



Charlotte Fire Department

FY2004-2005 Strategic Operating Plan

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I. Executive Summary

Introduction

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.

Summary of Resource Needs

	FY03 Budget	Annexation	FY04 Budget	FY05 Budget
Budget	\$62,357,201	\$2,628,073	\$67,205,092	\$70,000,243
Positions	966	47	1015	1015

Vision and Mission

Vision: We will be a customer-focused solution for the community, committed to reducing suffering and loss by providing optimum prevention and emergency protective services.

Mission: 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.

Key Issues and Challenges

The Charlotte Fire Department's most significant challenge is **to meet rising demands for both emergency and public safety services with finite and static resources**, by managing those resources efficiently and effectively. This is a concern for all divisions

but especially in Fire Prevention, where inspectors continue to struggle to cut the overdue inspection workload. Additional inspector positions filled in FY02 and FY03 have enabled the division to impact but not eliminate the problem. Even in a recession, certificate of occupancy inspections require so much time that six inspectors, a quarter of the inspector workforce, are assigned to them full-time.

Ensuring timely response to emergencies with the proper resources is also a concern for Operations. In FY03, fire companies have been regularly apprised of the incidents where they did not move out of the station within the benchmark turnout time (sixty seconds during daylight hours, 2 minutes at night), with the result that the percentage of calls responded to in six minutes has hit the 80 percent mark right on. Fire companies responded to 88.5 percent of first alarms within nine minutes, thus exceeding the 80 percent benchmark.

On the other hand, our first attempts to measure the in-service time of fire companies indicate that about 21 percent of daylight hours are devoted to training, community service, and other administrative tasks. Our benchmark is for these activities to take 20 percent or less of fire companies' time, to ensure that they are available to respond to emergencies. We already know that our busiest companies miss 15 to 20 percent of the emergencies in their first-due areas because they are not available to respond. Managing fire company availability will continue to be a significant issue for the Department.

Staffing in the Operations Division will be a significant concern and challenge in FY04. Our recruitment efforts have not been as successful as we would like; we gave an entrance exam last fall which was taken by 870 candidates, but that effort only produced 56 qualified applicants to fill 70 slots in January 2003. Due to retirements, we are still 25 firefighters short. We will be hard pressed to keep 226 firefighters on duty daily and stay within budget in FY04, given the magnitude of that shortfall.

