90% of the time
Turnout Time	60 seconds or less 90% of the time
Arrival of First Engine Company	4 minutes or less 90% of the time
Full First Alarm Assignment Arrival	8 minutes or less 90% of the time

Response Guidelines – EMS	
Arrival of First Responder Unit	4 minutes or less 90% of the time
Arrival of Advanced Life Support	8 minutes or less 90% of the time

Full First Alarm Assignment	
Command and Control	1 Incident Commander
Water Supply	1 Driver/Operator
Attack Line	3 Firefighters
Backup Line	3 Firefighters
Search and Rescue	2 Firefighters
Ventilation	2 Firefighters
Aerial Operations	1 Driver/Operator
Rapid Intervention	2 Firefighters
Total Personnel Required	15

*It should be noted that the call processing time is controlled by Beaufort County Dispatch. This is not a value for which the District can directly control.

NFPA 1710 Staffing

Since it is the policy of the District to operate fire apparatus at a minimum staffing level of 3 persons, this currently does not meet the minimum staffing guidelines in the 1710 Standard. Additional personnel are not currently available to maintain 4 persons on each apparatus at all times. This is not an uncommon practice in most fire departments and is actually closer to the norm than the exception.

NFPA 1710 Response Guidelines

Although the District maintains good records and statistics on response times, there are no minimum values established by the District. In other words, the District has not adopted benchmarks by which it can measure its performance in this area. By combining minimum staffing values and required response values a document known as a "Standard of Coverage" can be created. The Standard of Coverage then provides the measuring tools needed to evaluate our basic performance. The District currently has response time averages in the 5 to 6 minute range. However, current recordkeeping is not designed to calculate how often we are on scene within the 5 minute range.

NFPA 1710 Full First Alarm Assignment

The standard calls for a minimum of 15 personnel on scene within 8 minutes, 90% of the time. The Bluffton Township Fire District first alarm response consists of 3 Engine Companies, 1 Truck Company, and a Battalion Chief. Assuming we are working at minimum staffing levels the total personnel on scene would be 13 (each engine carries 3 personnel; the truck carries 3 personnel; and the Battalion Chief). Staff Chief Officers usually respond to fire emergencies as do some off-duty department members. However, it is impossible to count these members as part of the initial response. Therefore, the District is not meeting the basic minimums of the standard's requirement for a first alarm assignment.

Insurance Services Office (ISO)

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is an independent agency responsible for rating a community's fire service. The ISO inspects fire departments and determines what is known as a Public Protection Classification (PPC) for the department. The PPC is based on a scale of 1 – 10 with a score of 1 indicating exemplary fire services while a score of 10 indicates the fire service does not meet minimum recognized criteria.

The Bluffton Township Fire District currently holds a PPC of 3/9 (valid as of 2008). This rating places the District in the top 3.4% of all fire departments in the country. In addition, the lower the PPC score, the better the insurance rate citizens enjoy on their property. The District is pursuing an even better PPC of 2. This process should be completed by the end of July 2008. Obtaining a PPC of 2 will place the department in the top 0.8% of fire departments in the country.

The administration will continue to consider ISO in its decisions, especially those relating to station placement, staffing, and equipment purchases. Each of these items has a direct bearing on current and future ISO ratings.

Discussion

1. ***The organizational structure of the Fire Department is adequate for the current demographics of the District. However, with the addition of one additional station, the Department will need to consider a two (2) Battalion structure.***
 - The upper administration structure (Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, and Assistant Chief) is adequate for the department for the next few years.
 - Currently one (1) Battalion Chief per shift supervises the entire operational district on a daily basis. As the District continues to develop there will be the need for an additional Battalion Chief on each shift.
 - Based upon current span of control guidelines provided to fire service organizations a supervisor can effectively manage between three (3) and seven (7) companies with the optimum number being five (5). The Districts current span of control ratio for its Battalion Chief is 6:1. With the advent of another company the span will be at its maximum. With the advent of two more companies, it will be exceeded.

2. ***The facilities of the District are for the most part in good condition. The District must take the necessary steps and plan for continuing maintenance on these buildings.***
 - The administration is considering options for Station 30. Within the next five years the District must seriously consider rebuilding or completely refurbishing this building as maintenance costs will soon become prohibitive.
 - The District needs to develop a comprehensive maintenance and repair program which includes scheduled and projected maintenance upgrades and repair for its current and future facilities.

