Charlotte Fire Department

FY03 Business Plan

Executive Summary

The Charlotte Fire Department's business falls into three functional areas.

- First is preparedness; the Emergency Management Office is charged with ensuring that all agencies of City and County government are ready and able to respond to unexpected events, man-made or natural, that disrupt the normal life of citizens and with coordinating service delivery when such events occur.

- Second are emergency services, the response by firefighters to calls for help. These services include fire suppression, first responder emergency medical services, hazardous materials mitigation, technical rescue, and aircraft rescue firefighting.

- Finally, essential public safety services focus on preventing and investigating emergencies and include fire code enforcement, plans review, hazardous materials permitting, fire and accident prevention education, fire investigation, and arson prevention.

Environmental Scan: Opportunities and Threats

The Charlotte Fire Department generally enjoys good relations with its customers and stakeholders. It is perceived as an organization dedicated to public service and public safety, and it has no competition for its services within its jurisdiction.

The Department's biggest challenge is to meet rising demand for both emergency and public safety services with static resources, and to manage those resources with maximum benefit for cost. This is a concern in Fire Prevention, where inspectors struggle to cut the overdue inspection workload. Three inspector positions were funded in FY02 for the purpose of working through this problem. Early indications are that certificate of occupancy inspections are requiring so much time that significant progress in meeting the state-mandated inspection frequencies will be hard to make.

Adequate resources are also a concern for Operations, where the percent of calls responded to within coverage benchmarks is currently acceptable but falling. The City's budget crisis is a threat to delivery of Fire Department services in that service demand is already outrunning resources in some areas; Engine 15, for example, has missed 20 percent of the emergencies in its first-due area in FY02 by being on other calls or in training or otherwise being

unavailable. The Operations Division has no flexibility to shift resources permanently, so that the inability to add will eventually negatively impact response time.

Of particular concern is the Fire Department's relationship with MEDIC. The first responder program is vitally important to the Department and represents a cost-effective and essential service to customers. MEDIC reorganized its services to change to a 12-hour shift and posting of ambulances, which has distanced its employees from firefighters. The lack of trust between MEDIC's managers and the Fire Department has led to their rejecting offers to help by allowing firefighter/paramedics to practice, especially on the City's perimeter, where MEDIC has significant problems meeting its response benchmarks. This lack of cooperation harms people who need emergency medical services and must wait for ambulances to arrive.

One of the most serious problems the Department has faced is the lack of timely, pertinent management information. The remedy for that problem is at hand, with the anticipated purchase and installation of a new computer-aided dispatching system and records management system in FY03. Successfully implemented, this initiative will enable managers to ask strategic questions and receive timely answers so they can better lead and manage their functions. Ensuring that the CAD/RMS project is completed on time and within budget is the most important administrative task for the Fire Department in FY03.

Terrorism is, of course, a paramount concern, which the Department has addressed through the creation of the ALERT Team, which is composed of representatives from all the public safety response agencies in Mecklenburg County. Because of the ALERT team, which the Fire Department manages, Charlotte-Mecklenburg was recognized by FEMA as one of three best-prepared communities in the nation.

Strategy

The Charlotte Fire Department's strategy for FY03 will be, first, to monitor the budget closely to ensure that all divisions stay within their appropriations and to identify and deal with problems as quickly as possible. That will include, second, ensuring that proper staffing levels are maintained, especially in Operations, Communications, and Fire Prevention, the Department's three divisions that provide services to customers. Finally, installation and successful implementation of a new CAD and records management system will be essential for the Department's current and future leaders to have the relevant information in a timely manner to manage service delivery effectively.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Charlotte Fire Department is to minimize the risk of fire and other hazards to the life and property of the citizens of Charlotte.

To accomplish this mission, the Department provides response to and mitigation of fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials incidents, aircraft emergencies, technical rescues, and other emergencies as they arise. These services are provided immediately to any person who has a need anywhere within the corporate limits of the City of Charlotte.

Keys to Success

For FY03, the Charlotte Fire Department has three keys for success, as follows:

1. Close monitoring of the budget. Ensuring that division managers keep their expenditures within budget allocations is always important but essential in FY03.

2. Maintaining adequate staffing. Ensuring that minimum staffing levels are met is critical for provision of emergency services. For successful mitigation of emergencies, the necessary tasks must be performed rapidly. This requires having the proper number of firefighters on the scene. Minimum staffing is defined and closely monitored.

3. Implementation of CAD/RMS. The successful implementation of a new computer-aided dispatching system and a new integrated records management system is essential for leading the Department in the future.

