

Rockford Fire Department



Strategic Plan 2014

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Introduction

The City of Rockford, county seat of Winnebago County, is located in north central Illinois approximately 70 miles northwest of Chicago. According to the United States Census Bureau, Rockford is the largest city in the area with a population of 152,871. The jurisdiction covers approximately 64 square miles.

The Rockford Fire Department was established in 1855 as a volunteer organization. The first paid firefighters were hired in May of 1881 and consisted of a Fire Chief and five firefighters with a steam-powered, horse-drawn apparatus. The organization has grown to be the second largest fire department in the State of Illinois, staffed with 333 (sworn, support and Emergency 9-1-1) members, responding to 24,749 incidents in 2013 (.78% increase from 2012). Throughout its history the Department has consistently worked to achieve the highest level of professionalism and efficiency on behalf of those it serves.

The Department achieved accredited status through the (CPSE) in August of 2011, and was one of only 160 departments throughout the world to receive final accreditation at that time (currently the number of accredited agencies has risen to 187 worldwide). The process required years of preparation and work from a core group of individuals who spent countless hours credentialing the Department through several individual documents. In October of 2013, the Department received annual compliance approval for the Center for Public Safety Excellence's (CPSE) accreditation process.

The group developed a five-year strategic plan, conducted a comprehensive risk assessment and standards of coverage study, and developed a comprehensive self assessment document. Each of these components had to meet strict criteria and rigid standards within a very narrow set of parameters in order to be deemed compliant and achieve accreditation. The Department has continued to annually update the strategic plan in an effort to identify new issues, maintain relevancy, and to ensure that our goals reflect the Department's mission. It is important to note that the accreditation process is a continuous and dynamic progression of improvement for an organization. The process does not stop after achieving accredited status; instead, it demands commitment and flexibility as an organization navigates the present and future.

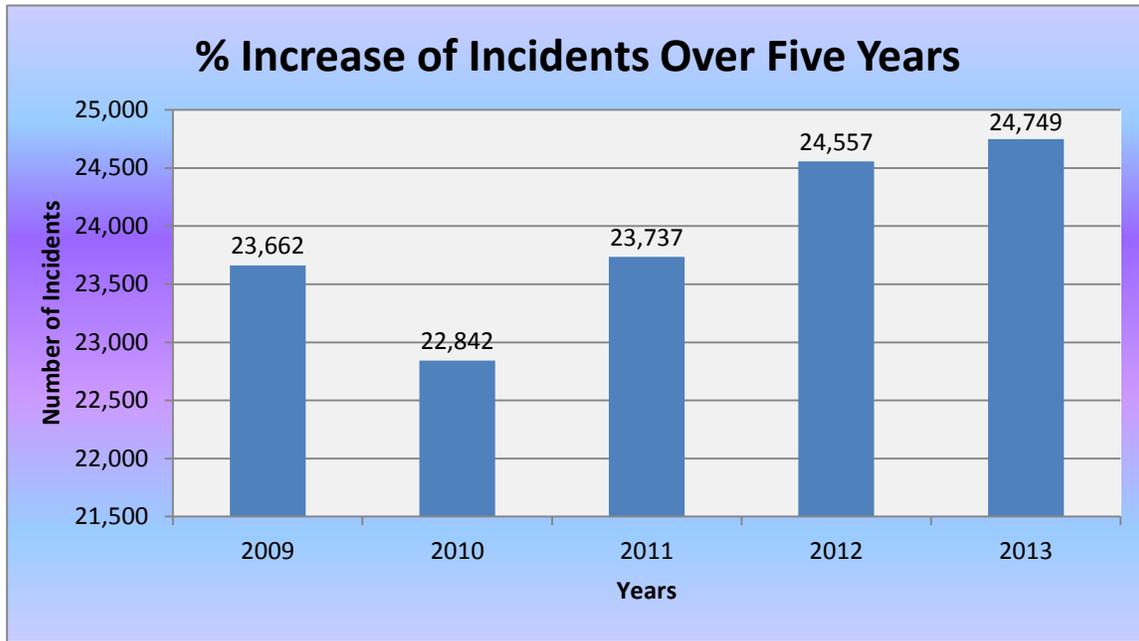
In addition to achieving accredited status, the Department currently holds an Insurance Services Office (ISO) Public Protection Classification (PPC) rating of "Class 2."



