



North Olympia Fire District 7

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South Bay Fire District 8

Emergency Services

Integration Plan

2014

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Executive Summary

Goal: *"By January 1, 2015, merge North Olympia Fire Districts 7 into South Bay Fire District 8"*

This document describes a strategy for the two departments to conserve resources and improve services for taxpayers in both Districts by officially merging the two Districts into one as authorized under the Revised Codes of Washington, Title 52. These "Merger Guidelines" propose a vision of the terms and conditions for reaching the desired outcomes by implementing a "short and long-range" strategy over the coming years. Four objectives will be accomplished to achieve this desired outcome by January 2015:

- Merger Petition:** The District 7 Board of Commissioners will submit a petition as the "merging" district, stating the reasons for the merger, the terms and conditions under which the merger is proposed and request the merger as authorized. (RCW 52.06.020)
- Petition Approval:** By the end of March 2014, The Board of the "merger" District 8 will, by resolution, reject or approve the petition as presented, or it may modify the terms and conditions and transmit the petition, together with a copy of its resolution to the merging district. (RCW 52.06.030) this two-month period will allow District 8 to communicate with its citizens and gain their advice regarding the viability of the petition.
- District 7 Vote:** By the end of November, a vote will have been conducted in District 7 asking approval to merge with District 8, if a majority of the votes cast at the election favor the merger, the respective district boards will adopt concurrent resolutions, declaring the districts merged under the name of the merger district. (RCW 52.06.050)
- Final Merger:** By January 1, 2015 after concurrent resolutions by the respective Boards and certification by the County, the Districts will be permanently merged.
- Board Members:** Initially, the Commissioners of both Boards will be merged into a single Board. As the terms of Commissioners expire (every two years) through citizen voting the Board will be reduced by one member until the number is reduced to three members. However, it is planned that by January of 2016, a proposition will be presented to the voters in the newly defined District to establish that the Board will consist of five elected positions. (RCW 52.06.085 and RCW 52.14.020)

In coordination with the merger process, the merged administrative function (Fire Chief and staff) will begin developing proposals for approval by the newly combined Board to efficiently integrate all functions of both agencies into a single effort, including revenue and expenditure plans, staffing design, incident response and readiness, personnel development (training), recruitment, capital repair and replacement, and employee relations. A priority would be to promptly integrate programs with the most effect on service delivery, such as staffing design, incident response, volunteer recruitment and training. The long-term plan will also include a strategy to locate fire stations to provide a more effective three-point delivery system, including the present Station 8-1, one centrally located in the Station 8-2/3 area, and Station-7-1 with the assumption that these facilities will be staffed 24/7.

To be successful, this effort will require a participative approach that will involve all who have a stake in the outcomes. Citizens, volunteers, and staff will need to be kept informed and closely involved in the decision-making process.

The rest of this document is divided into sections relevant to the functions of the two departments. Each section provides conceptual detail to further explain the assumptions, anticipated benefits and major challenges. It is intended that the design of this document can serve as an organized repository for information as future strategies are developed.

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Planning Process

Assumptions:

“The planning process will use a participative approach involving all stakeholders”

“All stakeholders will be kept informed as the process develops”

“It will be important that stakeholders have an opportunity to influence outcomes”

Key Definitions:

“Merging District”: Fire District 7 prior to the actual merger

“Merger District”: Fire District 8 prior to the actual merger

“Merged District”: Fire District 8 after the voter-approved merger of FD7 into FD8

- Preliminary assumptions, benefits and challenges have been drafted by a Commissioner from each Board, including the process, scope, vision and issues. (*Completed – 13 March 2013*)
- The draft document was completed by the two Commissioners and presented to the two Boards of Commissioners at a joint session. (*Completed – 27 March 2013*)
- From that meeting the Boards consulted, gained consensus and agreed to proceed. (*Completed – 7 May 2013*)
- A petition for merger will be presented by the Board of District 7 to the Board of District 8, who will subsequently accept the petition. Voters of District 7 will then be asked to approve, by a majority vote during an election, merging into and becoming a part of District 8.
- If a Merger is approved by the District 7 voters, concurrent resolutions will be passed by both Boards and the Districts will be combined into one entity with a single combined Board at that time. Then the departments will begin operating as a single unit under the leadership of the Fire Chief. Based upon the strategic direction of the Board, the Fire Chief will research options, propose alternatives and recommend a strategy to facilitate the unification of all operational functions of the merged District.

Anticipated Benefits:

- The process will streamline the planning effort and provide a common understanding on the steps to be accomplished.