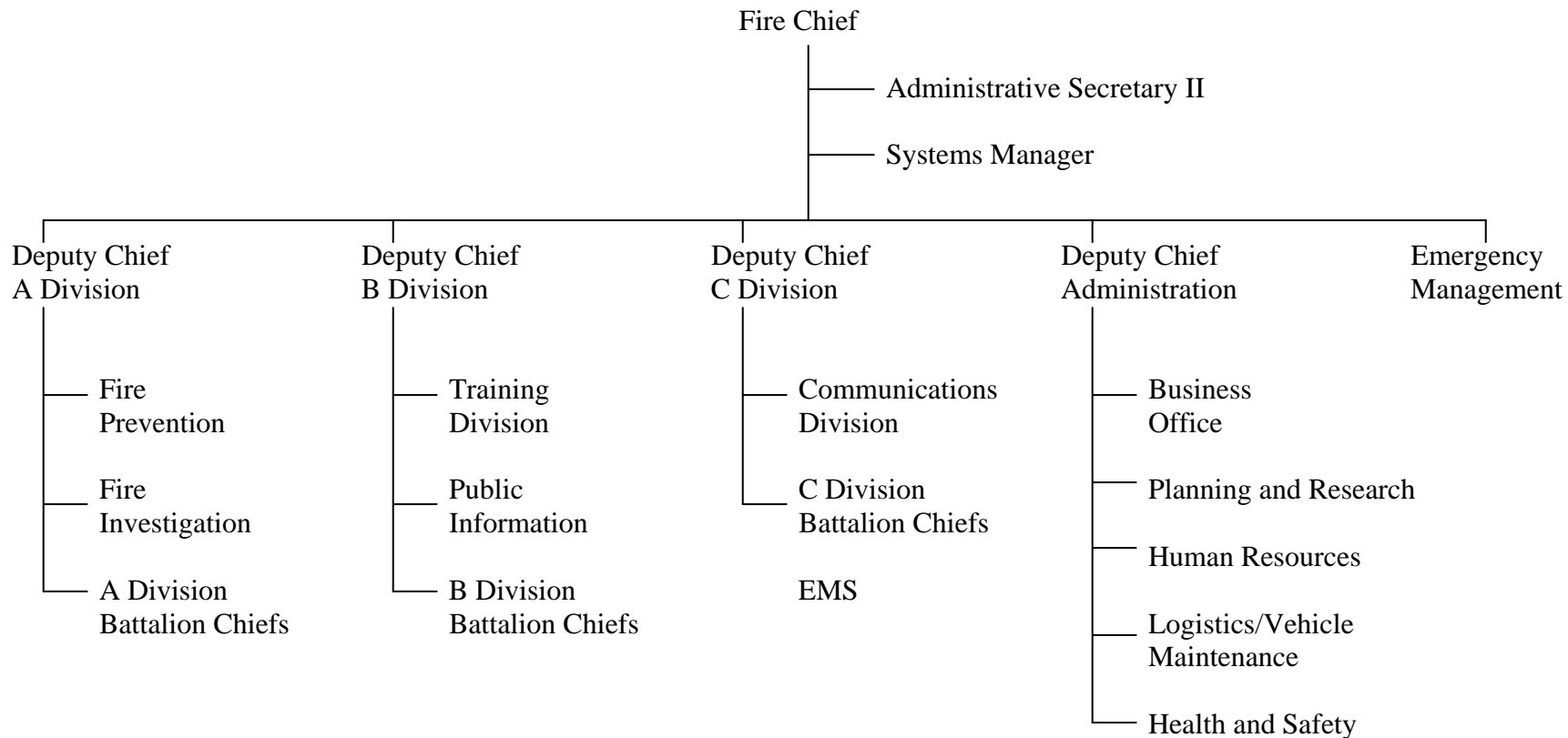
The winter storm of December 2002 highlighted the Department's need for **timely, pertinent management information**. At the height of the storm on December 5, 2002, fire companies responded to four times the normal emergency workload, but managers struggled with their inability to retrieve even simple data about emergencies. Implementation of a new computer aided dispatching system and records management system has been accomplished. Its successful installation is the most significant administrative challenge the Fire Department faced in FY03. Now the challenge is to create management reports that are timely and useful.

The **Fire Department's relationship with MEDIC** is a key ongoing issue, given the vital importance of the first responder program to the Department and the essential service provided to customers. Managers from both Fire and MEDIC are working to ensure that cooperation occurs on both sides and that customer service receives the highest priority. Considerable effort has been made to ensure that a viable and renewable contract is in place for first responder services.

Terrorism is, of course, a paramount concern, which the Department has addressed through the creation of the ALERT Team. The team is composed of representatives from all the public safety response agencies in Mecklenburg County. They train regularly to respond to all types of terrorist acts, and their work enabled the Federal Emergency Management Agency to recognize Charlotte-Mecklenburg as one of the three best-prepared communities in the nation.

Most importantly, we need a dedicated facility for an **emergency operations center**. The current EOC is a classroom at MEDIC headquarters, a leased building. We envision a room in Fire Administration which will be designed to handle the communications needed by multiple public safety agencies in the event of a natural disaster, terrorist event, or other large-scale emergency requiring careful coordination among responding public safety and public health organizations.

