



# **Fire Department Strategic Plan**

**2009**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

More than a year ago, the Mt. Lebanon Fire Department initiated a strategic planning process to develop its first formal strategic plan. Plan development was facilitated by a Strategic Planning Team, which consisted of both career and volunteer staff of varying ranks and tenure. The plan's goals and objectives were all derived from community and staff input solicited during the planning process. Procedures utilized in the development of the plan included staff and resident surveys, numerous staff and community focus groups, a facilitated retreat of department chief officers and staff feedback on the draft plan. Through the strategic planning process, the department identified its core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. It also clarified the department's mission, vision, values and expectations.

The plan established eight strategic goals for the department:

1. Continue to improve service delivery to the community
2. Improve organizational effectiveness
3. Continue to support effective community outreach and involvement
4. Provide and maintain quality equipment and facilities
5. Be fiscally proactive and responsible
6. Improve leadership of the department
7. Improve communications
8. Develop a department master plan

The strategic plan is designed to guide the department over the next five years. However, this document should be viewed as merely a first step toward effecting change through implementation. The strategic plan should be reviewed and updated annually to assure currency and allow for adaptation to changing circumstances. Further, a department master plan, which outlines the specific action steps, costs, timelines and implementation priorities of the objectives stated in this plan, needs developed.

The Mt. Lebanon Fire Department has a proud history of exceptional community focused service delivered by a highly trained and professional staff of career and volunteer firefighters. The department membership looks forward to an even greater future as a result of this planning effort.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND**

The Municipality of Mt. Lebanon, located on the southern border of the City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is served by a combination fire department consisting of 17 career and 50 volunteer fire fighters serving a population of approximately 34,000. The municipality spans 6.2 square miles consisting of mostly residential and commercial properties. The fire department operates out of a single fire station with four engines, a ladder truck, rescue truck, mobile command unit, a collapse rescue trailer and four squads. The department responds to approximately 1,900 calls for service and participates in over 1,000 hours of community-related activities each year.

A combination fire department blends the advantages of an all-career department and an all-volunteer department. The primary advantages of an all-career department include immediate response to emergencies and the ability to deliver other essential services to the community. The primary advantage of an all-volunteer organization is the availability of a large manpower pool at little cost. In combination fire departments, a limited full-time staff is on duty around the clock. The staff quickly responds to emergencies and provides training, inspections, public education, maintenance and other community-related services between alarms. The volunteer members are called out to emergencies that are beyond, or potentially beyond, the capabilities of the on-duty force in addition to attending training and assisting with community service activities.

Today, response to emergencies represent only a fraction of the total activities of the fire department. Functions such as fire safety inspections, public education, building plan review community outreach and fire prevention have become the foundations of the new fire service. Other areas of involvement now include technical rescue, hazardous material response and emergency and disaster preparedness.

In accordance with the department's mission and fundamental values, each of the career staff is assigned a great deal of responsibility. In fact, the two rank designations within the career department - platoon chief and lieutenant - do not accurately represent the jobs being performed. In reality Mt. Lebanon platoon chiefs are assigned responsibilities commensurate with those of a deputy or division chief in larger departments while lieutenants' roles are equal to or greater than those of captains.

The core duties of all fire department staff are three-fold: fitness, training and equipment readiness. Each individual must be physically fit, be well versed in a wide variety of emergency response skills and have functional equipment in order to safely and effectively mitigate emergencies of all types. A portion of every work shift is dedicated to these three essential functions. In addition to these fundamental responsibilities, every career member is assigned to one of six platoons within the Prevention or Operations Divisions, each of which is responsible for a specific staff function. These staff functions include: Fire Prevention & Inspections, Emergency Management, Training, Resource Management, Community Services & Outreach and Fire & Life Safety Education.