Challenges:

- Keeping all stakeholders, including the communities and staff, informed as to the process and progress toward full merger of the two Districts.

Adopted: February 3, 20 14

Vision and Desired Outcomes

"To join Thurston County Fire Districts 7 and 8 into a single District"

"Vision without action is just a dream. Action without vision is just passing time. Vision with action can change the world"

Joel Barker

Assumptions:

- A petition for merger will be presented by the Board of District 7 to the Board of District 8, which will subsequently accept the petition; Voters of District 7 will then be asked to approve, by majority vote during an election, merging into and becoming a part of District 8.
- All stakeholders should be integral participants in the development of short and long-term strategies.
- Following voter approval of the merger, and in accordance with RCW 52.14.015, the Merged District Board will request voter approval to expand to a five member board of fire commissioners.
- The vision, goals and assumptions agreed upon in the Emergency Services Integration Plan should drive the annual business plan and budget for the Merged District.

Anticipated Benefits:

- Improved services and efficiency for the Merged District
- More productive policy decision-making:
 - Broader perspective with larger policy board.
 - Meld different approaches to gain more effective outcomes.
 - Improved understanding and potential impacts of issues challenging the Merged District.
- Reduced Administrative Costs over time:
 - One fire chief versus two.
 - One department secretary versus two.
 - One administrative system versus two.
 - Reduced cost through joint purchasing.
- Improved personnel training:
 - One training officer/program versus two.
 - More efficient use of training facility and props.
 - Larger number of personnel for shift training.
 - Opportunity for more specialized training.
 - Improved training because of broader knowledge base.
- Recruiting and Retention:
 - Expanded opportunities for experience and leadership development.

"Many advantages in strength and efficiency are expected"

“Savings will support personnel training and incident response staffing”

- Facilities and Equipment
 - Eliminate unnecessary duplicate equipment.
 - Improve utilization of existing equipment for back-up, equipment compatibility
- Emergency Response:
 - Larger pool of responders for major events.
 - Improved coverage for concurrent calls.
 - Response coverage based on geography rather than jurisdiction.
- Operational Cost:
 - Reduced management and administrative costs which can be used to support fire personnel training and incident response staffing.

“There will be challenges and downsides”

Challenges:

- Higher Personnel and Legal Costs:
 - Larger district size may mean higher comparables for salaries and employee benefits.
 - Increased costs in the short-term for technical and legal support.
- Melding of two boards with different cultures and governance norms
- Due to a larger organization and more complicated roles, gaining agreement for change may take longer.

Adopted: February 3, 20 14

Policy/Decision-Making

Assumptions:

“The Two former Boards will function as one new policy-making body”

“Administrative staff will research, develop and recommend alternative system designs”

“Everyone within the Merged District will have the opportunity to influence outcomes”

- In accordance with RCW 52.06.085, the two Boards will initially be combined into a single six member board. Board vacancies will be filled in accordance with the provisions of the same Statute. Following voter approval of the merger, and in accordance with RCW 52.14.015, the Merged District Board will request voter approval to expand to a five member board.
- The Chair will be responsible to work with the Fire Chief and other Commissioners to develop agendas for Board meetings, lead productive meetings in accordance with legal requirements, facilitate performance evaluations with the Fire Chief, and serve as spokesperson for the Board on previously agreed upon policy and decisions.
- A Board workshop will be promptly scheduled to establish norms and expectations for conducting Board business and supervisory relationships with the Fire Chief.
- Fire department leadership and administration will maintain a strategic plan and planning process under the policy direction of the Merged District Board.
- Decision making by the Merged District Board will be by simple majority vote in meetings.
- The planning process will assure a flexible and continuing focus on long-term needs for community fire and life safety in the Merged District.
- Management staff will develop alternative goals and objectives for introduction into the planning process at least annually, unless requested more frequently by the Board.
- Any person within the Department may make a recommendation for change by presenting an idea through the chain of command or directly to the Fire Chief. All formal recommendations made to the Fire Chief shall be documented, evaluated and presented to the Board with recommendations.
- Any person outside the Department may make a recommendation for change by presenting the idea to the Fire Chief, any Board Member or the Board of Fire Commissioners during their regular meetings.
- All recommended changes to the Strategic Plan will be presented to all members of the combined Departments at timely meetings for their review and recommendations.