Charlotte Fire Department Organization Chart



II. Strategy and KBU Planning

Accomplishments

The Fire Department has realized the following accomplishments in its continuing quest to provide stellar emergency and essential public safety services:

- In August 2000, the Department was awarded accreditation by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.
- The third hazardous materials response team was put in service at Station 32 in Ballentyne to provide service to the southern part of the city.
- The Department was awarded grants for the regional response team for haz mat response in this area and for the urban search and rescue team which may be deployed anywhere in North Carolina.
- The new Training Academy was opened in June 2002.
- The Department's new computer-aided dispatching system and records management system were funded in FY03 and were successfully implemented in June 2003.

Links to Corporate Strategy

All the Charlotte Fire Department's services fall within the City's corporate strategy. Our links to the Balanced Scorecard are attached as Appendix A, and our services and their links to the corporate strategy are summarized as follows.

Serve the customer. The Charlotte Fire Department provides the emergency services of fire suppression, first responder emergency medical response, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, and aircraft rescue firefighting. Essential public safety services include emergency management, fire code enforcement, hazardous materials permitting, fire, life safety, and accident prevention education, and fire investigation. The intent of all services is to improve public safety by preventing emergencies and limiting damage to life and property when they occur.

Run the business. The Charlotte Fire Department is a general fund agency; the only revenues come from hazardous materials permitting fees, which partially support the Fire Prevention Bureau. Thus, accurate budgeting and monitoring of expenditures are essential to the fiscal health of the organization, to ensure that emergency and public safety services are provided in the necessary timely manner. The Department therefore carefully monitors its expenditures.

Manage resources. Effective emergency services depend on having an adequate number of personnel resources when and where they are needed. The Fire Department is fortunate that the City has always chosen to staff fire companies to the level recognized as necessary for effective response to emergencies. For effective emergency services, the Department needs 226 firefighters and officers on duty at all times, and battalion chiefs work hard daily to ensure that this occurs.

Develop employees. Delivery of the Fire Department's services is predicated on employees obtaining and maintaining the relevant state certifications for the positions they hold. The Training Division is responsible for ensuring that firefighters have the emergency service certifications; fire inspectors, telecommunicators, and fire investigators also must meet professional standards. In addition to ensuring that they have the required certifications, individual employees also seek to prepare themselves for the future by earning degrees. In FY03, the Fire Department paid educational reimbursements to 124 employees enrolled in two-year degree programs and 31 enrolled in bachelor's degree programs. Sixteen percent of the Fire Department's employees furthered their education in FY03.

Strategic Initiatives

Strengthen and prepare neighborhoods (Strengthen neighborhood corporate objective)

- Reach 80 percent of all third and fourth grade students with fire and life safety programs.
- Inspect 80 percent of non-residential properties within the frequencies mandated by the North Carolina Fire Code.
- Keep the residential structure fire rate at 1.21 fires per thousand population, or less.

Provide emergency services (Increase perception of safety corporate objective)

- First-due fire companies will respond to 80 percent of all emergencies within 6 minutes of the time an alarm is received
- A first alarm assignment will be on-scene at 80 percent of all first alarm emergencies within 9 minutes from the time an alarm is received

Provide effective public safety services (Increase perception of safety corporate objective)

- Ninety five percent of fire code violations will be corrected within the times specified by the inspector

Provide useful management information (Improve technology efficiencies corporate strategy)

- CAD and RMS will be 100 percent operational by June 30, 2004 (including a link between the Fire Department and MEDIC that will improve response by the Fire Department to medical emergencies)

Monitor budget expenditures (Deliver competitive service corporate objective)

- Divisions will manage their budgets not to expend more than 25 percent per quarter
- The Fire Department's SBE utilization goal is _____

Maintain optimal staffing and fire company availability (Deliver competitive service corporate objective)

- Ensure minimum staffing of 226 firefighters and officers on duty daily
- Fire companies will be available to respond to calls 80 percent of the time during business hours (8 a.m. – 6 p.m. Monday – Friday)

Maintain certifications (Recruit and retain skilled, diverse workforce corporate objective)

- Fewer than five firefighters will have any lapsed certification at any given time

KBU Special Plans

Technology

Basic implementation of CAD and RMS has occurred. In FY04, the focus will be on implementation of mobile data computers in fire apparatus and inspectors' and investigators' vehicles. We will be partnering with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department to study options for wireless communications, to determine the best solution. Our goals are to have all modules of CAD and RMS fully functional and operating by the end of FY04, and to perform all maintenance on our systems in-house. This will include having the link between Fire and MEDIC's CAD's which will improve response time to medical emergencies by enabling quicker communications between the two agencies.