3. ***Current station locations are viable and will be adequate if supported by additional new stations in the proper locations.***
 - Comparing growth statistics to station locations indicates as many as five to six new stations may be required within the next ten years.

- Stations should be located based upon several factors. The three main factors are response time, density, and special hazards (target hazards).
- We are currently projecting stations as needed in the following areas:
 - ***Buckwalter Parkway/Bluffton Parkway:*** This station will assist in the rapidly developing Buckwalter area. The area has a mix of residential and commercial structures. In addition, the Bluffton schools complex is also located in this area. Although the area is predominantly residential at this time, the forecast is for additional commercial occupancies to be built over the next 2 -3 years. This area is currently served by Station 30 and is at the outer fringe of the response area. Placing a station near the Buckwalter Parkway and Bluffton Parkway intersection will provide immediate response into the Buckwalter area
 - ***Palmetto Bluff West/Midpoint:*** The property for this station will be acquired through an anticipated agreement developed in which Palmetto Bluff assists with the construction and equipment costs. The Midpoint area is rapidly developing with several new housing developments including New Riverside, Southern Oaks, Del Webb, Ashton Park, and Midpoint. In addition, there is related commercial construction slated for this area to support the residences. This station will also serve as back-up into the Mill Creek/Palmetto Pointe areas as well as along May River Road up to the back gate of Hampton Hall.
 - ***Oldfield area:*** Property for this station is provided for through the Okatie Community PUD. This station will provide a station approximately half – way between the current Callawassie station (32) and the Sun City station (34). This will effectively cut our largest response district into thirds. The Oldfield area is scheduled to see some additional light commercial development as well as some multi-family dwelling units. Currently the District operates an Automatic Aid Agreement with the Hardeeville Fire Department out of the Cherry Point station for ISO grading purposes. Our experience has been that this agreement is one-sided in that the Bluffton Township Fire District provides equipment and manpower more times than aid is received. The Cherry Point station is under manned with only one person on the fire engine so what help the station can provide is very limited. Upon completion of the Oldfield station, the Cherry Point agreement will no longer be required for ISO grading. The

- administration will rapidly move to dissolve the Automatic Aid Agreement and convert it into a standard Mutual Aid Agreement.
- **Rebuild/refurbish Station 30:** This project will involve rebuilding Fire Station #30 on its current site. Research indicates that the station is adequately positioned to protect the Old Town, Myrtle Island, All Joy, and Burnt Church Road areas. In coordination with a proposed station in the Sawmill Creek Road area the response time profiles are acceptable.
 - **Sun City (back gate area):** Sun City is approaching 6000 dwelling units, making it by far the largest residential area in the District. Response profiles into the newer portions of the community will reach the point where they will easily exceed 5 to 6 minutes. As a result, an additional fire station will be required in the general vicinity of the newly opened back gate. A station in the vicinity of the Bluffton Parkway – Okatie Highway intersection would serve this purpose well. In addition, this station could provide first due service into the proposed commercial and multi family residential areas between the Bluffton Parkway and Fording Island Road interchange. In the interim, once constructed, the Palmetto Bluff-West Fire Station will provide improved back-up for the current Sun City Station
 - **Palmetto Bluff East/Village Station:** The property and funding for a station and equipment in the Eastern portion of Palmetto Bluff will be acquired through a developmental agreement. Under the agreement, the Palmetto Bluff Development group will pay all costs associated with the construction of the station and the purchase of the needed equipment. This station will predominantly provide service within Palmetto Bluff and will provide limited support to the Palmetto Bluff West/Midpoint Station.
 - **Sawmill Creek Road area:** Another area requiring assistance due to response time is the Sawmill Creek Road – Colleton River Plantation area. Currently the District has an engine, unmanned, stationed in the back side of Colleton River Plantation. This vehicle is so positioned for ISO grading purposes. Building a station along Sawmill Creek Road would provide rapid access to the Sawmill Creek area, Colleton River Plantation and Outlet Malls along Fording Island Road. Although there is limited construction along Sawmill Creek Road, there is considerable construction within Colleton River. Since Sawmill Creek Road is virtually straight and

unencumbered, response times to the back side of Colleton River Plantation will be quicker than within the confines of the development.