Strategic Initiatives

The Charlotte Fire Department has eight strategic initiatives that correspond to six Balanced Scorecard corporate objectives. These initiatives broadly describe the essential services the Department provides, and the measures associated with them describe how successful the service delivery is. They are as follows:

<u>Customer Service Perspective: Strengthen Neighborhood Corporate Objective</u>
Initiative: Strengthen and Prepare the Community

This initiative describes the Fire Department's effort to decrease the demand for emergency services by providing fire and life safety education and by enforcing the fire code, thus making communities stronger and safer places to live and work. For example, fires not only destroy buildings in productive use and create unhealthy eyesores; the indirect costs, including income and job losses, can be devastating to a community. Three measures comprise the Department's response to this initiative.

First, fire and life safety education targets all groups but focuses on third and fourth graders as the prime age children can learn, understand, and practice good prevention and safety behaviors, as well as take them into their families. The goal of the program is to reach all third and fourth graders during the school year and the target is 80 percent.

Second, the North Carolina Fire Code mandates inspections in non-residential properties and specifies the frequencies inspections should occur, based on the property use. Fire Prevention's target is to make 80 percent of inspections on time; hopefully this target can be stretched as the workload of overdue inspections is cut.

Third, most structure fires occur in homes. Nationally and locally, the residential fire rate is about half what it was twenty years ago, because of the widespread availability of smoke detectors and more awareness of fire safety hazards. The residential fire rate is a per capita measure of the occurrence of fire in residential structures. We use the FY98 rate of 1.21 per thousand as our benchmark because that was the first year we had it in our business plan. We also believe it is close to the threshold below which the rate will not go, given human nature and current technology.

<u>Corporate Objective: Increase Perception of Safety</u>
Initiative: Provide emergency services (suppression, hazmat, etc.)

The first initiative describes the Fire Department's efforts to increase safety through providing emergency services. Generally, emergencies to which the Fire Department responds increase in severity over time; therefore, rapid response by appropriate resources is paramount to limit property and life loss – the Department's mission. The two measures describe what we consider an acceptable standard of coverage for an urban career fire department. The underlying issue is to balance the cost with the service; to move from 80 percent to 100 percent response within six minutes would require doubling our fire protection resources, which is obviously not fiscally prudent and would create unnecessary excess capacity.

Timely response by the first-due fire company is essential to ensure that firefighters have the opportunity to mitigate an emergency before irremediable damage occurs. Approximately two thirds of the Charlotte Fire Department's emergency incidents require response from only one fire company. The six minutes specified includes one minute for receiving and dispatching the call in Fire Communications, one minute for the fire company to get out of the station, and four minutes for it to respond. The target is to respond to 80 percent of alarms within six minutes. When that figure falls below 80 percent, additional resources will be needed.

Fire suppression is a fairly straightforward process; success requires rapid completion of specified tasks compressed sequentially by an adequate number of firefighters within a given time frame. A century of experience has defined that process, for a 1500 square foot single family dwelling, as response by two engines, a ladder, and a battalion chief (a total of thirteen firefighters) within nine minutes. The resources needed change, but the time does not, for response to larger and more complicated structures and for other hazards. The Department's target is to put thirteen (or more) firefighters on any first alarm emergency within nine minutes.

Initiative: Provide effective public safety services (code enforcement)

The second initiative describes the Fire Department's efforts to improve perceptions of safety by providing effective public safety services, specifically in fire code enforcement. Reducing the possibility of fire is accomplished by ensuring that violations of the fire code – which represent hazardous conditions that could cause fires – are corrected within time frames specified by the inspector.

The measure for fire code violation correction is 95 percent within specified times. This reflects the emphasis put on eliminating fire-causing hazards in the public safety services program. This measure, at this level, has been in place for a number of years and has been successfully met. Non-residential structure fires are just over a quarter of the fires to which the Charlotte Fire Department responds, and the top two causes of these fires are arson and abandoned smoking materials, neither of which can be regulated by the fire code.

Financial Perspective: Maximize Benefit/Cost Corporate Objective
Initiative: Monitor budget expenditures to ensure they are within budget appropriations

The Charlotte Fire Department's initiative in this area is to monitor expenditures to ensure that they are within budget appropriations. Staying within budget has been a growing problem in the Department, and the current budget crisis magnifies the need to stay on track.

Division managers are charged to ensure that their budget appropriations are expended within the desired constraints. They will track expenditures monthly and report quarterly on their success.

Internal Process Perspective: Improve Productivity Corporate Objective
Initiative: Maintain optimal staffing requirements

The first Fire Department initiative in this perspective is to maintain optimal staffing of fire apparatus in the Operations Division. Effective response to emergencies of all kinds is labor-intensive. Studies in the fire service have shown that a minimum four-person team is the best for accomplishing the tasks that must be done within a reasonable time frame for successful mitigation of an emergency.

With 36 engines, 12 ladders, two heavy rescues, and the rescue firefighting units at the Airport, the Charlotte Fire Department needs 213 firefighters and officers on duty at all times. The goal is to have at least these many all the time; the measure is to accomplish this 95 percent of the time. This will be a challenge, given leave policies, retirements, firefighters on light duty, and delays to hiring because of the budget crisis.

