

June 2018

## Strategic Plan 2018-2023



### Prince George Fire & EMS Prince George County, Virginia

Prepared by:



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# CONSULTANT REPORT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fitch & Associates, LLC were contracted by the Prince George County Fire & EMS Department to provide a facilitated strategic planning process. On May 19 and 20, 2018 a twenty-four-member group of internal and external stakeholders completed a strategic visioning process. The process included a review of the value of strategic planning; an analysis of the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges; a review of agency "statements of facts"; an introduction to the Commission on Fire Accreditation International process; plus, a review of the stakeholders' strategic planning statements for final inclusion into a strategic plan. At the conclusion of the process, the stakeholders derived three key themes:

1. How do we save more lives?
2. How do we meet the increasing service demands over the coming years?
3. How do we better market our services and demonstrate our value to our community?

From these key themes, members of the agency's command staff developed a list of eleven strategic initiatives and 54 goals to prepare the Prince George Fire & EMS Department to meet the needs and expectations of their community and remain a "value-added" organization into the future.



## PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is an intentional process by which an agency or organization surveys the industry trends: the customer's needs and wants; the current and future available resources; and the current and future capabilities of the agency to determine performance gaps. Once these gaps are identified, the agency can then determine organizational goals and critical tasks necessary to close or eliminate the performance gaps. At the completion of the process, the agency will possess a planning document that helps better focus organizational resources towards measurable outcomes versus possible inefficient or counterproductive activities. The process of strategic planning also provides additional value when a broad array of stakeholders is able to develop consensus on organizational performance gaps and the potential solutions. The effectiveness of the team is enhanced through the power of shared vision and goals.





## METHODOLOGY

A team of twenty-four members of the Prince George Fire & EMS Department and external stakeholders from the community it serves met for a two-day process facilitated by a senior consultant from Fitch & Associates, LLC. The twenty-four-member group consisted of representatives from all ranks and positions within the organization including command officers, ranking firefighters, volunteers, various support personnel and elected officials. The stakeholders were tasked with providing input and feedback throughout the planning process as advocates from the sub-groups they were asked to represent.

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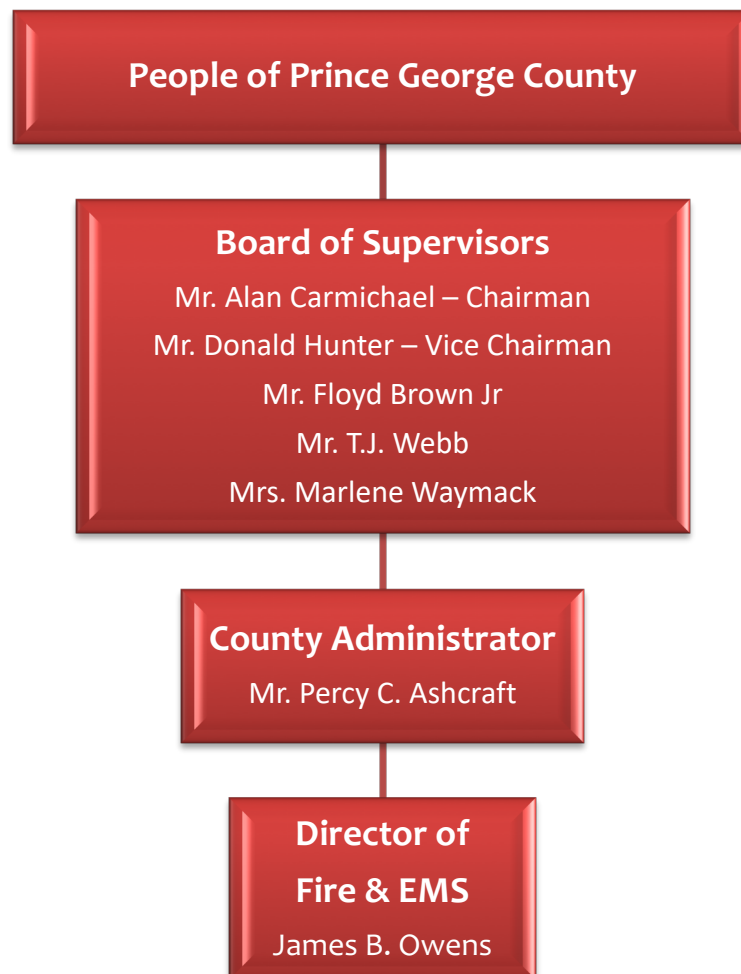
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A draft of the proposed strategic plan was provided to the agency to review for errors prior to publishing. The final report also included an internal progress tracking spreadsheet.