“Anyone will have the opportunity to suggest ideas and advice to the Board”

“Community advisory groups with wide-based representation will be utilized by the Board”

- The Board of Fire Commissioners has the final authority to adopt or reject recommendations for change.
- The Merged District will support a community based advisory group with broad geographical representation to provide balanced community input on major policy decisions being considered by the Board as well as providing input to the Board on issues of community concern. (*Reference Section Six regarding community connections during the consolidation process.*)
- When bargaining of merger-related working conditions for Merger District employees is required, policies and agreements of the Merger District will be utilized. The provisions under Statute (RCW 52.06.110, 120 & 130) will be followed for employees of the Merging District.
- During operational planning for the consolidation, the Fire Chief will engage key stakeholders in a balanced fashion, obtaining input and advice from selected volunteer members and career staff from both the Merging and Merger Districts.

DEFINITIONS

The purpose of the following definitions is to provide a common understanding of specific terms relevant to fire protection planning for use during this specific planning effort. It is recognized that many will have extensive knowledge in the planning process and, therefore, may be accustomed to definitions that are different than those presented here. However, for the sake of uniformity and understanding, the following will be used in this planning effort. They are not in alphabetical order but arranged in the order they are most likely used.

WORD OR PHRASE**DEFINITION**

Vision:	An inspirational description of what an organization will look like in the future.
Mission	The purpose of an organization, division, program or individual. As an example, the purpose of the Department is to control risk to life, property and community vitality, which may occur from emergency situations within the community.
Goal:	Desired outcomes of a given organization, program, service or activity, or the end to which activities are directed. They are usually more philosophical in nature and not measurable.
Service Goals:	Identify the desired service outcomes that will accomplish the Vision and Mission of the agency.
Support Goals:	Identify desired outcomes for programs that support the accomplishment of service goals .
Performance Objective:	Identify the desired degree of accomplishment for service goals. They should include all of three measurements - quantity, quality and time. They may quantify impacts on risks (life, property and community) or efforts (resources) devoted to controlling the risk. Performance objectives are not always accomplished, yet they are the performance that an organization strives to attain.
Performance Standards:	Identify the minimum acceptable degree of accomplishment for a given goal. It is expected that all performance standards will be accomplished.
Enabling Objectives:	Identify what activities will take place to implement and accomplish goals. They define what will be done, to what degree it will be done, and when it will be done.
Master Planning:	A plan giving overall guidance to an agency (in this case the combined fire departments) for the purpose of identifying and implementing its vision, goals and performance objectives.
Strategic Plan:	Relating to or marked by a strategy for accomplishing a desired plan of action.
Stakeholder:	Anyone with a special concern or stake in maintaining or influencing the mission, goals and objectives of the fire department.
Merging District:	Fire District 7 prior to the actual voter-approved merger.
Merger District:	Fire District 8 prior to the actual FD7 voter-approved merger.
Merged District:	Fire District 8 after FD7 voter approval of the merger; Fire District 7 ceases to exist legally and becomes part of Fire District 8.

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Community Connections

Assumptions:

"Citizens will have a fair and democratic opportunity to influence outcomes"

"An Interim Consolidation Advisory Group was formed to advise the combined Boards"

"The desired outcome is to have general agreement on the final decision"

- Continued liaison with residents in the Merged District is a high priority and will be encouraged as the two former Districts combine their operations. It is important that residents are informed and have a fair and democratic opportunity to influence outcomes.
- The Merged District will support a community based advisory group with broad geographical representation to provide balanced community input on major policy decisions being considered by the Board as well as providing input to the Board on issues of community concern.
- Residents in the Merged District will be kept informed using a variety of methods including periodic newsletters, on-line website, billboards, community meetings and public information announcements.
- An Interim Consolidation Advisory Group (ICAG) was formed to review the Emergency Services Integration Plan and advise the Boards of District 7 and 8. Representation included all who have a stake in the outcomes of a consolidation and at generally one person from each voter precinct in both former districts. (*Complete – 6 and 13 June 2013*)
- Current programs that reach out to the communities of both pre-merger Districts will be continued and expanded to enhance connections with constituents as approved by the consolidated Board.

Anticipated Benefits:

- Public understanding of the planning process, potential outcomes and community agreement with the final decision.
- A source of good ideas for making the consolidation successful as well as indentifying potential challenges and pitfalls.
- Opportunities for public input in regards to Fire Department issues including consolidation and future endeavors.

Challenges:

- Identifying and selecting representatives to the community advisory groups in a fair and timely manner.
- Staff time to develop and present timely information to keep the community advisory groups informed and organized.