Organizational Background

The Department currently provides services through the work of four (4) divisions: Administration Division, Fire Prevention and Training Division, Operations Division, and 9-1-1 Division. The Department's incident history over the past five years shows an overall increase of 4.59% and is depicted in the following graph:

Figure 1: Increase of Incidents Over Five Years



Utilizing eleven (11) fire stations, the Department operates with nine (9) engine companies, two (2) quint companies, one (1) ladder/quick response company, one (1) quint/quick response company, seven (7) advanced life support (ALS) ambulances, and two (2) district chiefs. All fire companies have the capability of providing ALS emergency medical care.

The Department also provides many special operations capabilities. These include the following: hazardous materials; water rescue and recovery; extrication; trench; confined space; structural collapse; and high/low angle rope rescue. The Department will provide airport rescue and firefighting services for the Chicago Rockford International Airport until February 2014, at which time the airport will contract these services with another provider.

Additionally, the Department is a member of Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) Division Eight. There are twenty-five (25) fire departments that belong to MABAS Division Eight sharing resources on a regular basis. The Department responds to MABAS Division Eight requests and has the potential to respond for assistance to over 794 square miles. In addition, the Department has written agreements with five (5) other MABAS Divisions, which cover 5,000 square miles, to provide assistance with water rescue, hazardous materials and technical rescue.



Community-Driven Strategic Plan

Planning Process

The strategic planning process is an opportunity to unify the Department's administration with the internal and external stakeholders through a common understanding of the organization's direction, how those involved can work to that common purpose, and how progress quantifies and measures success.

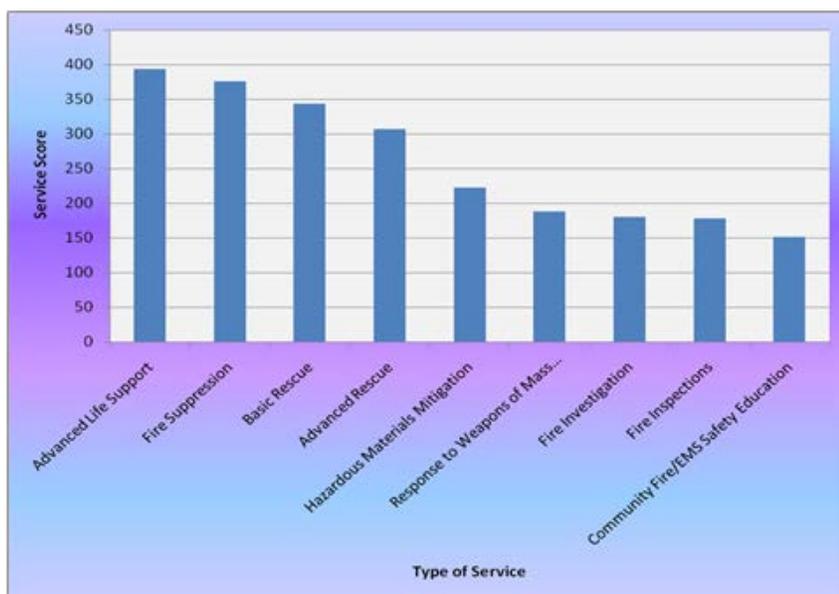
External Stakeholders

As part of the Department's original strategic plan development, the external stakeholders consisted of various business and community organization leaders. The current strategic planning process has solicited the direct input of citizens through various neighborhood organizations and user surveys.