4. ***The District currently has adequate staffing at the response level. The District will need to provide for additional staffing as new stations are constructed.***
 - The administration believes that a station should be staffed fully when it is constructed.
 - Projected staffing for fire stations includes:
 - Four firefighters per shift for each additional engine company
 - Four firefighters per shift for each additional truck company
 - One Battalion Chief per shift for each 4 – 6 stations supervised.
 - To build the additional stations mentioned above, staffing will have to increase by 29 persons (6 Engine Companies, 1 Truck Company, and 1 Battalion Chief) per shift for a total of 87 persons. In simpler terms, using current cost figures the payroll budget would have to increase by approximately 4.2 million dollars to support the projected growth.

5. ***The District currently has a functional and effective training program for its employees. The training program will need to target officer and driver/operator development as the department continues to grow.***
 - Approximately 10% or less of the Company Officer's job is managing emergency incidents. The remaining 90% of the time is spent managing people. The Districts current officer training program is lacking in its content of personnel management subjects and techniques. The Training Officer is working on developing a training plan that addresses these needs for Company Officers.
 - The Driver/Operator is another position requiring a tremendous amount of specialized training. The District currently utilizes courses delivered by the South Carolina Fire Academy as its core program. There is little input directly from the Fire District. The Training Officer is also working on developing a training plan that addresses the needs of the Driver/Operator so the District has a comprehensive and well structured program.
 - To maintain a current and progressive training program the need is already evident for the addition of an assistant training officer. This position is budgeted for in FY 08-09. An additional assistant training officer will be required around the same time that span of

control issues require that the second Battalion is formed. The District has already assigned a permanent Administrative Assistant to the Training Division for support.

6. ***The District currently provides no assistance to those attempting or completing college degree programs.***
 - The administration along with Training is looking into the feasibility of providing benefits for those pursuing a college degree. Currently the job descriptions for all positions above the rank of Captain have some degree requirement. However, very few of the senior officers have college educations. Instead they receive credit for experience in lieu of a degree. We recognize that experience is just as valuable if not more so than a degree in some instances. However, the education and discipline gained by obtaining a degree is beneficial, especially from a professionalism standpoint. In progressive fire departments college degrees for all officers is quickly becoming the norm rather than the exception.
 - Options being discussed include tuition assistance, bonuses, paid time off to attend class, or a combination of the options. It is our goal to provide our personnel every opportunity to grow both professionally within the organization and individually.

7. ***The District's records management system (RMS) is effective and helpful in determining present and future needs.***
 - To date the records management system maintained by the IT department is effective in developing incident related statistics. These statistics are valuable when comparing current trends in response to the growth and development trends of the community. However, the system is lacking in its ability to project future trends. Currently we take averages of current and past information to make a "best guess" prediction for the future. Recent studies have indicated that averaging is not the most reliable method of predicting change and forecasting for the future. The District needs to consider investing in software solutions that can assist in the decision making process.
 - Currently the District is very dependent upon the Planning and IT departments of the County and Town of Bluffton. Most mapping is conducted by the Town. The District is very fortunate that the Town is supportive of our administration and mission. In fact, the Town has expended funds recently to upgrade some GIS

applications to provide more detailed mapping and response time estimates for the District. This is helpful to us when we look at present and future station locations. We will continue to foster this relationship, but will at some time need to contribute to the costs or take some of the services on internally as this type of information is critical to making us proactive and efficient in our future decisions and plans.

8. ***The District continues to see an increase in the amount of EMS related responses it makes. This trend will continue into the future, especially as the area continues to develop with additional residential communities.***
 - Of the 3765 emergency responses conducted by District personnel in 2007, 1668 were rescue and EMS related. This is almost 50% of the total call volume. EMS response is vital to the community. However, the Fire District realizes no revenue from this service unlike Beaufort County EMS who charges per call to respond. In many cases a District fire engine is the first emergency help on scene since the County only provides three (3) ambulances south of the Broad River at any given time. In many cases, District personnel routinely treat and stabilize the patient while awaiting the arrival of a Beaufort County ambulance.
 - With the continued growth in the area it is a safe assumption that the District will continue to run an ever increasing number of medical related emergencies. A conservative 6% increase in call volume annually over the next five years would project that the District will respond to approximately 2300 EMS related calls per year by 2012.
 - With this in mind, the District is investigating the possibilities of increasing its service level to include EMS transport. We are currently providing EMS level treatment with our Basic EMT's and Paramedics. The next logical step is to provide transport to the medical facility. Since EMS is one of the services the County provides directly it will be difficult to convince the Council that fire-based EMS will work in the Bluffton district. Operationally, beginning an EMS service will be a tremendous change in our organization and the way we operate and think.

