



ALTON FIRE / RESCUE DEPARTMENT

65 FRANK GILMAN HIGHWAY
P.O. BOX 472 ALTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03809
TEL: (603) 875-0222 FAX: (603) 875-0226
"Desire to Serve - Committed to Protect"

ALTON FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

FIVE YEAR PLAN - 2011

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 2016, in regards to its service to the citizens of the Town of Alton.

AFD is a hybrid service with a solid foundation provided by the Alton Firemen's Association as well as the other Alton fire associations. This is a relationship which has spanned over 100 years. The Association/Department relationship is estimated to have benefitted the Town of Alton financially through the Association's purchase of needed equipment as well as providing a membership foundation saving the Alton taxpayers some \$1,000,000 annually in a full-time department offset.

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 (which is fully self funded without any tax dollars in its budget), on the other hand, experiences a greater demand and combines call members with part-time on-shift members during peak service times.

The AFD updates its five year plan annually given the ongoing, increasing and changing demands for the department's services, changing resource availability and increasing 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 fire & rescue services and emergency medical services provided.

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

- Staffing, operation and maintenance 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 5,883 by 2016. As with any municipal Department, the support of the citizens and the members of the Board of Selectmen is a key 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 and its current availability of manpower and equipment resources. However, it must be noted that a cadre’ of officers and senior department members will soon reach retirement age leaving a manpower gap which the department struggles to fill.

Staffing and operation of each of the four stations

As the demand for services increases, we foresee the eventual presence of EMS/FIRE personnel housed in Central station. By 2016 we expect that at least one shift will need to be staffed 7 days per week. We would consider applying for a SAFER Grant (Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response) to help offset a tremendous increase in our personnel budget. In the interim, we project continuing summer season day coverage with 2 EMS crew members from Central Station along with scheduled on-call EMS crew members for night coverage. This coverage is increased to two working crews during peak demand periods.

We anticipate fire intern presence in our Central station during their academic year. We also have a dire need for additional management staff to deal with an ever increasing workload of maintenance and 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 or train in groups consistent with our response practices. Members 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. Interns residing at Central station assemble a Crew regardless of their Squad assignment.

Increasing our Call membership is 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).

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 and both in need of major repairs. We support the Board of Selectmen’s initiative to upgrade Central Station through the architectural plan they have drawn up and also the plan they are considering for a streamlined and modern West Alton station.

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. At this time we anticipate replacing the West Alton station engine (Engine 5) as it approaches 40 years in age and is showing signs of failure in its frame as well as replacing Central Station’s ladder (Ladder 1) as it is over 20 years old. Both of these apparatus are at a critical “end of life” state at this time.

Officer corps make-up and responsibilities

We have embraced a personnel management structure (as opposed to an apparatus management structure). This does require the number of junior (Lieutenant) officers to ensure a reasonable span of control over members assigned to Squads. In our efforts to maintain a Call Department, we project the need for a continuing 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,” recognizes the increasing time demands on each member and utilizes the fractional time commitments available from Call Department members.

We have defined officer duties in terms of personnel requirements. We have developed 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 full time employees. Officers need to be appropriately certified and exhibit leadership and management skills as well as specific skills in EMS or FS 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 through 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 in our chain of command. We also rely on the interaction between the community based fire associations in Alton and also facilitate communication through the auspices of the Alton Firemen Inc website (www.altonfire.org) in support of the Department's efforts.