Customer-Prioritization Surveys

The CPSE Customer-Centered/Prioritization of Services survey was used as a tool to gather input from the community. In an effort to include a wide variety of citizens, the Department targeted neighborhood organizations over a period of five months. The prioritization of services results are depicted in the graph below. In addition to the CPSE-developed survey, the Department also included five service-related questions to solicit customer expectations. Results of the surveys have been tallied and posted on the Department's SharePoint website.

Figure 2: Customer Service Prioritization Results



The following table is a summary of the top five responses from each service question contained in the Customer Prioritization Survey.



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Figure 3: Customer Questionnaire Summary

<i>List expectations, in priority, of your fire department:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prompt response (25)• Serving those in need by putting out fires and saving lives (10)• Educating the community regarding our services and fire safety (9)• Well-trained and prepared personnel (4)• Professional and dedicated personnel (4)
<i>List concerns regarding your fire department:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staffing cuts (18)• Reduction in funding (4)• Too many trucks on scene based on call type (4)• Better/updated equipment and apparatus (3)• Quick response (2)• Firefighter safety (2)• Too many personnel on apparatus (2)• More community involvement (2)
<i>List feedback or strengths you would like to share regarding your fire department:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Department provides professional services (7)• Fast response times (6)• Personnel are kind (5)• Appreciate community involvement (4)• Well-trained personnel (3)
<i>List general remarks for your fire department:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Doing a good/great/excellent job (18)• Thank you (6)• More public education (3)• Need more diversity/minorities (2)• Have questions regarding new QRV program (2)
<i>Based on City's budget concerns, are you worried about reduction of fire/emergency services?:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Yes. Do not reduce staffing (16)• No. Not necessarily (reason not given) (7)• No. Budget cuts may be necessary (5)• Yes. Concerns about infrastructure/apparatus (4)• Yes. Make cuts elsewhere (4)

The Department also examined the external stakeholders' responses from the 2007 Customer Prioritization survey to find that both the prioritization of services and the service-related questions revealed similar results as those found in the recent surveys.



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Customer Service Surveys

The Department also seeks input through customer surveys regarding emergency medical services and fire suppression. The results are maintained in a database that generates customer satisfaction reports, which are then used for RockStat presentations with other City departments.

Figure 3: Customer Service Survey Results 2013

Question	Answer	Total Answered	Percentage of Total Answered	Outstanding or Excellent	
<i>The 911 call was handled in a prompt, courteous, and competent manner:</i>	Outstanding	397	59.25%	638	95.22%
	Excellent	241	35.97%		
	Average	26	3.88%		
	Fair	4	0.60%		
	Poor	2	0.30%		
	Total Answered	670			
<i>The 911 instructions given prior to the arrival of the paramedics were:</i>	Outstanding	286	46.28%	569	92.07%
	Excellent	283	45.79%		
	Average	43	6.96%		
	Fair	1	0.16%		
	Poor	5	0.81%		
	Total Answered	618			
<i>The paramedic crew acted in a concerned, caring, and professional manner:</i>	Outstanding	661	67.45%	936	95.51%
	Excellent	275	28.06%		
	Average	28	2.86%		
	Fair	7	0.71%		
	Poor	9	0.92%		
	Total Answered	980			
<i>The paramedics clearly explained the procedures performed:</i>	Outstanding	386	57.36%	623	92.57%
	Excellent	237	35.22%		
	Average	39	5.79%		
	Fair	6	0.89%		
	Poor	5	0.74%		
	Total Answered	673			
<i>How would you rate the overall quality of the care provided:</i>	Outstanding	513	65.85%	739	94.87%
	Excellent	226	29.01%		
	Average	26	3.34%		
	Fair	11	1.41%		
	Poor	3	0.39%		
	Total Answered	779			
<i>How would you rate your overall experience with our services:</i>	Outstanding	506	65.04%	738	94.86%
	Excellent	232	29.82%		
	Average	28	3.60%		
	Fair	7	0.90%		
	Poor	5	0.64%		
	Total Answered	778			



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The results of the customer service surveys for 2013 demonstrate that the Department delivers outstanding or excellent service at least 92.07% of the time in each of the categories. Additionally, customers rated service delivery as fair or poor 1.8% or less of the time in each of the categories.