## GOVERNANCE

Prince George County, Virginia, is governed by a five-member board of supervisors elected by district with one member serving as chairman. The board of supervisors appoints a county administrator to coordinate the affairs of the county and supervise the respective county departments. The county administrator is an at-will position with authority to appoint support staff, including the director of Prince George Fire & EMS.



## FIRE & EMS DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Prince George County, Virginia, was established and incorporated in 1703 as a county that extended from North Carolina to the south to the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Today Prince George County encompasses approximately 282 square miles and has a population of 37,000+ residents. The Fire and EMS Department responds to over 4,200 calls for service annually and protects buildings dating from 1657 to a high-tech Rolls-Royce jet engine plant. The County remains primarily rural, with housing subdivisions throughout, an industrial park, small businesses, multi-family housing, recreational areas, as well as urban-wildland interface. Transportation corridors include the James River- an international waterway, Interstate Highways 95 and 295, and Virginia Route 460 which provides commercial and private vehicle passage through the County.

From the founding of Prince George County in 1703 to 1957, the County had no fire protection. For a total of 254 years, the residents lacked organized fire protection unless provided by an outside agency. With a donation from the Prince George Ruratan Club, a Navy surplus 1943 Seagrave pumper was purchased and Prince George Volunteer Fire Department (Co. 1) was organized and began operation from the Court House area of the County. Using a telephone notification system and fundraising to support activities, this remained the only fire protection in the County for a number of years.



The 1960's saw the establishment of the Disputanta Volunteer Fire Department (Company 2 – 1960), the Carson Volunteer Fire Department (Company 3 – 1962), and the Burrowsville Volunteer Fire Department (Company 4 – 1969).

On its original organization, Jefferson Park Volunteer Fire Department was a sub-station of Company 1 and in 1987 became an independent fire company (Company 5). Additionally, an operational sub-station was added in

1995 to the Crater Road area.

Until 1970, emergency medical services (EMS) were not available within the county. Since that time, the Prince George Emergency Crew was formed.

During the formative years of the Fire and EMS services within the County, each station operated independently and raised its own funds for equipment, supplies and other organizational needs. These activities ranged from carnivals, Brunswick stew feeds and bingo games. The coordination between companies resided with the Chiefs' Committee, which met monthly and worked to provide guidance

for interoperability between companies. Funding for new equipment began to transition from an individual company function to a shared company/county function for major purchases.

In 2005 fire, EMS and emergency management were more formalized under county governance. Although the Fire & EMS Department maintained the responsibility for fire and EMS services, the



Director coordinated with limited authority over the individual fire companies. This continued until July 2014 when the Board of Supervisors provided the Director with the authority, as well as the responsibility, for coordination and management of all fire and EMS services throughout the county. Additional full-time cross-trained personnel were hired through a federal grant to assist with staffing 24 hours per day. This has resulted in three stations staffed 24/7 and one station staffed 12 hours per day.

Today, Prince George Fire & EMS operates 12 engines, 3 aerial apparatus, 4 water tanker/tenders, 2 heavy rescue units, 6 brush units, 2 emergency utility vehicles, and 5 responder units, as well as multiple utility vehicles. The Department has a staff of full time, part-time, and volunteer personnel, serving from seven stations, providing 24-hour service to the citizens of Prince George County. In addition, they also provide personnel to the Crater Regional Technical Rescue Team and the Crater Hazardous Materials Team, both of which require specially trained technicians. Fire and EMS personnel also respond to adjoining districts with mutual aid and automatic aid agreements.

In relating Prince George Fire & EMS to other comparable agencies in the region, it is impressive to note the “cost per capita” (total annual cost of operations divided by the population) is approximately 45% lower than the six-agency average. **See Table 1 – Comparable Agencies**

Prince George Fire & EMS continues to train and improve service levels within the community by conducting fire academies, EMS academies, and providing other opportunities for fire and EMS continuing education, through state, local and industrial classes available to individual firefighters.