## **THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS**

### **PROCEDURES**

The following procedures were utilized in the development of the strategic plan:

1. Survey of volunteer staff
2. Survey of career staff
3. Survey of residents
4. Resident focus groups (3)
5. Business and facility focus group
6. Career staff focus groups (5)
7. Volunteer staff focus group
8. Career staff SWOC discussion
9. Volunteer staff SWOC discussion
10. Department mission / values discussion
11. Platoon Chief Retreat
12. Department review and comment on draft plan

### **RESULTS**

#### SWOC Analysis

##### *Strengths*

- Level of training, education, and experience of staff
- Training standards
- Support of outside training opportunities
- Quality of equipment
- Newer facility
- Members do not have to spend time performing fund raising activities
- Involvement in community
- Customer service focus
- Immediacy of response from on-duty crew

##### *Weaknesses*

- Staffing of night and weekend still alarm responses
- Volunteer staff not fully utilized
- Outdated operating procedures
- Lack of succession planning for volunteer company executive roles
- Program and project planning
- Communication between platoons and with volunteer staff

##### *Opportunities*

- Center for Public Safety Excellence accreditation
- Fire Corps for emergency management and school education program activities
- Expanded volunteer leadership opportunities

- Point system for volunteer activities (emergency and non-emergency)
- Restructuring of drill credit to a con-ed model with requirements for subject areas
- Volunteer mentor program
- Define community expectation of fire department role in EMS response
- Company inspection program (include Knox Box maintenance / inventory)
- Improved time management

*Challenges*

- Municipal budget constraints
- Availability and participation of members
- Retirement of senior volunteer staff
- Shift of volunteer response from full alarm to more still alarm and duty shift based
- Training requirements potentially driving volunteers away
- Declining turnout and competence of some mutual aid companies
- Lack of career staff promotional opportunities
- Improving esprit de corps

Community Input

*Survey Findings*

- Maintain current programs with a focus on community priorities (Table 1)
- Residents are not fully aware of the scope and number of department emergency and non-emergency activities
- Citizen satisfaction with the department’s delivery of emergency and non-emergency activities is excellent

**Table 1 Priority Ranking of Fire Department Services**

<b>Service/Program</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Emergency Response	Very High
Emergency Management (Municipal and Facility Plans)	High
Fire Code Enforcement (Inspections & Plan Review)	High
Facility Staff Training	High
Alarm System Monitoring	High
Public Education (School Program, Senior Program)	High
Special Needs Database	Medium
Fire and Life Safety Outreach (Smoke Detectors, Home Safety Inspections, Chimney Inspections, Safety Fairs)	Medium
Car Seat Program	Low
Citizen's Fire Academy	Low
Public Relations Activities (Community Events, Scout Projects, Station Tours, Block Parties, Fire Truck Rides)	Low

## **MISSION, VISION AND VALUES**

### **Mission**

The mission of the Mount Lebanon Fire Department is to serve and safeguard our diverse community through the delivery of professional, efficient and effective services protecting life, property and the environment.

### **Vision**

It is our vision to be leaders in delivering the highest quality and cost effective prevention, education and emergency response services.

### **Values**

Service with Pride, Professionalism and Personalized Delivery

### **Motto/Slogan**

It's all about the people

## **ORGANIZATIONAL EXPECTATIONS**

### **Everybody Goes Home**

#### **To the Residents:**

We owe the residents of Mount Lebanon the highest quality of service possible, characterized by pride, professionalism, community-focused delivery and public trust.

We will strive to improve productivity; remain fiscally responsible in our decision-making; treat every resident with the utmost dignity and respect; ensure our equipment is always in superior working order and ready to respond to meet the customer's needs; learn our profession to the best of our abilities; strive to deliver a personalized "WOW" customer service experience on every response; and maintain the public trust through the highest levels of responsibility and accountability. We will be untiringly proactive in the fields of education, engineering and enforcement, resulting in continuous improvement of the fire prevention initiatives. We will use every resource available to help our customers recover in the fastest and least disruptive manner.

- Be humble, be tactful, be responsible, and be nice
- Be fiscally responsible
- Learn your profession
- Perform daily and monthly truck and equipment checks
- Ensure your personal protective equipment is in good condition
- Continue to develop and deliver proactive programs that meet the changing demographic needs of the community
- Strive to meet or exceed expectations defined in Department Standards of Cover
- The customer is the reason we are here
- Welcome members of the community

#### **To the Fire Department:**

We owe the Mount Lebanon Fire Department our fullest commitment and dedication. We will always look beyond the traditional scope of our individual positions to promote teamwork, innovation and organizational effectiveness.