Internal Stakeholders

With great success, the Department engaged in a strategic planning process that was a departure from previous strategic planning endeavors and goal-setting processes. The Department utilized a third-party who conducted a three-day workshop in 2011 with a cross-section of personnel spanning all divisions and ranks within the organization, and included members from the internal accreditation workgroup.

Howard Cross, from Howard Cross and Associates, conducted his workshop entitled Strategic Planning: Embracing the Future. Over the course of the three days, the participants (as a whole) developed new mission and vision statements, and identified the Department's core values and critical issues. During breakout sessions among the different divisions, the individual groups developed goals pertaining to each division.

After the initial workshop, the entire group met for three additional four-hour sessions to complete the goal development portion of the strategic plan. Additionally, members of the administration along with members from the accreditation workgroup partnered in making face-to-face visits to each fire station on each shift to deliver the new mission and vision statements, and to discuss the components of the entire accreditation process.

In November of 2012, the Department's internal stakeholder group engaged in an additional one-day session with Howard Cross. The group reviewed the Department's goal-planning process, assessed the 2012 annual goals, developed goals for the upcoming year, and updated the Strategic Plan accordingly.

In November 2013, the Department assembled again for a one-day strategic planning session with Howard Cross to evaluate our progress regarding the 2013 goals. In an effort to more closely align the Department's goals with its mission and vision, we identified goals within broad categories rather than by organizational divisions. During this process six critical issues were identified. The work group met for an additional one-day session later in November 2013 to further develop goals, objectives and critical tasks for each of the broad categories.

Although the Department had existing mission and vision statements and had previously identified core values and critical issues, all aspects were revisited during the workshop. The Department is committed to keeping these fundamental elements of the organization current and meaningful so that members have clear direction regarding the accomplishment of goals, objectives, and critical tasks.



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Internal stakeholders who participated in the 2013 strategic planning workshop are listed in the table below.

Figure 4: Rockford Fire Department Internal Stakeholders Group

Internal Stakeholders Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Derek Bergsten, Fire Chief• Joe Corl, Division Chief of Operations• Greg Castronovo, Division Chief of Administration• Matt Knott, Division Chief of Fire Prevention and Training• Sandy Stansell, 911 Division Administrator• Steve Preiss, District Chief• Benny Ognibene, District• Bud Turner, District Chief• Jim Rife, District Chief• Barry Fitz, Fire Equipment Specialist• Mark Marinaro, Fire Prevention Coordinator• Bob Vertiz, EMS Training Coordinator• Brian Drerup, Fire Training Coordinator• Rick Tetrick, Shop Coordinator• Michele Pankow, Captain/Accreditation Manager• Tracy Renfro, Captain• Derreyl Brown, Captain• Kyle Hill, Lieutenant• Ernest White, Lieutenant• John Dempsey, Lieutenant• Todd Monahan, Lieutenant• Mike Schnaper, Inspector• Keith McNeff, Firefighter/Paramedic• Erica Nunez, Firefighter/Paramedic• Chris Scrol, Firefighter/Paramedic – Local 413 Secretary• Rebecca Tyo, Firefighter/Paramedic• Tim Brown, Firefighter/EMT• Elizabeth Russell, Statistical Analyst• Leigh Sterrenberg, 911 Training Supervisor• Tad Shaver, Technical Services Coordinator• Judi Yehling, Senior Administrative Assistant



The Department's current mission and vision statements, and core values are illustrated below.

Figure 5: Mission Statement

The mission of the Rockford Fire Department is to protect the lives and property of our community through fire, emergency medical and life safety services.