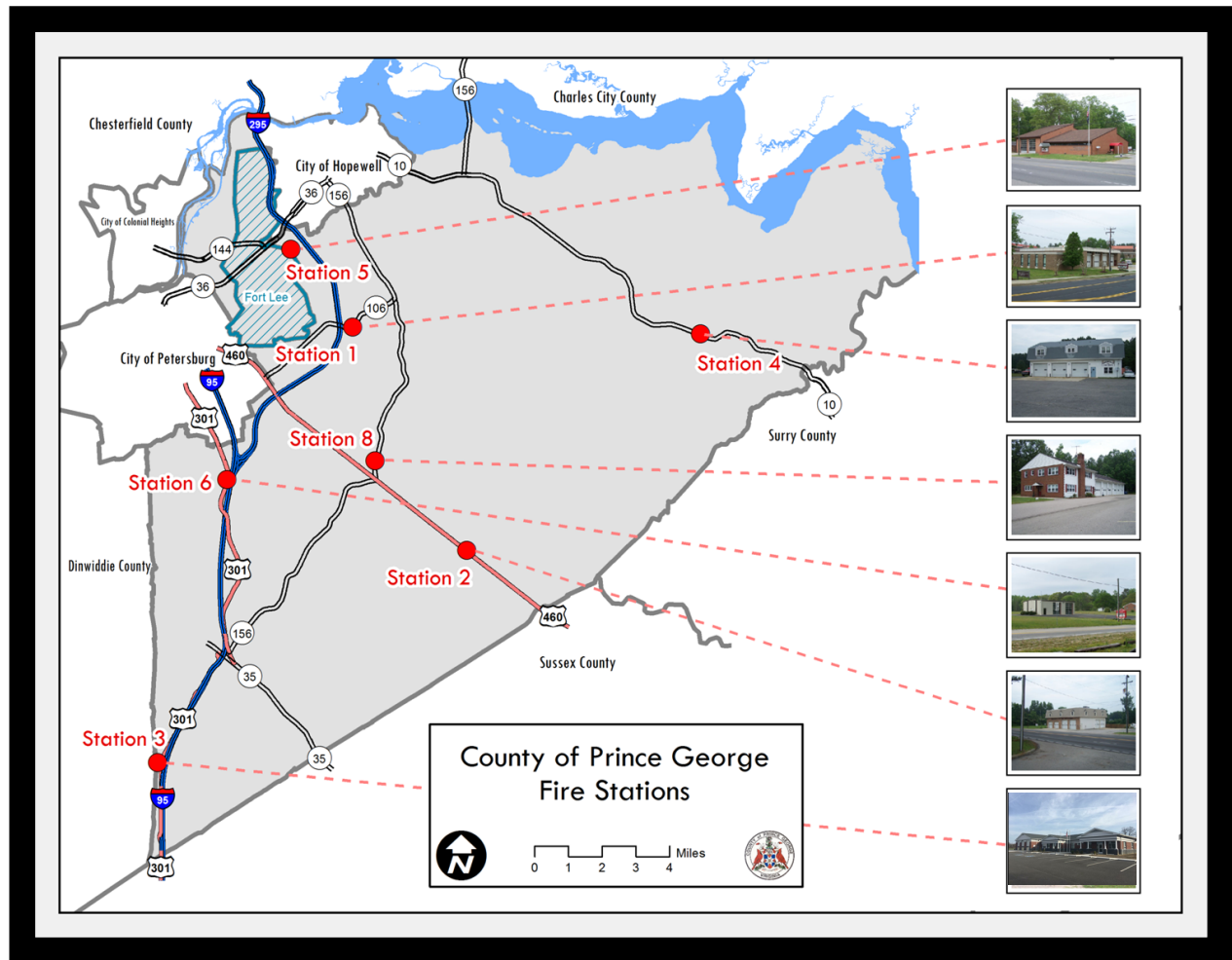
**Table 1 – Comparable Agencies**

| Peer Agency                   | Population Estimate | General Fund Operating Budget (In Millions) | Per Capita General Fund Expenditures | ISO Rating (1 is best) | CPSE Accreditation | # of Fire Stations |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Hanover County, VA            | 105,923             | \$ 20,054,120                               | \$ 189                               | 3                      | No                 | 16                 |
| Dinwiddie, VA                 | 29,000              | \$ 3,181,990                                | \$ 110                               | 5                      | No                 | 3                  |
| Albemarle County, VA          | 107,702             | \$ 12,535,000                               | \$ 116                               | 3                      | No                 | 14                 |
| Newkent, VA                   | 21,671              | \$ 3,205,000                                | \$ 148                               | 3                      | No                 | 4                  |
| Caroline County, VA           | 28,000              | \$ 4,715,000                                | \$ 168                               | 4                      | No                 | 6                  |
| Goochland County, VA          | 22,500              | \$ 4,100,000                                | \$ 182                               | 5                      | No                 | 6                  |
| <b>Peer City/Cnty Average</b> | <b>52,466</b>       | <b>\$ 7,965,185</b>                         | <b>\$ 152</b>                        | <b>4</b>               | <b>No</b>          | <b>8</b>           |
| Prince George, VA             | 37,000              | \$ 3,100,000                                | \$ 84                                | 5                      | No                 | 7                  |





# FACILITIES AND SERVICE AREA



## Prince George County – Fire Stations and Facilities:

**Headquarters,** 6602 Courts Dr. Prince George

**Station 1,** 6500 Courthouse Rd. Prince George

**Station 2,** 10000 County Drive, Disputanta

**Station 3,** 20015 Halifax Rd. Carson

**Station 4,** 17300 James River Dr. Disputanta

**Station 5,** 4225 Jefferson Park Rd. Prince George

**Emergency Crew,** 10800 Prince George Dr. Prince George

**Carson Substation,** 11300 South Crater Rd. Petersburg



# AGENCY VISION

**Our Vision** is to be foremost in public safety by providing first-class fire, rescue, and emergency services to our citizens, as well as to create a resilient community that can recover from all disasters. We will maintain a “customer first” service model to our internal and external customers while representing, supporting, and maintaining our image to the community with pride and honor.

- **We will** recruit, train, and retain exceptional personnel that will endeavor to meet and honor our mission, maintain the public trust, be innovative and efficient in thoughts and actions, and maintain collaborative relationships between all stakeholders during our years of service.