We will work through the chain of command to resolve issues at the lowest possible level of the organizational structure; prioritize our goals and objectives to most effectively meet the fire department mission; demonstrate the highest levels of personal integrity; be accountable for our decisions; and strive to learn our profession to the best of our abilities.

- Curtail any culture of negativity
- Work together as a unified entity

- Work within the chain of command
- Set high standards
- Maintain the appearance of equipment and facilities
- Place the good of the department ahead of personal gains
- Follow rules, regulations, and procedures
- Look professional
- Respond to 10% of all alarms
- Attend 50% of departmental drills
- Get involved with a committee or shift activity
- Perform one duty shift per month
- Be adaptive to the changing needs of our customers, internal and external

### **To Each Other:**

We owe each other a working environment characterized by trust and respect for the individual, fostering open and honest communications at all levels, and personal accountability for our actions.

We will work hard to develop a culture of unity, treating one another with dignity and respect, leading by example, promoting participative management, fostering open and honest communications at all levels. We will be accountable to one another and do our best to recognize and reward those who go beyond our day-to-day expectations. We will treat our second family as we treat our first.

- Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- Be tolerant of other people's thoughts, opinions and differences
- Mentor and help train new fire fighters
- Recognize the contributions of others
- Reward the contributions of others
- Open and honest communications and feedback
- Be on time
- Perform your daily duties, do not leave them for someone else
- Lead by example
- Don't ask someone if they need help, help them
- If you mess it up, clean it up

### **To Ourselves:**

We owe ourselves personal and professional growth. We will seek new knowledge and greater challenges, and strive to remain at the leading edge of our profession.

We owe it to ourselves to be the best we can be, striving to gain greater knowledge and experience in our profession, going beyond meeting minimum standards bust striving to meet departmental expectations. We realize we are an extension of the fire department in our personal and professional lives and shall

always act in a manner that is consistent with the values of the organization, demonstrating the highest levels of pride, professionalism, integrity, and accountability.

- Maintain fire fighting skills and update regularly
- Get involved
- Become a certified FF1
- Communicate effectively
- Be physically and mentally fit

## RECOMMENDED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

<b>Goal 1 – Continue to improve service delivery to the community</b>
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**Objective 1-A            Prepare for and request a re-evaluation of current Insurance Services Organization Public Classification of the municipality.**

**Recommendations:**

- Gather required information
- Identify improvement opportunities
- Implement improvements in advance of the rating visit
- Request and support the rating visit

**Objective 1-B            Achieve accreditation from the Center for Public Safety Excellence.**

**Recommendations:**

- Utilize accreditation standards as a guide for improving department effectiveness.
- Increase volunteer awareness of the benefits of accreditation.
- Gather required information
- Identify improvement opportunities
- Implement improvements in advance of the peer review
- Request and support the peer review

**Objective 1-C            Update district maps and pre-incident plans for target hazards**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify target hazards
- Assign responsibility to do surveys and develop maps
- Provide training to those assigned to do surveys and produce maps
- Conduct pre-incident plan surveys
- Develop pre-incident plans
- Provide training to members on target hazard features
- Develop a program to include a schedule to review and revise as needed
- Annually review and update map books and pre-incident plans

**Objective 1-D            Update the local emergency plan that includes the four phases of emergency planning**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify and coordinate with other planning partners (Current Program)
- Conduct a hazard assessment (Current Program)

- Develop response annexes to address identified hazards
- Exercise the plans
- Continue refining Emergency Operations Center (EOC) (Current Program)

**Objective 1-E            Increase the reliability of volunteer staffing for emergency responses.**

**Recommendations:**

- Explore, evaluate and implement options for improving volunteer response

**Objective 1-F            Increase utilization of volunteers in Department operations**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify workload appropriate for volunteer personnel and develop job descriptions accordingly
- Utilize special skills and talents of department members
  - Create a skills inventory
  - Recruit responding and non-responding members who can provide specialized skills to the department
- Investigate the validity of Fire Corps program and prepare report on implementation for Fire Chief
- Investigate implementation of a point system for volunteer to better balance activities (emergency and non-emergency).