Figure 6: Vision Statement

The members of the Rockford Fire Department are professionals dedicated to provide services that are innovative and progressive ensuring the safest environment for our community.

Figure 7: Core Values

<i>Professionalism</i>	<i>Service</i>
<i>Respect</i>	<i>Loyalty</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>Compassion</i>
<i>Integrity</i>	<i>Safety</i>



During the goal setting process, the following six recurring issues were identified as critical to the success of the Department.

Figure 8: Critical Issues





Goals and Objectives

The Rockford Fire Department Strategic Plan revolves around six goal areas. Each goal is supported by and accomplished through a series of high level objectives and more specific critical tasks. In the context of this strategic plan, goals are defined as visionary statements that guide the future direction of the department. The objectives listed beneath each goal outline a plan of action for achieving the goal. Below each objective is a set of critical tasks which are concrete, specific tasks designed to help implement the objective and ultimately reach the stated goal.



The following goals and objectives provide specific timelines for completion. The strategic planning group will meet periodically to review progress toward these goals and objectives, and adjust timelines and specific targets as needed. In an effort to ensure transparency and measure progress toward goals, objectives and critical tasks, the Department has established a tracking program that is accessible to all members of the organization via the SharePoint website.

All objectives have been developed using the SMART method:

- **S** – specific
- **M** – measurable
- **A** – attainable
- **R** – relevant
- **T** – timely

Additionally, the Department's goals have been developed and categorized to target the following areas: Resource Management, Diversity, Community Outreach and Partnerships, Employee Development, Communications, and Health and Safety. The strategic planning work group first identified critical issues, developed goals and categorized each goal in one of the aforementioned target areas.



Strategic Goals

Health and Safety

Provide for the health and safety of all Rockford Fire Department personnel.

Resource Management

Maintain quality equipment, apparatus, facilities and technology to meet the mission of the department.

Employee Development

Create an employee development program to give employees and supervisors tools for improvement.

Communications

Ensure communications and dissemination of information between all members of the department.

Diversity

Ensure that diversity, inclusion and cultural competency are integral to the way the department functions, both internally and externally.

Community Outreach and Partnerships

Foster community outreach and agency partnerships to strengthen department services.



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Goal #1:

Provide for the health and safety of all Rockford Fire Department personnel.

Objective #1: Work to improve overall department morale:

Critical tasks

- Create a work/focus group
- Develop survey to assess current morale
- Deliver survey to line personnel
- Categorize and identify critical issues
- Develop a plan
- Re-evaluate and compare

Objective #2: Quarterly upper management meetings to identify and address inconsistencies with general practices:

Critical tasks

- Ventilation practices
- Chain of Command
- Incident response regarding new staffing guidelines

Objective #3: Review emergency response guidelines for different types of incident responses:

Critical tasks

- EMS – downgrading ambulances after first unit arrives
- Vacant building identification
- Rehabilitation at structure fires

Objective #4: Continue to enhance and improve the physical fitness program:

- Individual physicals counting toward insurance points

Goal #2:

Maintain quality equipment, apparatus, facilities and technology to meet the mission of the department.

Objective #1: Provide access to 24/7 IT support:

Critical tasks

- Meet with IT
- Develop/consider budget
- Implement a 24/7 support program



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Objective #2: Improve overall radio communication

Critical tasks

- Radio towers
- Fire ground channel
- Training

Objective #3: Improve Mobile Data Terminals

Critical tasks

- Training
- Upgrade hardware
- Preplans

Objective #4: Improve/address station technology

Critical tasks

- Fiber optics
- Upgrade hardware
- Upgrade software

Goal #3:
Create an employee development program to give employees and supervisors tools for improvement.

Objective #1: Design training based on operational needs

Critical tasks

- Develop a formalized process that allows the Captains/911 supervisors to identify training needs.
- Include O1, district chiefs and the training committee in developing classes that support these needs.