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Incident Readiness and Response Deployment Strategy

“Incident responders from both former Departments will be integrated into a single design”

“Incident response on nights, weekends and holidays will be primarily volunteer”

“Daytime response will be a combination of career and volunteer”

Assumptions:

Short-Term: (Less Than Five Years)

- All response personnel will be integrated into a single organizational design to provide consistent and adequate response teams throughout the merged District.
- In the short term, all response personnel will be deployed from Stations 81 and 71 to provide optimized and balanced coverage utilizing available resources. A minimum of two qualified responders will be maintained at each Station, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.
- Battalion coverage during nights, weekends, and holidays will be volunteer and may include home response using an assigned Department vehicle.
- The Fire Chief will develop a detailed staffing plan to accomplish the above assumptions in coordination with merger activities to consolidate all functions of the two Districts.
- Implement interim staffing to the extent possible for the Station 8-2 and 8-3 response area.

Long Term: (After Five Years)

- The feasibility of relocating firestations to more consistently meet target levels of service and better align with Washington Survey & Rating Bureau standards will be considered and may be proposed to the community. Firestations will be staffed 24/7 and provide community meeting space.
- A third station will be staffed in the present 8-2/8-3 response areas.

Anticipated Benefits:

- Over time, increased staffing for the combined district.
- Ability to respond to Olympia FD and Lacey FD3 for mutual aid requests and still leave district covered.
- Consistent response from a staffed battalion unit.
- Improved ability to handle simultaneous calls.
- Future ability to provide transport opportunities to citizens.
- Increased experience due to larger call volume of combined response area.
- Ability to better meet target levels of service.

Challenges:

- Comingling personnel from both agencies.
- Maintaining sufficient numbers of trained volunteers in all categories at all times.

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Personnel Development

“All personnel development activities will be integrated into a single effort”

“A larger number of participants will enhance training outcomes”

Assumptions:

- All training activities will be consolidated into an integrated plan under the direction of a single training officer.
- The Thurston County Recruit Academy will continue to be used for initial firefighter training.
- Participation in Thurston County Fire and Rescue Training Consortium will continue to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- A progressive program of leadership development will be utilized to identify potential leaders, to provide leadership training and advancement opportunities for volunteers in all levels of the organization.
- Investigate the potential and options for a firefighting training facility designed and developed at the most desirable location as recommended by the Fire Chief and accepted by the Board.

Anticipated Benefits:

- Improved training facilities and props through use of combined resources.
- Improved training as a result of a larger number of fire personnel interacting through planned practical exercises.

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Volunteerism

Assumptions:

- The Merged District will continue to operate as primarily volunteer, supported by a small cadre of career personnel.
- Volunteers will be integrated into officer and administrative positions as practical and appropriate.
- The Fire Chief shall develop an organizational design for approval by the Board to integrate all volunteer personnel of both former departments into a unified structure.
- Recognizing that community connections are vital to the long-term health of the Department, efforts to attract and engage community-based volunteers in emergency response, response support, administrative and maintenance areas will continue.
- The volunteer recruitment system shall be integrated into a common effort.
- The overall success of the volunteer program will be measured based on a variety of factors, including:
 - Maintaining sufficient membership to meet effective emergency incident response targets.
 - Volunteers serving at all levels of department leadership, including the senior management team.
 - Volunteer retention and references.
 - Participation of local community members in Incident Readiness & Response and non-response volunteer roles.
 - Volunteer morale.

"The merged departments will continue to rely primarily on volunteer response personnel"

"The combined strength of both former agencies will support a more consistent response to emergencies"

Anticipated Benefits:

- Increased overall strength for major incidents.
- Improved ability to handle simultaneous calls.
- Ability to rely less on neighboring agencies for incident readiness and response.
- Increased ability to recruit more people.
- Potential to retain out of District volunteers longer due to being a larger volunteer agency.
- More consistent staffing and improvement in meeting emergency response target levels.
- Potential to hire from within for career openings.

Challenges:

- Maintaining a sufficient number of volunteers to meet future needs of the combined departments.
- Integrating operating procedures and performance standards from the two former organizations.
- Recruiting in-district volunteers.

"Maintaining a sufficient number of volunteers for response will continue to be a challenge"

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Facilities and Apparatus

Assumptions:

“The Fire Chief will be responsible to assign and direct the use of all capital resources under approval of the Board”

- All buildings, facilities and apparatus will be under the administration of the Fire Chief and assigned personnel.
- Appropriate fire apparatus shall remain at each fire station in sufficient deployment to meet Washington Survey and Rating Bureau requirements for the public protection class now assigned to each response area.
- The Fire Chief will immediately develop an assignment plan for all apparatus for approval by the Board.
- Maintenance of all facilities and apparatus will be under the administration of the Fire Chief and assigned maintenance officer.
- Completed a survey of the status of all equipment, apparatus and facilities in the Merger and Merging Districts. (*Complete – 2013*)
- All facilities and apparatus will be included in a Board approved Strategic Deployment Plan and Capital Repair and Replacement strategy.