**Objective 1-G            Implement and Support an active Explorer program**

**Recommendations:**

- Investigate and develop a plan to charter and host an Explorer type program for teenager to involve them in the department's mission.
- Provide funding and support as needed
- Develop a recruitment partnership with the school district

**Objective 1-H            Improve post-emergency victim support**

**Recommendations:**

- Review and revise as needed Occupancy Support Sector Procedures
- Provide training to all department members on victim support
- Investigate expanding the program to include support services for businesses

**Objective 1-I Determine the extent to which the Department will provide Technical Hazardous Materials response and mitigation.**

**Recommendations:**

- Conduct needs analysis to determine level of need in community
- Determine the availability of these services from other sources
- Develop partnerships with other sources as needed
- Identify service gaps remaining
- Identify resources required to fill gaps
- Develop specification and a funding plan for resources needed to fill the gaps
- Review and revise policies and operating guidelines as needed
- Provide needed training to meet the services requirements

**Objective 1-J Determine the extent to which the Department will provide Technical Rescue response.**

**Recommendations:**

- Conduct needs analysis to determine level of need in community
- Determine the availability of these services from other sources
- Develop partnerships with other sources as needed
- Identify service gaps remaining
- Identify resources required to fill gaps
- Develop specification and a funding plan for resources needed to fill the gaps
- Review and revise policies and operating guidelines as needed
- Provide needed training to meet the services requirements

**Objective 1-K Determine the extent to which the Department will provide Emergency Medical Services**

**Recommendations:**

- Conduct needs analysis to determine level of need in community
- Determine the availability of these services from other sources
- Develop partnerships with other sources as needed
- Identify service gaps remaining
- Identify resources required to fill gaps
- Develop specification and a funding plan for resources needed to fill the gaps
- Review and revise policies and operating guidelines as needed
- Provide needed training to meet the services requirements

**Objective 1-L          Develop and adopt an operational plan for the Department**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify elements needed in an operational plan
- Develop draft plan for approval
- Implement Plan
- Provide needed training to all personnel

**Objective 1-M          Develop and implement a post-incident analysis program**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify best-practices with regard to post incident analysis
- Develop procedure to collect post incident analysis data
- Develop procedure to review and recommend changes based upon post incident analysis data.

**Objective 1- N          Implement a company inspection program that includes  
Knox Box maintenance that focuses on secondary occupancies,  
freeing up time to focus on target hazards.**

## **Goal 2 – Improve organizational effectiveness**

### **Objective 2-A          Review, reorganize and revise Policies and Operating Guidelines**

#### **Recommendations:**

- Review, revise and implement policies and guidelines for consistency and currency (Current Program). Maintain controlled updates.

### **Objective 2-B          Develop desk manuals for critical functions**

#### **Recommendations:**

- Identify critical functions
- Draft step-by-step procedures to accomplish critical functions
- Publish and maintain desk manuals for critical functions

### **Objective 2-C          Improve communication of availability of support mechanisms to all members.**

#### **Recommendations:**

- Provide training to all members on the employee assistance program (EAP) and available resources to support members and how to access EAP.
- Provide training to all members on the family assistance unit (FAU) and available resources to support members and their families and how to access FAU.
- Develop and train members to a guideline for access to critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) services.

### **Objective 2-D          Develop a competency evaluation system to comply with NFPA training standards.**

#### **Recommendations:**

- Identify required skill sets by department position (Current Program)
- Establish performance criteria for various skill sets (Current Program)
- Develop a schedule for competency evaluation
- Conduct competency evaluations

**Objective 2-E            Manage the increasing training requirement impacts on members time.**

**Recommendations:**

- Evaluate and implement a training program allowing for individualized, flexible training to meet identified needs
- Ensure good communication for changes in upcoming training offerings

**Objective 2-F            Review, revise and implement an annual training plan based upon a needs analysis.**

**Recommendations:**

- Implement a training program evaluation system
- Continue to improve the quality of training facilities, props and resources
- Ensure training is specific to departmental mission and values
- Maintain support for outside training that meets department training standards
- Increase the use of simulation in the training program
- Increase the number of multi-company, scenario based training sessions
- Utilize typical staffing for crew assignments in training rather than standard crew size of 4 to 6 members.
- Continue emphasis on hand-on training as opposed to classroom training.