Training and Development

All the Charlotte Fire Department's services to the public require the individuals who provide them to obtain and maintain relevant certifications. Standards for certifications are set by the North Carolina Fire and Rescue Commission, the North Carolina Office of Emergency Medical Services, the North Carolina Office of Emergency Management, North Carolina Department of Labor, the North Carolina Building Code Council, and others. Firefighters receive their initial training and certification through recruit school at the Training Division and then receive the necessary continuing education and recertification training on-duty. Other employees receive initial certification and continuing education through the community college system.

Customer Service

Fire Department employees are customer-service oriented, because the Department's services are completely geared toward helping people. Firefighters in particular see customers in bad situations, and all their training emphasizes that they are to ameliorate the situation they have been dispatched to. In past business plans, we measured customer response to our services through a random survey, but the numbers were always high, so that the survey was unhelpful in identifying problems and ways we need to improve. We have therefore discontinued it.

That does not mean, however, that we are ignoring customer service issues. Recruits are taught how to deal with difficult customers; customer service is a part of the Officer Candidate School curriculum. Complaints about delivery of services are promptly investigated by the deputy chiefs, and appropriate action is taken to resolve the problems.

The Fire Department is not ignoring customer service. A fire service customer video project is in its conceptual phase and the Department is considering its accountability structure, to ensure that it is capable of handling the issues that arise.

Competition

City Council exempted the Charlotte Fire Department's public safety services from competition. Apparatus maintenance, background checks, and applicant physical examinations are the only functions subject to outsourcing. The City's Equipment Maintenance Division of Business Support Services has the contract for apparatus maintenance. Background checks are handled by Lyons and Associates, and applicant physicals by Occ-Med, which has the Department's contract for occupational health. The Department participates in the Institute of Government benchmarking process, and its service costs compare favorably to other fire departments across the state.

III. Service Delivery

Like all fire departments, the Charlotte Fire Department began as an organization that only fought fires. It has expanded its services to meet the needs of the community it serves. The Fire Prevention Bureau was established in 1929 to inspect property and prevent fires. Aircraft rescue firefighting became a responsibility of the Fire Department after World War II. The Department accepted the role of first responder to medical emergencies in 1978. The first hazardous materials response team was organized in 1983. Emergency Management came into the Department in the middle 1980's. The technical rescue program came of age in the 1990's. Now, the Department is the lead agency in the ALERT Team, which is designed to coordinate community response to acts of terrorism.

Core Service Areas

The Charlotte Fire Department provides emergency and essential public safety services to anyone who has a need within the corporate limits of the City of Charlotte. Emergency services are provided from 36 fire stations strategically located to minimize response time; firefighters are on duty 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to respond as soon as they are called. In addition, the Department ensures that City and County government agencies are ready to respond to any large-scale disaster situation. Through the fire code enforcement and fire and life safety education programs, the Department prevents fires and other emergencies by eliminating the causes of fires and teaching citizens safe behavior.