- **We will** enjoy every interaction with our citizenry, love and honor this calling, and always strive to be our best. We will honor all names on our turnout coats and uniforms equally.
- **We will** exercise selfless devotion to our community while helping each other maintain physical, mental, and emotional well-being for each of our members.
- **We will** plan for success and succession because we know that hoping for them is ineffective, but purposeful actions and participation will position us for the future.
- **We will** lead and be responsive to our stakeholders both internal and external.
- **We will** challenge the status quo in pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness through innovation, accountability, and professional growth as individuals and as a team.
- **We will** develop and maintain partnerships throughout the community that help us address the unique challenges of growth while preserving the history and heritage of our county by promoting personalized service delivery with the highest quality of pride and professionalism.
- **We will** pursue International Accreditation; not for the recognition but for the internal evaluation and the processes that continually promote our efficiency and effectiveness.
- **We will** be successful through the continuation of funding strategies that employ fiscal responsibility and position this Fire and EMS Department to successfully meet the defined level of service delivery that this community has come to expect, even during times of economic difficulty and/or uncertainty.

## MISSION STATEMENT

**“To provide quality services through the dedication of our people.”**

## **AGENCY STATUS ANALYSIS**

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) analysis is designed to help the organization evaluate itself in order to determine its current state of effectiveness as well as its future competitiveness/survival based foreseeable changes. Stakeholders were asked to develop a broad list of items from each category, which was then summarized as follows:

### **Strengths: Things the agency does particularly well, competitive advantages, preparedness investments that are paying off, etc.**

- Employee dedication to duty to the community – both career and volunteer
- Good reputation and support with the community
- Apparatus and equipment are in good condition
- Employees are flexible and able to adapt to different daily work assignments
- The culture values customer service
- Good relations with emergency service partners
- Able to provide more mutual aid to surrounding agencies versus over-relying on receiving in the past
- Many members with lots of experience
- Better support from County administration and governing body than in the past
- 911 Center improvements
- Good logistical support
- Very little history of litigation