**Objective 2-G            Create an organizational environment that will promote member commitment and loyalty and improve participation.**

**Recommendations:**

- Review and revise the recognition programs as needed
- Continue to support social activities
- Continue to publish an internal newsletter with information to connect members to the organization
- Foster teambuilding through the use of appropriate training methods.

**Objective 2-H            Redundancy/Succession Planning**

**Recommendations:**

- Conduct a Job Task Analysis & Job Task Matrix
- Develop a primary and secondary Job Task Matrix
- Evaluate distribution of Job Tasks to make sure more than one individual is competent at any given Job Task.

**Objective 2-I            Redistribute resources to match community priorities and Department workload.**

**Recommendations:**

- Create a Job Task Matrix to determine current workload and to aid in planning how to redistribute workload to match priorities and capacity availability.
- Review and reassign shift alignment volunteers to better balance activity levels.
- Review and reassign shift duties to better balance activity levels between career staff.
- Investigate alternate staffing models

**Objective 2-J            Develop a recruitment and retention plan**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify required daylight, night and weekend volunteer turnout needs.
- Develop a target volunteer recruit profile, with a focus on availability and commitment
- Conduct exit interviews with volunteers who resign.

**Objective 2-K            Evaluate department standards with regard to volunteer availability, commitment and time constraints.**

**Recommendations:**

- Evaluate all Department requirements for consistency and validity to Department mission, values and goals.
- Implement changes as needed.

**Objective 2-L            Establish and annually update an Accident Prevention and Risk Management Plans**

**Recommendations:**

- Establish risk management plan to include on and off scene strategies to manage risk and minimize potential for injury and death.
- Establish an accident prevention plan with the assistance of the Municipalities risk manager to comply with statutory and other legal requirements.
- Train department members in the risk management model and according to training needs identified in the accident prevention plan.
- Research and purchase safety equipment as appropriate.

<b>Goal 3 – Continue to support effective community outreach and involvement</b>
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**Objective 3-A            Maintain positive relations with local, regional and national media, through the use of a Public Information Officer.**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify and establish a Public Information Officer
- Provide news releases to the media on significant incidents, prevention topics and Department activities
- Prepare a fire department fact sheet for distribution to the press
- Encourage members to submit articles to national trade magazines
- Provide media relations training to staff

**Objective 3-B            Increase public awareness of department activities.**

**Recommendations:**

- Provide open communication with the community through the use of publications, public meetings, community events, and electronic media as needed
- Conduct service users surveys (current program)
- Investigate the use of the community “welcome wagon” to introduce department services to new residents.

**Objective 3-C            Review and revise department involvement in community outreach activities based upon effectiveness and cost efficiency.**

**Recommendations:**

- Evaluate the relativity of all outreach activities ranked in the planning process to the departmental mission. Eliminate any that do not support the department mission.
- Evaluate ability of department to provide proper resources to continue provided current menu of services/programs.
- Revise program delivery to increase efficiency and effectiveness
- Redistribute department resources to match community priorities.
- Investigate the feasibility of re-instituting the Household Hazardous Waste program

<b>Goal 4 – Provide and maintain quality equipment and facilities</b>
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**Objective 4-A          Develop a comprehensive asset management plan**

**Recommendations:**

- Develop a comprehensive apparatus needs assessment
- Develop an apparatus replacement program
- Develop a small equipment replacement program
- Seek alternate funding sources when appropriate

**Objective 4-B          Conduct a comprehensive facilities assessment**

**Recommendations:**

- Conduct a facilities assessment
- Identify improvements needed
- Develop a schedule and funding plan to complete improvements

**Objective 4-C          Continue to provide quality maintenance for facilities,  
apparatus and equipment**

**Recommendations:**

- Ensure adequate funding for facilities, apparatus and equipment maintenance programs
- Ensure daily and monthly apparatus inspections are completed
- Evaluate out-sourcing maintenance tasks to provide for better time-utilization and fiscal efficiency
- Maintain quality reserve apparatus