9. ***The District needs to develop standards for response and coverage.***
 - Currently the District has no written Standard of Response Coverage making it difficult to accurately measure our response

effectiveness. We track our response time, but not in the manner indicated by national standards. The Center for Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) has developed a method for creating and evaluating response standards for fire departments. This method takes into consideration pertinent OSHA, NFPA, and ISO criteria. This is a good method for the District to use to determine its standards.

- Response standards are valuable when determining station and equipment locations. Currently station locations have been determined primarily based upon ISO guidelines which are based strictly upon travel distance from the station to the incident location. There is little consideration given in the current system as to actual response time. However, total elapsed time from call receipt to arrival, deployment, and incident mitigation are better indicators of what makes the Fire Department successful in stopping fires and intervening successfully in emergency medical incidents before they become catastrophic. The District's response standards and future planning for station locations needs to take into consideration all of these factors.

10. ***The Fire District currently has a general Fire Prevention program for the public. The primary elements of the program need to be evaluated to guarantee the program is meeting the needs of the community.***

- The current Fire Prevention program targets the community's young and old. The program is based upon national averages that indicate the young and old are the most likely to suffer harm from the effects of fire. In reality the current program is more closely a Public Awareness program than it is an education program.
- The current program has not been validated nor tracked to indicate its effect on the reduction of fire and emergencies in the community.
- A community needs assessment in regards to Fire Prevention and Education programs has not been conducted to determine the target audiences within the Bluffton community.
- The Fire Marshal and Inspection staff attempts to educate the public during the performance of their daily duties. This is effective and should be considered a portion of the complete Public Education program.

11. *As the District's operating budget continues to tighten the District will need to explore alternative options for funding its programs.*
- The District will continue to explore grant funding for equipment and programs. There are several federally funded programs to potentially assist the department. However, the current trend is that many of these programs are "drying up". Immediately after the 9-11 attacks government funds became very plentiful. Unfortunately for the fire service, many of these funds were directly managed or administered through law enforcement at the federal and state levels as terrorism is viewed as a law enforcement issue. This created and still continues to create roadblocks for fire department access to the funds.
 - The District is looking very closely at offering its maintenance services to other government agencies in the area. The Bluffton Police Department is very interested in utilizing the District's maintenance department for all of its vehicle maintenance. This program is currently under review as the District wants to make sure that it can adequately provide this service. The Final Report of the study and a recommendation are due by July 15, 2008. All indications are that the District will provide this service with an initial review gain of approximately \$10,000.00.
 - Another potential source of revenue increase may occur from Impact Fees. During the recent budget review session with the County Finance Committee this subject was brought up for discussion. Apparently the Impact Fee process has not been reviewed in five or more years. The Finance Committee seemed to be very interested in having the subject reviewed since the growth patterns and demographics of the area have changed drastically over the last five to six years. The District should maintain a close watch on this subject and make sure it is adequately addressed at the County level.
 - The Volunteer Firefighter Program is another option to help supplement the operating budget. Approximately six (6) months ago the volunteer staff had dwindled to less than 10 members. However, with a change in leadership the program is now at twenty five members. Fifteen of those members are currently in their first training class to become certified as firefighters.
 - The District can also pursue other more traditional funding methods such as bonds and lease purchases for capital improvements. It is the intent of the administration to maintain an

extremely low debt ratio. Although such funding methods stretch the repayment of funds out over a longer period yielding lower annual payments with a smaller impact on the operating budget annually. Debt incurred includes interest and ultimately adds to cost over time.