### **Weaknesses: Things that the agency doesn't do particularly well, competitive disadvantages, blind spots, not prepared for, liabilities, etc.**

- Daily staffing levels are not reliable enough to provide stable service levels
- Members are not following incident accountability practices
- Members not following nationally recognized and required incident command system
- Turnaround time for apparatus repairs
- Not enough reserve units/medical equipment in the ambulance fleet
- Lack of standardization of equipment between different apparatus
- Condition and capabilities of fire stations
- Lack of a fire specific training facility and equipment
- Lack of timely project completions due to too broad of a span of control/lack of staff
- Poor radio reception in certain areas
- Poor interoperable communications with other agencies
- Communication throughout the organization
- Organizational input
- Apparatus placement on emergency incidents
- Lack of an equipment inventory management system
- Demand for service growing faster than organizational capability and revenue
- Traffic congestion - Response times increasing
- Lack of formal firefighter health and safety program; lack of compliance with existing policies
- Water supply capabilities in deficient areas/utility infrastructure
- Lack of inventory of proper PPE

**Opportunities: Opportunities the agency should explore that would improve its mission, service delivery, efficiencies, reputation, survivability as an organization.**

- Additional funding to improve service levels and response times
- Improved reputation with the community through marketing and social media
- Lower fire loss throughout the community with the implementation of a fire marshal and enhanced fire prevention program
- Enhance the use of volunteers in administrative and logistical support roles
- Improve career/volunteer recruitment and retention
- Enhance fire/EMS training division
- Development of fire/EMS training facility
- Enhance training partnerships with other localities
- Improved fire protection levels through better mutual aid/automatic aid exchange of services (ratio of service)
- Expand opportunities for Community Emergency Response Teams to integrate into daily operations (incident support)
- Cost recovery for nuisance or preventable incidents (DUI, arson, failure to comply with code enforcement notices, etc.)
- Development of a strategic plan and future standards of cover
- Accreditation through Commission on Fire Accreditation International
- Improving ISO Class

**Challenges: Things that threaten to undermine the agency mission, service delivery, efficiencies, reputation, survivability as an organization.**

- Slow transition of rural based service model into a more synchronized and standardized countywide fire/EMS system
- Unfunded political/regulatory mandates (state and federal)
- Loss of career/volunteer and support personnel
- Inability to consistently provide daily staffing and/or recall staffing for larger-scale incidents
- Infrastructure becoming more of a barrier to service levels (road network, water system, radio coverage, cell coverage)- Servicing water deficient areas
- Some fire stations are not adequately designed for staffing programs
- Some fire stations are still in need of significant repair or replacement
- Potential for litigation
- Maintaining ISO Class 5
- Future economic downturn
- Event that inhibits employees for reporting to work (pandemic, natural disaster, terrorist event, civil unrest, etc.)
- Aging building stock

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES AND GOALS

## Theme #1

***“How do we save more lives?”***

### **Strategic Initiative - 1.1 Improve Survivability for Victims of Fire, Hazardous Material Release, Entrapment or other Crisis Incidents**

- 1.1.1 Create a Fire Prevention/Community Risk Reduction Division
- 1.1.2 Develop a program to target high-risk areas for door-to-door fire prevention efforts
- 1.1.3 Develop a Standards of Cover plan to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of deployment
- 1.1.4 Explore strategies that mitigate the impact of growing traffic congestion on travel times and routes
- 1.1.5 Explore strategies that provide appropriate response capabilities and equipment for target hazards
- 1.1.6 Enhance incentives for volunteer fire personnel to meet service needs
- 1.1.7 Explore strategies to improve quality and quantity of incident data reporting

### **Strategic Initiative - 1.2 Improve Survivability of Patients Experiencing Acute Medical Emergencies**

- 1.2.1 Explore strategies that measure and improve patient definitive care
- 1.2.2 Enhance incentives for volunteer EMS personnel to meet service needs

### **Strategic Initiative - 1.3 Improve Firefighter Safety and Survival**

- 1.3.1 Limit firefighter exposure to high-risk operations
- 1.3.2 Develop a field training program for new or promoted employees prior to operating in new position
- 1.3.3 Develop a formal mentoring program for all field and command level positions
- 1.3.4 Improve radio communication coverage to address “dead spots” within the county
- 1.3.5 Expand employee health and wellness programs
- 1.3.6 Develop a fire specific training facility with appropriate equipment and training props