**Objective 4-D          Continue to support advanced information management  
systems and practices**

**Recommendations:**

- Continue First Look Pro Project to completion
- Continue to provide maintenance of department network and its associated hardware and software.
- Create and implement a data protection plan

## **Goal 5 – Be fiscally pro-active and responsible**

**Objective 5-A            Explore and implement partnerships with other emergency response agencies and other service providers.**

**Recommendations:**

- Review and update mutual aid agreements including regional agreements to provide services
- Identify joint purchasing opportunities
- Identify opportunities to share training and physical resources such as equipment and facilities

**Objective 5-B            Continually explore revenue enhancement opportunities**

**Recommendations:**

- Apply for grants as available and appropriate (Current Program)
- Utilize state surplus program if appropriate
- Utilize local and state purchasing consortiums as appropriate
- Continue to explore other revenue opportunities (Current Program)

**Objective 5-C            Develop and adopt a financial plan for the Department**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify elements needed in a financial plan
- Develop draft plan for approval
- Approve and implement plan

**Objective 5-D            Examine all departmental operations for cost efficiency**

**Recommendations:**

- Review all department functions on a cost-benefit basis
- Redistribute resources to match community priorities and department workload
- Consider outsourcing when appropriate

## **Goal 6 – Improve leadership of Department**

**Objective 6-A            Expand leadership opportunities at all levels of the organization**

**Recommendations:**

- Continue to provide Lieutenants opportunities for professional growth and increased responsibility on high profile projects.
- Expand leadership opportunities (line and staff) for volunteers.

**Objective 6-B            Provide leadership training to staff**

**Recommendations:**

- Provide career officers regular leadership and management training having a focus on volunteer issues, time management and project management.
- Conduct “team building” exercises between career and volunteer staff.

**Objective 6-C            Develop a culture that supports appropriate leadership behavior**

**Recommendations:**

- Define leadership expectations and Department philosophy
- Incorporate into performance appraisal systems where appropriate

**Objective 6-D            Research, develop and implement a staff rotation plan**

**Recommendations:**

- Research and develop a plan to rotate career staff amongst platoons to prevent stagnation
- Plan would also support goal of providing necessary redundancy of operations

## **Goal 7 – Improve communications**

**Objective 7-A            Review and revise the policies, guidelines and media used for internal communications and the decision making process.**

**Recommendations:**

- Clarify and enforce proper use of the chain of command
- Explore, evaluate and implement a variety of communications tools that encourage open expression of issues, concerns and suggestions.

**Objective 7-B            Improve communications via appropriate methods and/or media**

**Recommendations:**

- Identify an official forum for the submission and consideration of new ideas
- Discussion and training of policy and procedure changes at drills and meetings, accompanied by e-mail and newsletter notification prior to implementation.
- Posting official Department communications in a central location
- Continued emailing of the municipal AR
- Weekly platoon meetings with the Fire Chief
- Implement written monthly platoon reports
- Post training notices in a more public location

**Objective 7-C            Develop appropriate feedback mechanisms to promote professional development**

**Recommendations:**

- Revise the career staff performance appraisal form to better match job description, pare back subject areas and minimize subjectivity.
- Develop an informal performance appraisal system to provide feedback to volunteer staff based upon job description.
- Train all members in the uses of feedback systems.

**Goal 8 – Department Master Plan**

**Objective 8-A      The Department shall develop a five-year Master Plan that addresses the Strategic Goals and Objective identified in the Strategic Plan and establishes responsibility for completion and timelines.**

## **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS**

The ability to define “great” service requires a set of tools that can be used to measure the performance of an organization. These tools allow an organization to evaluate its performance through observation of changes in key performance indicators. They also allow an organization to compare itself with other similar organizations to identify opportunities for improvement.

In addition to the objective measurements inherent in the Strategic Plan, the Mount Lebanon Fire Department has identified the following Performance Objectives as critical to maintaining “great” service to the community and will strive to meet these benchmarks. Pending the writing of the Standard of Cover required for the Accreditation process, some of these benchmarks may change, be eliminated or additional benchmarks be identified.