Objective #2: Expand and improve programs to develop consistent tactics for the Department

Critical tasks

- Consider operational needs
- Changes in tactics
- Identify weaknesses
- Assist in the research and analysis of current fire tactics

Objective #3: Expand training opportunities

Critical tasks

- Position-specific training: officer, driver/engineer - identify goals and develop programs to meet goals/objectives
- Leverage technology: video-based training, on-line training



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Goal #4:

Ensure communications and dissemination of information between all members of the department.

Objective #1: Provide format for the distribution of information from the Administration to line personnel.

Critical tasks

- Implement computer-based electronic memo/general orders (power DMS)
- Provide all documentation line personnel (staff meeting/briefing minutes)

Objective #2: Provide format for the distribution of information from line personnel to the Administration.

Critical tasks

- Meet with district chiefs and company officers to develop plan for improvement of communication between line personnel and the Administration
- Implement and evaluate the plan

Goal #5:

Ensure that diversity, inclusion and cultural competency are integral to the way the department functions, both internally and externally.

Objective #1: Develop diversity plan

- Hire a recruiter to manage the program
- Identify support staff

Goal #6:

Foster community outreach and agency partnerships to strengthen department services.

Objective #1: Improve interdepartmental relationships

Critical tasks

- Address the police department's responsibility to 911 during peak call volume
- Streamline emergency demos

Objective #2: Improve Union Administration relationship

Critical tasks

- Regular meetings – not issue-related

Objective #3: Reinstate school programs



Long-Range Considerations

The Rockford Fire Department Strategic Plan creates a platform for a wide range of initiatives. This strategic plan will come to life by being shared, debated, and implemented in the context of organizational realities.

The strategic plan contains goals that will be updated annually to embrace newly identified challenges. Critical issues that extend into the future have also been considered. Although some of the critical issues have defined timelines and strategies, the Department is limited by budgetary, contractual, technological, and intangible factors, which inhibit specific goal development. These issues include:

Apparatus procurement

In early 2012, the City developed a seven year apparatus replacement plan which included three quint apparatus, one engine, two sport utility vehicles, and three sedans during the first year. In 2013 the replacement plan continued with procurement of three engines, four ambulances and two tow vehicles. Plans are to address further apparatus requirements with additional agreements over the next four years that would provide for all front line apparatus and support vehicle needs. The capital replacement plan is outlined in the following table.

Figure 9: Capital Replacement Plan

Capital Replacement Plan				
Vehicle Type	2014	2015	2016	2017
Ambulance	3	3	3	4
Engine	2	0	2	0
Quint	0	1	0	1
Van	0	0	1	0
Sedan	0	0	0	4
SUV	4	4	7	4
Truck	0	0	1	1
Dive vehicle	0	2	0	0
Boat	0	0	1	0

Additional facilities

Statistical analysis and facility recommendations designed to provide for both resource distribution and concentration factors will continue. Due to the State's South Main Road Project, Station #3 relocation is aggressively being pursued consistent with the Standards of Cover recommendations. The current State timeline dictates that Station #3's apron will be rendered unusable by April 2014. General timelines for the Fire Station #3 project are as follows:



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- Design and document development: October 2013 – March 2014
- Bidding and Negotiation: April 2014 – May 2014
- Contract Administration (construction): June 2014 – March 2015

It is expected that the City will occupy the new Fire Station #3 by March of 2015.

Facility improvements

The Department continues to work with the City Public Works Department to address station maintenance and improvements. Additional improvements include office enhancements at the maintenance facility, and upgrades to the training facility including additional training props and additional classroom space to better serve the training needs of the Department.

Workforce diversity

The Department recognizes the need for a workforce which represents the community. Both elected officials' and community survey comments have expressed the desire for a diverse department. The Department has committed to filling a recruiter position by April 2014.