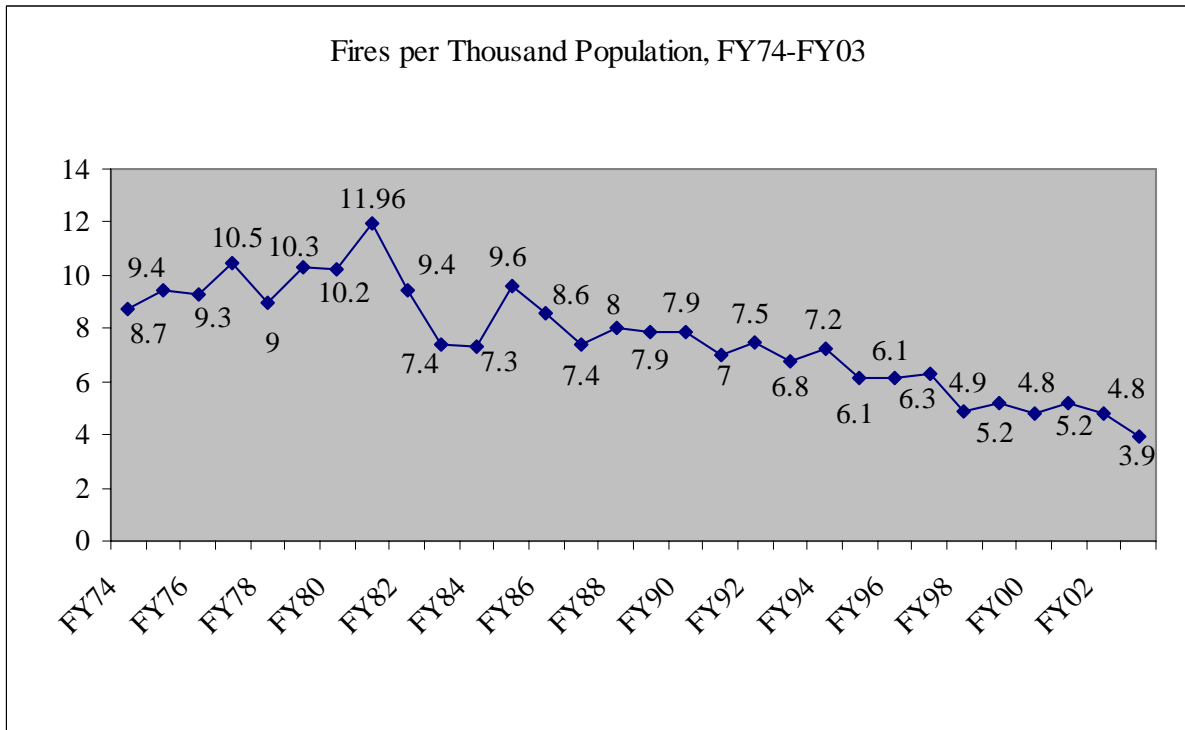