First engine en-route in 90 seconds or less 90% of the time

Arrive on scene in 5 minutes or less 90% of the time

Contain fire to the compartment of origin 75% of the time

Maintain per capita fire loss under \$25 per capita

0 fire deaths annually

0 Fire Fighter deaths annually

0 time-loss fire fighter injuries annually

Volunteers will respond to 10% of all alarms on average

All members will attend 50% of Department training sessions

Volunteers will perform 2 duty shifts per month

All combat fire fighters will be certified Fire Fighter 1

## APPENDIX 1

**From:** douglas d mitchell [fosis@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 15, 2008 1:55 PM  
**To:** msoshyda@mtlebanon.org; Thomas Cook  
**Cc:** fosis@verizon.net  
**Subject:** FW: MTLVFD's STRATEGIC PLAN - FOLLOWUP TO YOUR PUBLIC LISTENING SESSIONS

Dear Chief Nick and Tom Cook:

Thank you once again for offering the public listening sessions regarding strategic priorities of the MtLebanon Volunteer Fire Department. A very helpful expression of caring and concern for the citizens of MtLebanon!

Here are the comments that I felt deserved some deeper analysis and thought than a quick response at the session:

1. **MTLVFD needs to stay on its intentional track to explain how its public relations activities are vital to the community's welfare as well as that of the VFD.**
  - **The community substantially benefits in reinforcing its very sense of "community"** - one of the most potent reasons why people select and stay here – through the VFD's modeling behaviors with its citizens. By continually demonstrating to the population and the Township's leaders the VFD's faithful dedication to the community, you raise the bar for all of our expectations, and some of us **respond** to that through additional volunteer activities, word-of-mouth advocacy for Mt Lebanon, better attendance at community forums and meetings, etc. Public Relations is a LOT more than PR!
  - **Public relations activities educate our children about what normal community life is supposed to be about.** They are much more important than training kids how to respond to fire drills, as important as that is. These kids have few opportunities to understand civic responsibilities, and we are "reaping the whirlwind" in so many ways as our society increasingly ignores them. Once again, people love Mt. Lebanon because it's a real community. They pay extra taxes to live here, and this is a big reason why they are willing to do so. MTLVFD is a major, leading part of maintaining "community" here, and other aspects/programs/administrators within the Township can take a cue from you!
  - **Township administrators need to be reminded about these values as they set priorities and policies.** MTLVFD's role in the community **MUST** continually be understood as more than fighting fires and making service calls, or the Township will lose the very qualities that create the special value of living in Mt. Lebanon. It's that important, and yet it needs continual reinforcement.
2. **MTLVFD's Strategic Plan needs to clearly specify its "business model," so that the planning process continually reinforces its values.**
  - **It needs to be specific – for example, it needs to quantify how many public relations activities, and what kind, are needed to meet annual recruitment goals.**

- **It needs to be specific – it needs to estimate how many “house calls” (in broad terms, anyway) are needed to ensure that the public will keep its smoke alarms functional, and will call for chimney inspections, and in many other ways remain vigilant, to keep up their part in the prevention of fires.**
- **It needs to be specific – it needs to describe new strategy ideas that are intended to improve the safety of the community, such as those below:**
  - **Revival of hazardous materials disposal programs** – to reduce storage of flammables, to provide community values, and to distribute literature about fire safety practices.
  - **New “links” with local realtors and contractors** to introduce new residents to MTLVFD’s services, and to update its database when home modifications are made.

**3. Through a study, there may be an economic contribution/justification, reducing Mt Lebanon’s major institutions’ fire insurance costs, and a rationale for requesting financial assistance!**

- **MTLVFD’s response times are better than average – reducing the financial risk of major fire losses.**
- **MTLVFD’s mixed professional/volunteer force is more reliable than in other communities – reducing financial risks of loss.**
- **Further research into invested costs and resultant benefits is needed to improve the relationship between the “protected payers” and the provision of “protection resources.”**

Tom, the worst that can happen is that our residents and administrators underappreciate the value of our Mt Lebanon Volunteer Fire Department! I wish you and the rest of the team EVERY success in your ongoing efforts. We’re depending on you!

Douglas D. Mitchell

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