



ALTON FIRE / RESCUE DEPARTMENT

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"Desire to Serve - Committed to Protect"

ALTON FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

FIVE YEAR PLAN - 2010

OVERVIEW

The Alton Fire & Rescue Department's (AFD) FIVE YEAR plan provides information regarding the evolution of the department and its anticipated development over the next five years, or to 2015.

AFD is a hybrid department housing both the Fire Service (FS) and the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) under one roof with two distinct budgets; but with shared manpower, training, equipment and supply resources. The FS is essentially a call department meaning that the majority of members responding to incidents do so when they are called. The EMS, on the other hand, experiences a greater demand and combines call members with on-shift members during peak demand times.

The AFD updates its five year plan annually given the ongoing and changing demands placed on the department for services as well as the requirements for compliance with equipment and training. The department's overarching objectives whether for FS or EMS are:

- Assuring that the fire & rescue service and emergency medical service standards are maintained regarding every component of man-made and natural disaster readiness; and
- Retaining the confidence of the citizens of Alton and the general public for the fire & rescue services and the emergency medical services provided.

With each update to the fire year plan, the department takes into consideration:

- Staffing and operation of each of the four facilities (stations).
- Mix of: call personnel, interns and full time personnel.
- Officer corps make-up and responsibilities.
- Training and standards necessary to achieve our overarching objectives.
- Lines of communications and coordination; "up and down" the chain of command.
- Facility and equipment needs.

This Strategic Plan organizes and presents information vital to the Department's function in service to the Citizens of the Town of Alton assuming a population growth of 15% overall in 5 years to an approximate year 'round population of 5,875. As with any Town Department, the support of the citizens and the members of the Board of Selectmen is a keystone component in the Department's efforts to serve the Town efficiently.

The Department's evolution as a hybrid operation has been shown to be the most cost effective given the current demand for service. This is also seen when Alton's cost effectiveness is compared with our immediate neighbors, shown in rank order from most cost effective to least for 2009 (all departments provide fire and EMS service except where noted):

- New Durham**: Call department. \$534 per call (\$182,000 budget, 341 calls)
- Alton**: Call + occasional Shift coverage. \$700 per call (\$448,000 budget 640 calls)
\$139,000 of the total is a EMS revolving fund and does not impact the tax rate. **With the EMS budget factored out, Alton's per call cost is \$482)**
- Barnstead**: Call + Shift coverage \$718 per call (\$422,656 budget, 589 calls)
- Gilmanton**: Call + Shift coverage. \$809 per call (\$473,000 budget, 585 calls)
- Wolfeboro**: Full shift, FS only \$1,100 per call (\$1,350,000 budget, 1,227 calls)
- Gilford**: Full shift coverage, \$1,322 per call (\$1,642,155 budget, 1,242 calls)

Staffing and operation of each of the four stations

As the demand for services increases, we foresee the eventual presence of EMS/FIRE personnel assigned to each station or station district (except for the Bay Station) in the long term future. In the near term, we project continuing summer season day coverage with 2 EMS crew members from Central Station along with scheduled on-call crew members for night coverage. This coverage is increased to two working crews during peak demand periods.

We project a fire intern presence in each station (except for the East Alton and the Bay Stations) during their academic year. We also project the need for additional management staff to deal with the increasing administrative requirements of both the fire and EMS services by augmenting the current 1/2 time Chief and 1/2 time Assistant Chief (Fire Prevention/Inspection) officers with a 1/2 time operations Captain.

We have embraced a Squad personnel structure with members assigned to a Lieutenant with a reasonable span of control. Lieutenants manage the personnel aspects of squad members to ensure each member's ongoing training and developing of expertise.

Since AFD is primarily a Call Department, members from any Squad respond to a station to man apparatus in Crews. A Crew may consist of members from a single Squad, or from multiple Squads with an Officer in Charge conforming to our current chain of command Standard Operating Guidelines. Interns residing at a station assemble a Crew regardless of their Squad assignment. The assembled Crew responds as appropriate and as needed.

The current approach to meeting manpower needs appears to be effective and is anticipated to remain so for the next 5 years. The service demand does appear to be in the EMS area, and any move towards more permanent on-duty or shift personnel would appear there. The current manpower/personnel make-up with FS on-call and EMS a combination of on-call and scheduled on-duty shifts appears to be viable for the next five years.

We plan increasing our Call membership as the most cost-effective method of providing services. In doing so, we recognize an increase in administrative, training and personal protective equipment costs; we also recognize that overall personnel costs in a primarily call department will have an overwhelming savings over a full-time staffing pattern (which would still require a Call membership presence). We do project an increasing use of shift coverage during periods of increase service demand (such as the summer season) as noted.

Space and accommodation requirements.

Our Central and West Alton stations – both in 50+ year old buildings – are drastically out of compliance with code and safety standards and sorely lacking in space requirements. We project the need for upgrading adequate living quarters in Central and West Alton Stations as well as upgrading equipment housing and supply storage space.

The Board of Selectmen, in their anticipation of our need, did have architectural renderings drawn showing a projected upgrading to Central Station. This plan envisioned living quarter plans are for current use by interns, but with the flexibility for use by over-night staffing in the future, as necessary.

Equipment requirements.

The fire service is a rapidly evolving technology with similarly evolving codes and regulations that we strive to meet. The Town of Alton has been quite progressive in assisting us in our attempts to “keep up.” The protective personal equipment and consumables such as hose are constantly being renewed. Apparatus has been upgraded and we are able at times to forestall investing in new “big ticket” items. However, we do anticipate a need to replace our ladder truck and the West Alton engine in the foreseeable future.

Officer corps make-up and responsibilities

We have embraced a personnel management structure (as opposed to an apparatus management structure). This does require a greater depth of junior (Lieutenant) officers to ensure a reasonable span of control over members assigned to Squads. In developing a broad based Call Department, we project the need for an expanded junior officer base and possibly an expanded senior officer cadre (Captains, Deputy Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs).

This reflects our concept of “many hands make light work,” and utilizes the fractional time commitments available from Call Department members.

We have defined officer duties in terms of personnel requirements. We have developed of Area Matter Experts in the officer corps to manage the multiple functions necessary to carry out the mission of the AFD in its day-to-day operations thus splitting up tasks that would ordinarily require a full time employee. Officers need to be appropriately certified and exhibit leadership and management skills as well as specific skills in EMS or FIRE duties as well as expertise in their subject matter area. Officers are active in Department operations.

Training and standards necessary to achieve our overarching objectives.

Currently we have members certified in a number of areas. All new members are required to achieve either certification as a firefighter or as an EMT. Some elect to achieve certification in both areas. Ongoing training is provided and is essential to provide the services necessary to meet the needs of Alton’s citizens. Training is both individual and team oriented so that members have the personal skills to perform tasks and the teamwork to accomplish those tasks in emergency situations.

Lines of communications & coordination up and down the chain of command

We have developed Standard Operating Guidelines to effectively communicate with our members in both directions – down and up the Chain of Command. We practice this concept in our training and in our actual emergency operations. Communication to the Department membership is facilitated though electronic means and we have become more reliant on computer and internet services in this regard.

The Department is represented to the Board of Selectmen and to Town Hall as well as the public in general through the Chief of the Department. We also facilitate communication through the auspices of the Alton Firemen Inc website in support of the Department’s efforts.