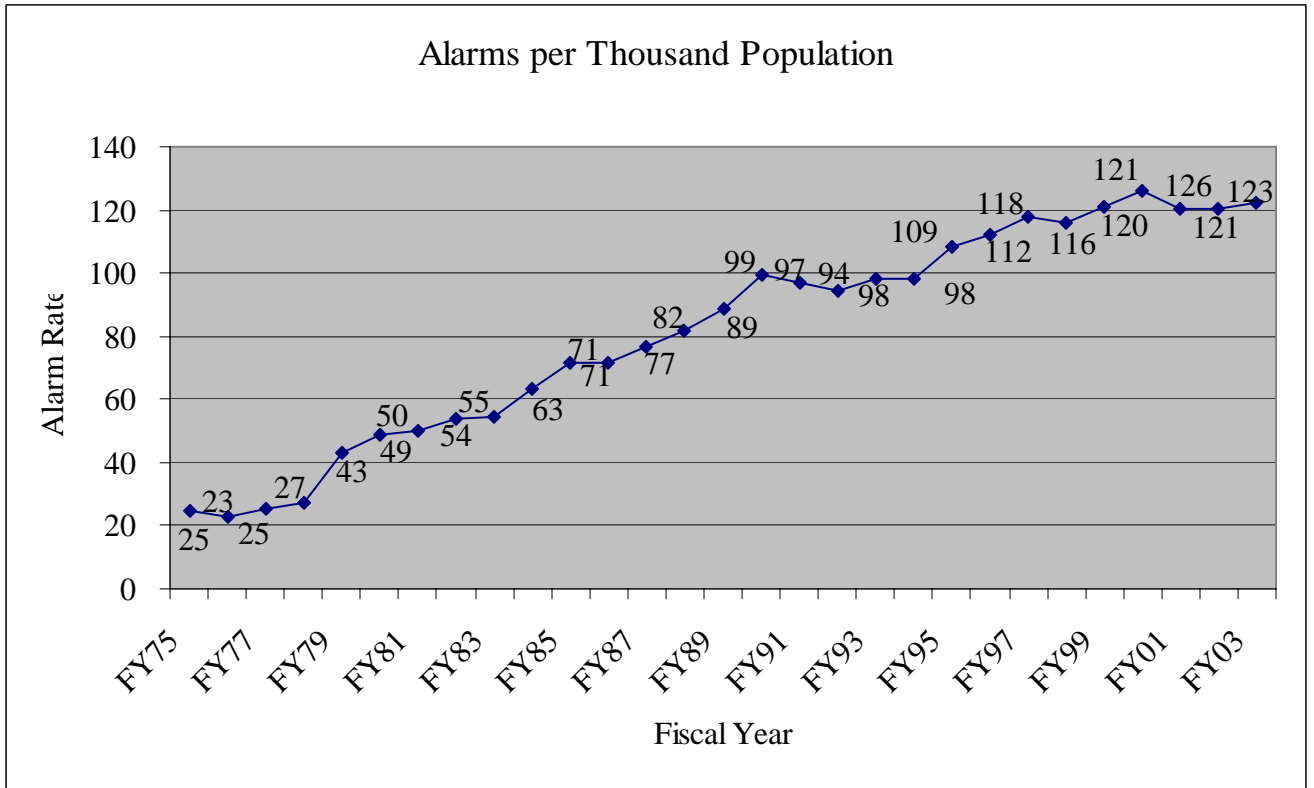
Key Service Indicators