12. *The District currently uses vendor provided training supplemented by in-house training for the majority of its training program. As the Department continues to grow and develop it will become increasingly more important to decrease the District's reliance on vendors and increase reliance on its own training programs.*

- The Department will pass the 100 firefighter mark during FY 08-09. Relying heavily on vendors to provide a significant portion of the training program to the number of people in the department is becoming more costly. In addition it is becoming more difficult to adequately schedule so all personnel get the training they need. When the department was much smaller a single class offering could serve all personnel. Now it routinely requires three to six offerings of the same course to training all our personnel.
- The use of vendors also requires our personnel to travel to different locations for training. The Training Officer attempts to host as many programs as possible at the District. However, certain classes are only offered at the SCFA main campus due to the availability of required props and equipment. This makes the problem of training multiple personnel even more cumbersome. It is impossible and impractical to send numerous personnel to the SCFA in Columbia simultaneously.
- To provide the necessary training for our personnel the Training Officer needs the proper tools and resources. Our current training area, located off of Ulmer Road, is only adequate for very basic training evolutions such as hose advances, ladder skills, and search and rescue. The property on which the facility is constructed does not belong to the District. A community member allows the District to use the property for the purpose of training. It is the administration's concern for safety and liability that limits the amount and types of training permitted on the site. The District received credit on its last ISO inspection for the training area. However, the lack of an area in the building to conduct live fire training was noted and will be a concern for future ISO inspections.

- As such, the District must use the Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) burn building to conduct live fire training. Live fire training is required by OSHA on an annual basis. In reality, hands on live fire training is required more often than once annually to insure proficiency. At the current time this is not possible due to cost constraints. For example a recent trip to the MCAS for required annual training cost the District approximately \$20,000.00. The \$20,000.00 figure is approximately 12% of the total Training budget. The majority of the cost of a trip to the MCAS is overtime pay for those attending. Due to the travel time to and from Beaufort for the training we now ask personnel to attend off-duty so daily operations are not interrupted. The remainder of the cost is for fuel and related supplies to support the live burn exercises.
 - An economical and prudent solution to the training issue is to acquire property and construct our own training area for the District. Hilton Head Island Fire & Rescue (HHIFR) has attempted several times over the last few years to construct such a structure on the Island. To date these attempts have met strong opposition from the community and have not been successful. The administration would entertain a possible agreement with the HHIFR to utilize their facility if it is constructed. In the event the HHIFR cannot develop a facility on the Island, the District needs to be prepared to construct a facility of its own within the next 3 to 5 years. The cost of construction can be recouped over the years in eliminated trips to Beaufort and increased safety of our personnel due to the ability to properly train locally.
13. *The District currently provides vehicle maintenance services for its operating fleet. As with all portions of the Department, as the District grows so should the Maintenance Division.*
- The current Maintenance Division consists of one supervisor and one vehicle technician. The supervisor holds the rank of Battalion Chief and also serves as a vehicle technician. Due to the size of the Department this is creating some issues. The supervisor is so busy working on vehicles he has little time to supervise, plan, and administer the Maintenance function properly. In the FY 08-09 Budget a second vehicle technician is scheduled to be hired. This should free up the Maintenance Supervisor to more properly perform his job as the supervisor.

- As the District continues to grow, so will the fleet. The District will need to add at least one additional vehicle technician over the next 3 years. This is especially true if the District takes over preventive maintenance for the Bluffton Police Department.
 - Another factor to consider is that of building maintenance. As we continue to build new stations and other structures the need will become evident for a person dedicated to the maintenance of these structures. Currently one of the shift Battalion Chief's attempts to manage this function. However, as the call volume has increased and the Battalion Chiefs have to supervise more personnel this duty is already becoming cumbersome. The administration anticipates this will become even more difficult and the need will arise for a dedicated maintenance person for the buildings.
14. *The District currently has no dedicated resources and materials ordering system. Several individuals within the Department are responsible for ordering and maintaining the resources required for operating the Department.*
- Currently the District allows multiple individuals to place orders for materials, supplies, and other resources. This creates accountability issues with so many persons placing orders. In many cases orders are delayed or not made in a timely fashion. In addition, the Finance Director has a tough time determining and projecting budget figures by not being directly in the purchasing process. The Department is reaching a size where a dedicated person is needed for purchasing and contract management.
 - The administration is investigating the possibility of hiring a full time Quartermaster. This person will be responsible for budgeting and ordering all supplies and resources utilized by the Fire District. In addition, this person will deliver those supplies to the fire stations as needed. The Quartermaster would also serve as a procurement officer, managing the process for Bids, Request for Proposals, and other contracts related to purchasing. This person will work closely with the Finance Director and will coordinate on all financial issues related to purchasing.