“All capital resources will under the direction of a single entity”

Anticipated Benefits:

- Reduce cost due to avoidance of duplication of programs in both former departments versus one merged department.

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Financial Management

Assumptions:

- All financial and budget activities will be managed and administered by an Executive Secretary under the supervision of the Fire Chief and approval of the Board of Commissioners.
- All assets of both Districts will be combined under the Merged District's ownership.
- Funds allocated by each original district for real estate and capital facilities will continue to be utilized for their intended purposes in the original district as directed by the Board.
- District 8 administrative staff will continue administering the budget and resulting financial transactions of the Merged District as approved by the Board.
- The Fire Chief will immediately develop a two-year business operations plan for all available funds from both Districts for approval by the Board.

"All funds will be integrated into a single budget"

"Real estate and capital facilities funds will continue to be utilized for their intended purposes"

Anticipated Benefits:

- Reduced costs due to avoidance of duplication in financial and budget administrative staff.
- Improved purchasing power resulting from larger user base.
- More efficient and effective management of fire district resources.

"Reduced cost due to less duplication and more buying power"

Challenges:

- In the short-term extra workload and time to develop expanded procedures for budget, payroll, purchasing, and other administrative processes.

Adopted: January 22, 2014

Administration

"All administrative function will be accomplished under the supervision of the Fire Chief and Executive Secretary."

Assumptions:

- All clerical and administrative functions, including policies, procedures, correspondence, archiving, audit accountability, records, etc. will be accomplished under the supervision of the Fire Chief and Executive Secretary.

Anticipated Benefits:

- Reduce cost due to elimination of duplicate programs in both former fire districts versus one combined fire district.

"The elimination of redundant administrative systems should reduce overall costs"

Challenges:

- Consolidating the separate records for inventory, budget and expenditures under the mantle of two systems into one combined system.

"Converting the two systems to a single process will be challenging"

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Labor Agreements

Assumptions:

“Any changes to working conditions will be negotiated with the appropriate bargaining unit”

- Any changes to working conditions will be negotiated with the appropriate bargaining unit.
- When bargaining of merger related working conditions for Merger District employees is required, policies and agreements of the Merger District will be utilized. The provisions under Statute (RCW 52.06.110, 120 & 130) will be followed for employees of the Merging District.

Adopted: February 3, 2014

Performance Evaluation

Assumptions:

- An evaluation process will be developed and implemented to measure whether the benefits expected by the merger are actually attained and to what degree.
- In coordination with merger activities, staff will establish "baseline data" to identify benchmarks for future measurements of progress in the consolidation process.
- Measureable "objectives" will be developed for the anticipated benefits to be attained to serve as a target for future measurements.
- Evaluation "milestones" will be scheduled periodically at key decision points in the process.
- Staff will prepare periodic "progress reports" to the Board for review and assessment.

"Many advantages in strength and efficiency are expected"

Anticipated Benefits: (Reference Section 3)

- Improved services and efficiency for both Districts
- More productive policy decision-making:
 - Broader perspective with larger policy board.
 - Meld different approaches to gain more effective outcomes.
 - Improved understanding and potential impacts of issues challenging the Merged District.
- Reduced Administrative Costs over time:
 - One fire chief versus two.
 - One department secretary versus two.
 - One administrative system versus two.
 - Reduced cost through higher volume purchasing.
- Improved personnel training:
 - One training officer/program versus two.
 - More efficient use of training facility and props.
 - Larger number of personnel for shift training.
 - Opportunity for more specialized training.
 - Improved training because of broader knowledge base.
- Recruiting and Retention:
 - Expanded opportunities for experience and leadership development.
- Facilities and Equipment:
 - Eliminate unnecessary duplicate equipment
 - Improve utilization of existing equipment for back-up, equipment compatibility.
- Emergency Response:
 - Larger pool of responders for major events.
 - Improved coverage for concurrent calls.
 - Response coverage based on geography rather than jurisdiction.
- Operational Cost:
 - Reduced management and administrative costs which can be used to support fire personnel training and incident response staffing.

"An important part of this merger is to continue to evaluate and determine success at reaching desired outcomes"

"Periodic assessments will be conducted, using baseline data and projected outcomes"