Paramedic class

Continuation of the paramedic training program is critical for service delivery. Contractual issues, including the number of ambulances, are factors as well as the need to rotate personnel through assignments. In addition to the 11 paramedic students currently enrolled in paramedic class, the Department has tentatively scheduled a paramedic class of 12 for the fall of 2014.

Expanded officer development program

The Department has developed an internal training program for new officers and officer candidates. This program will continue to be assessed for content and relevance for future participants. Through the collective bargaining process, the Department and Local 413 agreed to promotional bonus points for Fire Officer I and II certifications for the positions of Lieutenant and Captain, respectively.

Technological hardware upgrades

Improvements in radio communication equipment, mobile data computers, and a variety of fire suppression equipment are currently either being implemented or researched. The Department plans to replace 11 work station computers in 2014, and will work with the City's Information Technology Department to continue replacing work station computers as needed.

By the fall of 2014, most of the Department will be upgraded to fiber optic capability, and all frontline ambulances will be equipped with tablets for mobile patient care reporting. The Department will continue to convert the current network devices from MiFi to a Sierra system, and signal enhancers for each station will be researched for feasibility.



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Commission on the Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS)

In an effort to join the more than 160 CAAS-accredited agencies in North America, the Department is challenging the process to achieve accreditation for ambulance services. The Department will have completed the required documents for submission by the end of March. Based on the anticipated timeline, a site visit will take place in the summer of 2014.

Accreditation

Although the accreditation process follows a 5-year timeline, the Department conducts an annual compliance review. This review specifically addresses recommendations made by the peer assessment team and whether or not the Department is in compliance with those recommendations on a yearly basis. For the past two years, the Department has successfully met the annual compliance criteria.

In addition to the Strategic Plan annual update and the Annual Compliance Report, the Department must conduct a Standards of Coverage study every five years. The Accreditation Work Group will begin conducting this study in early 2015.

The Department is scheduled for a site visit from CPSE in early 2016 for re-accreditation. In an effort to maintain the Department's accredited status, the Accreditation Work Group will continue to keep data and documents current, as accreditation is a continuous process through which the Department strives to improve its service to the community.

Summary

These issues will provide the basis for future strategic planning efforts in order to maintain organizational and community commitment to the plan. Everyone who has a vested interest in the present and the future of the Rockford Fire Department also has a role and responsibility in this strategic plan.



Glossary of Terms

For the purposes of the Community-Driven Strategic Planning, the following terms have the meanings set forth below:

Accreditation	A process by which an association or agency evaluates and recognizes a program of study or an institution as meeting certain predetermined standards or qualifications. It applies only to institutions or agencies and their programs of study or their services. Accreditation ensures a basic level of quality in the services received from an agency.
Accredited	The act of accrediting or the state of being accredited , especially the granting of approval to an institution or agency by an official review board or organization that has established nationally accepted standards.
Customers	The person or group who establishes the requirement of a process and receives or uses the outputs of that process; or the person or entity directly served by the department or agency.
Goal	A broad target that defines how the agency will carry out its mission over a specific period of time, something to accomplish in assisting the agency to move forward.
Mission	An enduring statement of purpose, the organization's reason for existence. Describes what the organization does, for whom it does it, and how it does it.
Objective	A specific, measurable accomplishment required to realize the successful completion of a strategic goal.
Stakeholder	Any person, group, or organization that can place a claim on, or influence, the organization's resources or outputs, is affected by those outputs, or has an interest in or expectation of the organization.



Rockford Fire Department *Strategic Plan*

- Strategic Plan** A long-range planning document that defines the mission of the agency and broadly identifies how it will be accomplished, and that provide the framework for more detailed annual and operational plans.
- Strategic Planning** The continuous and systematic process whereby guiding members of an organization make decisions about its future, develop the necessary procedures and operations to achieve that future, and determine how success is to be measured.
- Vision** An idealized view of a desirable and potentially achievable future state - where or what an organization would like to be in the future.