Plan

Considering all information, the Administration proposes the following as its Strategic Plan for the next five years and beyond. Realizing that Bluffton continues to be a growing and diverse community the Administration feels this plan meets the current and future needs of the District. As with all planning documents the contents contain our best effort with the information provided at this time. However, as conditions change, the plan may need to change. In this sense all planning documents are truly fluid. The Administration will re-evaluate the plan in December of each year and adjust as necessary based upon the current conditions. The plan is structured into overall Goals for Action and the supporting Objectives to guide us toward the completion of the Goals.

Goals for Action are set up in four (4) distinct categories in this plan. The first category is what the Administration has determined to be ongoing or recurring goals. These are goals that we are currently meeting and want to continue to develop and strengthen.

The second category is what we have identified as short term goals. These goals are those items we want to achieve within the next one (1) to three (3) years. Short term goals involve those issues which have a somewhat direct impact on the organization currently and into the future. These goals are “building blocks” for future programs and organizational development.

The third category is what the Administration has determined to be medium term goals. Medium term goals are those items we want to address within three (3) to five (5) years. Medium term goals will have an indirect impact on service delivery and will deal mainly with infrastructure development.

The final category is long term goals. Long term goals are those items we would like to see occur in the five (5) to ten (10) year time frame. Long term goals are targets for the future we are anticipating based upon current conditions and information. As with any plan of this magnitude and importance, The Administration is recommending that the plan undergo a complete revision no later than five (5) years from the date it is approved.

Recurrent Goals

Goal #1 **Enhance community safety and security by providing a high level of emergency service delivery to the Bluffton Community. The Bluffton Community supports its fire service and District wants to continue to build this support.**

Objective 1.1 Conduct monthly reviews of service delivery to include call volume, call types, areas of responses, injuries, fatalities, and other related issues.

Objective 1.2 Conduct an annual analysis of the Community's needs for emergency services. This analysis should include a thorough review of the fire and emergency medical problem in the Bluffton Community in relation to the Fire Districts services provided.

Objective 1.3 Conduct ongoing customer satisfaction surveys to determine the level of service crews are providing in the field. This survey should be conducted on a random basis to provide feedback.

Goal #2 **Continue to provide employees a workplace that is safe, efficient, professional, and rewarding.**

Objective 2.1 Continue to emphasize the importance of workplace safety to all personnel.

Objective 2.2 Continue to emphasize the professionalism required of the fire service. All personnel must continue to demonstrate professionalism in the way they interact and present themselves in the public.

Objective 2.3 Continue to create opportunities for employees to better themselves and participate in the development of the organization.

Objective 2.4 Continue to provide both educational and professional development to all employees at all levels. Training programs are already in place to meet the basic needs of the organization. Continue to strengthen these programs and better prepare personnel to be firefighters, supervisors, and administrators.

Objective 2.5 Continue to develop already existing lines of communication between the Administrative staff and Line personnel. Utilize the Polycom System and Department meetings to provide current and needed information exchange. Keep employees at all levels involved via the communications process.

Goal #3: Maintain current Fire Department facilities and equipment in a state of readiness.

Objective 3.1 Continue to evaluate building maintenance needs closely through a proactive station inspection program and address those areas needing repair in a timely manner.

Objective 3.2 Continue to stress to all personnel the importance of maintaining fire apparatus in a constant state of readiness. Stress the importance of individuals taking pride in their equipment and maintaining it.

Objective 3.3 Complete the implementation of the Fleet Pro software program installation and training so personnel will have a single platform from which to enter repair requests and track maintenance repairs on their equipment.

Objective 3.4 Complete the implementation of the Fleet Pro software program installation and training so personnel will have a single platform from which to enter repair requests and track maintenance repairs on their equipment.

Short Term Goals (1 to 3 years)

Goal #4 Develop response standards for the provision of fire and emergency medical services

Objective 4.1 Create and implement a Standard of Response Coverage for the Fire District. This document should be developed in accordance with the guidelines provided by the CFAI document Creating and Evaluating Standards of Response Cover for Fire Departments, 5th edition.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009

FUNDING: FY2008 – 2009 Budget (minimal impact)

Objective 4.2 Working with the Town of Bluffton, integrate GIS mapping solutions to provide detailed information concerning response times and station locations. Validate current station locations and verify that future proposed locations are viable. This objective is dependent upon the Town's GIS update which is currently underway.

TARGET DATE: December 31, 2008

FUNDING: None

Goal #5 Acquire the necessary property and commitments to construct needed fire stations to support the short term growth of the Fire District while planning for the future.