Initiative: Maintain resource availability

We know that our busiest companies are missing about 20 percent of the emergency calls in their first due areas because they are otherwise occupied. There are so many non-emergency demands on fire companies' time on weekdays – community service events, in-service training, hydrant maintenance, apparatus maintenance and repair, et cetera – that they must be managed to ensure enough companies are available to respond to emergencies.

The measure for this initiative is to maintain 80 percent fire company availability during business hours. Until we have implemented our new records management system, measuring this initiative will be problematic, but that does not detract from its importance to timely service delivery.

Learning and Growth Perspective: Enhance Information Management Corporate Objective
Initiative: Implement technology-based solutions

The Charlotte Fire Department has been fortunate in its information systems, which have served our processes well for a quarter of a century. But the time has come to replace them with current technology that is more flexible, more usable and user-friendly, and has potential for growth. The annexation planned for June 30, 2003 is a driver for implementation of a new computer-aided dispatching system and records management system. The old systems cannot handle the additional information needed to ensure prompt service delivery in the areas that will be annexed; therefore, the new systems must be in place and usable by the time the annexation takes effect.

The measure for this initiative is to have 90 percent beneficial use of CAD/RMS by June 30, 2003. This level of implementation at this time will enable us to meet our service delivery obligations, emergency and public safety, when annexation occurs.

Close the Skills Gap Corporate Objective
Initiative: Obtain certifications

All members of the Charlotte Fire Department who provide services to the public, either emergency or public safety, are required to obtain the relevant certifications within specified time frames for the services they

provide. Firefighters, for example, must hold certifications from the NC Fire and Rescue Commission for fire suppression, emergency medical technician, rescue technician, and hazardous materials operations before they may ride fire apparatus. Fire inspectors must be certified, and investigators must work toward certification as a condition of continued employment. Certifications require initial training and then certain numbers of hours annually toward recertification.

The measure for this initiative focuses on firefighters, because of the numbers of them and the focus of the Training Academy program on providing the training they need. Fewer than 5 firefighters (out of 867 authorized positions) should not have the certifications needed to provide emergency services at any given time.

Balanced Scorecard Report-Fire

Reporting Period: _____ to _____

Corporate Objective	CFD Initiative	Measure	Prior Year Actual	Lead or Lag	Performance Data			Comments/Explanation *(To be completed at mid-year and year-end reporting))*
					Target	YTD	Status	
Customer — Strengthen Neighborhoods	Strengthen and prepare community	*Percent of third and fourth grade students receiving fire education programs.*		Lag	80%			
		Percent of fire code inspections conducted within state-mandated frequencies.		Lag	80%			
		Residential fire rate.		Lag	1.2/1000			
Increase Perception of Safety	Provide emergency services (suppression, hazmat, etc.)	*Percent of fire companies responding in 6 minutes for first due.*		Lag	80%			
		Percent of fire companies responding in 9 minutes for first alarm assignment.		Lag	80%			
	Provide effective public safety services (code enforcement)	*Percent of fire code violations corrected within specified times.*		Lag	95%			
Financial — Maximize benefit/cost	Monitor budget expenditures to ensure they are within budget appropriations.	*Percent of budget expended quarterly*		Lag	25, 25, 75, 100			
Internal Process — Improve Productivity	Maintain optimal staffing requirements	*Percent of time Minimum staffing of 213 on fire companies will be maintained.*		Lag	95%			

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Copy and paste these objects into the status column as needed.
Green: All is well.
Amber (yellow): Noted issues. Any item in amber or red requires an explanation.
Red: Problem area. Any item with amber or red requires an explanation.

Balanced Scorecard Report-Fire

Reporting Period: _____ to _____

Corporate Objective	CFD Initiative	Measure	Prior Year Actual	Lead or Lag	Performance Data			Comments/Explanation *(To be completed at mid-year and year-end reporting))*
					Target	YTD	Status	
	Maintain resource availability	*Percent of fire companies in service during daylight hours Monday-Friday.*		Lag	80%			
Learning & Growth — Enhance Information Management	Implement technology-based solutions	*Beneficial use of CAD and RMS by June 30, 2003*		Lag	90%			
Learning & Growth — Close the Skills Gap	Obtain certifications	*Number of firefighters during a 30-day period with lapsed certifications*		Lag	>5			

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Balanced Scorecard Report-Fire

Reporting Period: _____ to _____

Corporate Objective	CFD Initiative	Measure	Prior Year Actual	Lead or Lag	Performance Data			Comments/Explanation *(To be completed at mid-year and year-end reporting))*
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Balanced Scorecard Report-Fire

Reporting Period: _____ to _____

Corporate Objective	CFD Initiative	Measure	Prior Year Actual	Lead or Lag	Performance Data			Comments/Explanation *(To be completed at mid-year and year-end reporting))*
					Target	YTD	Status	

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