### **Strategic Initiative - 1.4 Improve Agency Resiliency During Crisis-Level Events**

- 1.4.1 Update coordination strategies with local, state and federal partners
- 1.4.2 Expand use of Community Emergency Response Teams
- 1.4.3 Update county Emergency Operations Plan
- 1.4.4 Develop an incentive program for volunteers to support extended operations on large-scale incidents
- 1.4.5 Expand role of Local Emergency Planning Committee in countywide disaster planning and response
- 1.4.6 Invest in additional EMS equipment necessary to fully prepare all reserve ambulances for immediately deployment



## **Theme #2**

### ***“How do we meet the increasing service demands over the coming years?”***

#### **Strategic Initiative - 2.1 Reduce Financial and Legal Risk/Liability to PGFEMS Department and the County**

- 2.1.1 Expand the use of dedicated training staff to the training division
- 2.1.2 Develop and maintain a two-year training plan
- 2.1.3 Enhance fire stations to better meet changing staffing programs
- 2.1.4 Develop plan to repair or replace fire stations in need of significant repairs

#### **Strategic Initiative - 2.2 Improve Efficiency within Current Budget System**

- 2.2.1 Maintain Workers' Compensation costs below 3% of annual budget
- 2.2.2 Pursue grant opportunities with a positive return on investment
- 2.2.3 Improve apparatus repair process to limit “turnaround” time
- 2.2.4 Explore the optimum relationship between division-level performance and staffing levels
- 2.2.5 Develop a program that formalizes how new ideas from throughout the organization can be submitted for review and tracked
- 2.2.6 Explore strategies to improve recruitment and retention of personnel
- 2.2.7 Implement an equipment inventory and tracking system
- 2.2.8 Develop a method of providing rapid organizational updates to all members
- 2.2.9 Develop an updated organizational mission statement that better clarifies the specific scope of PGFEMS services to the community
- 2.2.10 Explore statewide adoption of a Ground Emergency Medical Transport reimbursement program for Medicaid patients
- 2.2.11 Standardize apparatus equipment, inventories and locations on appropriate units
- 2.2.12 Update apparatus lifespan policy

#### **Strategic Initiative - 2.3 Prepare the Agency for Next Economic Downturn**

- 2.3.1 Invest in station improvement projects that provide economic savings measured in lower ongoing maintenance or utility costs
- 2.3.2 Invest in high-quality equipment/apparatus that can withstand deferred replacement when necessary
- 2.3.3 Develop/identify cutback strategies that can be implemented for immediate cost savings during an economic crisis

### **Theme #3**

***“How do we better market our services and demonstrate our value to our community?”***

#### **Strategic Initiative - 3.1 Promote A Positive Agency Reputation within the Community**

- 3.1.1 Provide rapid and accurate information on PGFEMS services and activities
- 3.1.2 Enhance the use of PGFEMS social messaging
- 3.1.3 Develop a public information/public education specialist position
- 3.1.4 Implement a “citizens academy”
- 3.1.5 Develop a policy providing field-level crews delegated decision-making parameters to meet non-emergency/customer service needs
- 3.1.6 Develop an "after the fire" follow up program to provide correspondence and feedback with victims

#### **Strategic Initiative - 3.2 Mitigate Fire Related Damage to Allow Occupants to Remain in the Impacted Structure after Suppression Operations**

- 3.2.1 Limit fire related damage to room of origin 50% of the time or better
- 3.2.2 Develop a policy that directs priority of salvage operations

#### **Strategic Initiative - 3.3 Provide Downward Pressure on Fire Insurance Premium Costs within the Community**

- 3.3.1 Maintain Insurance Services Office Class 5 Rating or better
- 3.3.2 Develop a formal Community Risk Reduction program
- 3.3.3 Develop a list of insurance industry representatives to provide information on changes within the insurance market

#### **Strategic Initiative - 3.4 Provide Value Beyond the 911 Call**

- 3.4.1 Develop a contact list of 3rd party/groups that can assist victims with "after the fire/after the incident" resources
- 3.4.2 Develop "after the fire" tours of damaged properties in target areas
- 3.4.3 Formalize smoke alarm installation/battery replacement policy