Objective 5.1 Enter into a development agreement with the Palmetto Bluff Development Group for the two fire stations to be constructed in or near Palmetto Bluff.

TARGET DATE: September 1, 2008

FUNDING: None

Objective 5.2 Advertise for architects and engineers to design a proto-type fire station to be used by the District for all its future sub-station construction.

Goal #6: Purchase the necessary equipment to support the projected demand for Fire District services

Objective 6.1 Purchase a new pumper for the Palmetto Bluff-West Substation.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009

FUNDING: Shared Impact Fees-Approved FY2008-2009 Budget.
Palmetto Bluff Development per Agreement

Objective 6.2 Purchase a new pumper for the Buckwalter/Bluffton Parkway Fire Station.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2010

FUNDING: Impact Fees
Possible Bond with Station

Objective 6.3 Purchase two additional vehicles to support the Fire Marshal's office. Vehicles for the inspectors.

TARGET DATE: December 31, 2008

FUNDING: FY2008-2009 General Budget-Approved for purchase

Objective 6.4 Upgrade a current rescue style pumper to serve as a medium duty rescue truck. The District is moving towards a dedicated rescue company. With the completion of the Bluffton Parkway and Fording Island Road, there is a need for such a company.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009

FUNDING: FY2008-2009 General Budget-Approved for purchase.

Objective 6.5 Upgrade the bumper of the Tower Ladder to carry hydraulic rescue tools. This will give greater capability to the vehicle and its crew for rescue situations.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009

FUNDING: FY2008-2009 General Budget-Approved for purchase

Objective 6.6 Purchase a new Battalion Chief's vehicle for the Second Battalion. With the construction of the Buckwalter/Bluffton Parkway Substation, the District will be to a size large enough to support a second Battalion Chief.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2011
FUNDING: General Budget FY2010-2011

Objective 6.7 Purchase two additional vehicles for the Training Division. With the growth of the District, the Training Division will also need to grow. An Assistant Training Officer is budgeted for FY2008-2009. With the advent of the second Battalion an additional training officer will be required and will need a vehicle.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2011
FUNDING: General Budget FY2010-2011

Objective 6.8 Develop and administer a comprehensive vehicle replacement plan for the entire fleet of the District. Coordinate the replacement plan with the needs of this plan to insure adequate resources to provide services.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2009
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Goal #7 **Maintain current and future Fire District facilities in a state of readiness.**

Objective 7.1 Develop and administer a comprehensive facility maintenance plan that coordinates the maintenance needs of current facilities with those indicated in this plan.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2009
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided.

Objective 7.2 Develop a Capital Improvements Project plan which coordinates with this plan.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided.

Goal #8: **Reduce the incidence of fire and safety related injuries within the Bluffton community by providing current and community specific public education programs.**

Objective 8.1 Conduct a comprehensive needs analysis of current hazards and safety issues related to fires and accidents within the Bluffton community.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2009
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 8.2 Develop a comprehensive public education program outline based upon the findings from the needs analysis.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 8.3 Implement the comprehensive public education program to the community.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2010
FUNDING: General Budget FY2009-2010

Objective 8.4 Measure effectiveness of the public education program and make changes as necessary annually. (This will become a recurrent goal in January 2011).

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2011
FUNDING: None-Staff Supported

Objective 8.5 Create community wide CPR and First Aid training programs using Fire Department personnel as instructors. This will provide more access for the community to the Fire District and will increase community involvement.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009
FUNDING: General Budget-FY2008-2009

Goal #9: Provide the necessary staffing to properly man all fire stations both current and as indicated in this plan.

Objective 9.1 Hire 12 new firefighters for the Palmetto Bluff-West Fire Station.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2010
FUNDING: General Budget-FY2009-2010

Objective 9.2 Hire 12 new firefighters for the Buckwalter/Bluffton Parkway Fire Station.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2011
FUNDING: General Budget-FY2010-2011

Objective 9.3 Hire 3 new firefighters for replacement for the second Battalion Chief.

TARGET DATE: January 1, 2011
FUNDING: General Budget-FY2010-2011

Objective 9.4 Create a comprehensive staffing plan that coordinates with the needs of this plan.

TARGET DATE: July 1, 2009
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Medium Term Goals (3 to 5 years)

Goal #10 **Continue to develop the facilities required to support the growth of the Fire District.**

Objective 10.1 Begin construction of the Oldfield Fire Station

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012

FUNDING: TBD

Objective 10.2 Develop the replacement plan for Fire Station #30.

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012

FUNDING: TBD

Objective 10.3 Replace Fire Station #30.

TARGET DATE: FY2012-2013

FUNDING: TBD

Objective 10.4 Acquire property for a new fire station in the Bluffton Parkway/Okatie Highway Intersection area.

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012

FUNDING: TBD

Goal #11: **Purchase the needed equipment to support the continued growth of the Fire District.**

Objective 11.1 Purchase a new “quint” fire apparatus for the Oldfield station to provide aerial coverage to the second Battalion.

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012

FUNDING: TBD

Objective 11.2 Provide for purchases as identified in the vehicle replacement plan.

TARGET DATE: Annually

FUNDING: TBD

Goal #12: **Conduct a comprehensive EMS provision feasibility study to determine the viability of the District providing a fire based EMS transport system within the District.**

Objective 12.1 Conduct an EMS needs analysis to determine the scope of services needed for the Fire District.

TARGET DATE: FY2012-2013

FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 12.2 Based upon the EMS Needs Analysis determine a potential cost breakdown for the implementation and operation of an EMS system within the Fire District.

TARGET DATE: FY2012-2013

FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Goal #13: **Begin development plans for a dedicated Training facility and possible Maintenance facility if not relocated to Station #35.**

Objective 13.1 Advertise and hire an architect/engineer to begin the programming for the development and construction of a training/maintenance facility.

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012

FUNDING: TBD

Objective 13.2 Determine potential total cost of a training/maintenance facility.

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012

FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 13.3 Determine additional staffing needs to implement a dedicated training facility for the District. Coordinate staffing needs with the comprehensive staffing plan.

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 13.4 Assess the viability of neighboring departments utilizing the training facility for a minimal cost. Secure commitments.

TARGET DATE: FY2011-2012
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Long Term Goals (*Greater than 5 years out*)

Goal #14 Evaluate the direction of the Department and make course clarifications as necessary.

Objective 14.1 Perform a full scale revision of the Strategic Plan

TARGET DATE: FY2013-2014

FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Goal #15 Complete construction of needed facilities ahead of community build-out which is slated to occur around the year 2018-2020.

Objective 15.1 Complete construction of fire stations in Palmetto Bluff East (second station) and Bluffton Parkway/Okatie Road area.

TARGET DATE: FY2016-2017

FUNDING: TBD

Objective 15.2 Complete construction of a training/maintenance facility.

TARGET DATE: FY 2013-2014

FUNDING: TBD

Goal #16: Implement a transport EMS system for the Bluffton Fire District if the results of Goal 12 are positive and the County agrees.

Objective 16.1 Create an implementation plan for an EMS system within the District. This plan should include training requirements, medical control, and additional equipment needs. This plan should also coordinate with the Vehicle Replacement plan, Staffing plan, and Facilities plan.

TARGET DATE: FY 2014-2015

FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 16.2 Implement the plan and begin EMS provision to the citizens of the community.

TARGET DATE: FY 2015-2016
FUNDING: TBD

Goal #17: Evaluate and update as necessary all operational related plans.

Objective 17.1 Evaluate and update the vehicle replacement plan.

TARGET DATE: FY 2013-2014
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 17.2 Evaluate and update the facilities maintenance/replacement plan.

TARGET DATE: FY2013-2014
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

Objective 17.3 Evaluate and update the staffing plan.

TARGET DATE: FY2013-2014
FUNDING: None-Staff Provided

References

Data for this report was derived from the following sources:

- Bluffton Township Fire District: **Standard Operating Guidelines**, 2008.
- County of Beaufort, South Carolina: **Code of Ordinances, Section 106: "Zoning and Development Standards"**, 2000. (Beaufort County Comprehensive Plan)
- Commission on Fire Accreditation International, Chantilly, VA: **Creating and Evaluating a Standard of Response Cover for Fire Departments**, Fourth Edition, 2003.
- County of Beaufort, South Carolina: **Southern Beaufort County Regional Plan**, 2007
- National Fire Protection Association, Battery Park, MA: **NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments**, 2004 Edition.
- National Fire Protection Association, Battery Park, MA: **NFPA 1901: Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus**, 2003 Edition.
- Town of Bluffton South Carolina: **Comprehensive Plan, 2007**.