- We will prepare for the visit of peer assessors in the spring of 2005 so that the Charlotte Fire Department can be awarded reaccreditation without delay.
- The Fire Investigation Task Force will clear 30 percent of all arson cases.
- Fire Communications will answer 99 percent of E911 calls within three rings or 12 seconds and 98 percent of customer service calls within four rings or 16 seconds.

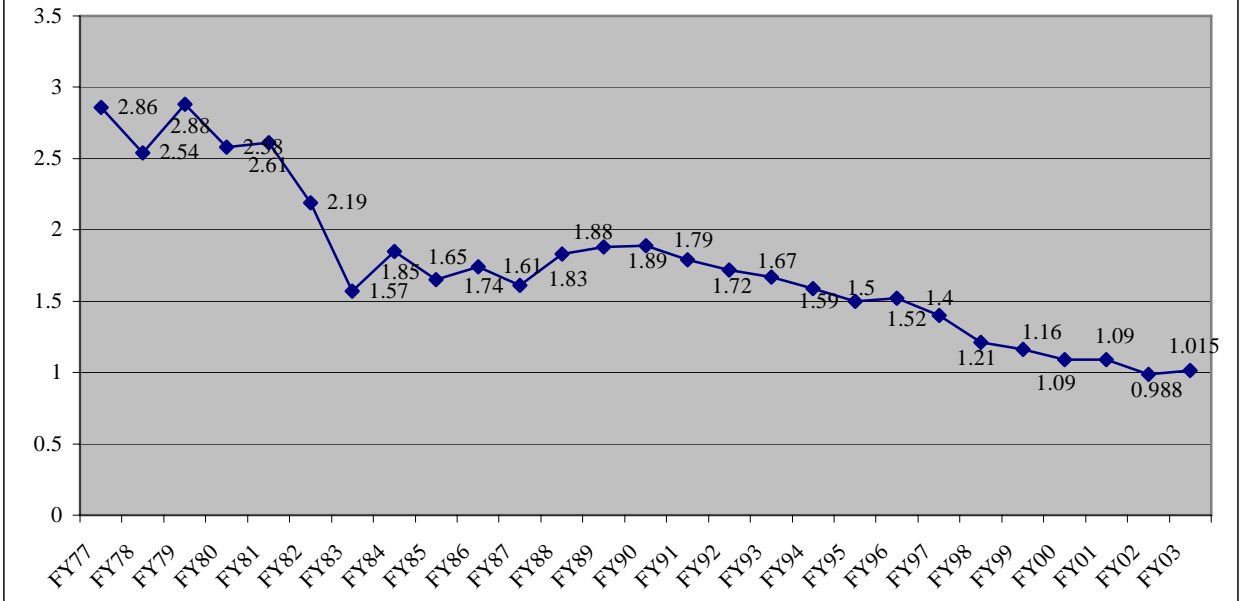
Program Budget Summary

	FY03	FY04	FY05
Emergency Response	\$61,679,348	\$64,472,989	\$67,198,736
Prevention/Investigation	\$2,573,141	\$2,743,356	\$2,801,150
Emergency Management	\$563,562	\$559,517	\$576,752
Total Fire Services	\$64,816,051	\$67,775,863	\$70,576,637
Net Fire Services	\$63,676,007	\$67,205,092	\$70,000,243
Net General Fund Cost	\$59,928,488	\$63,130,825	\$65,726,695
Total Positions	966	1015	1015

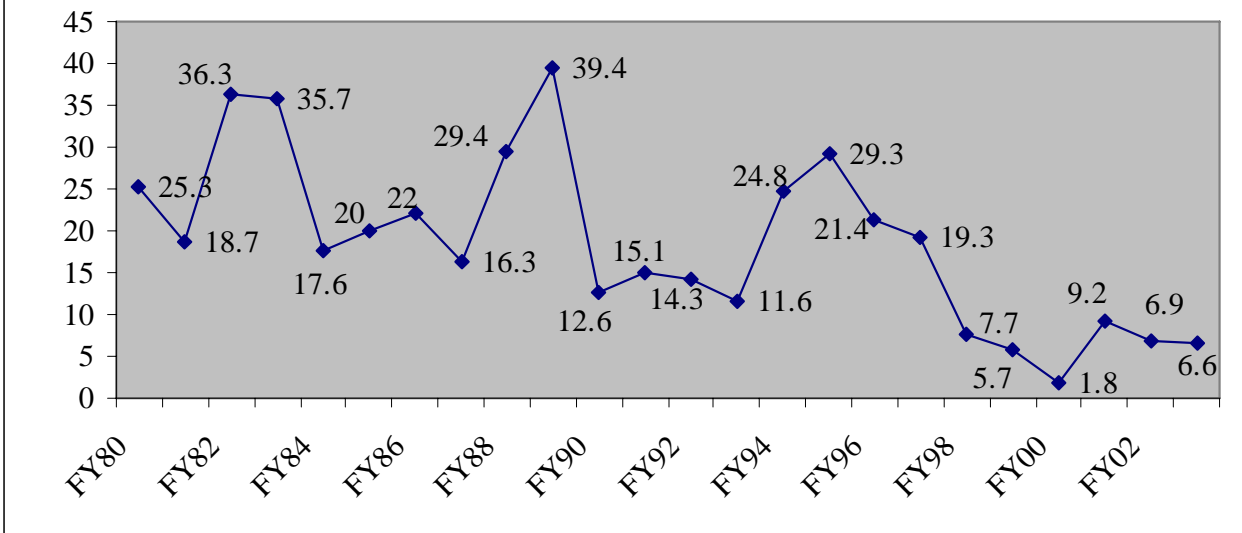
Service History and Trends



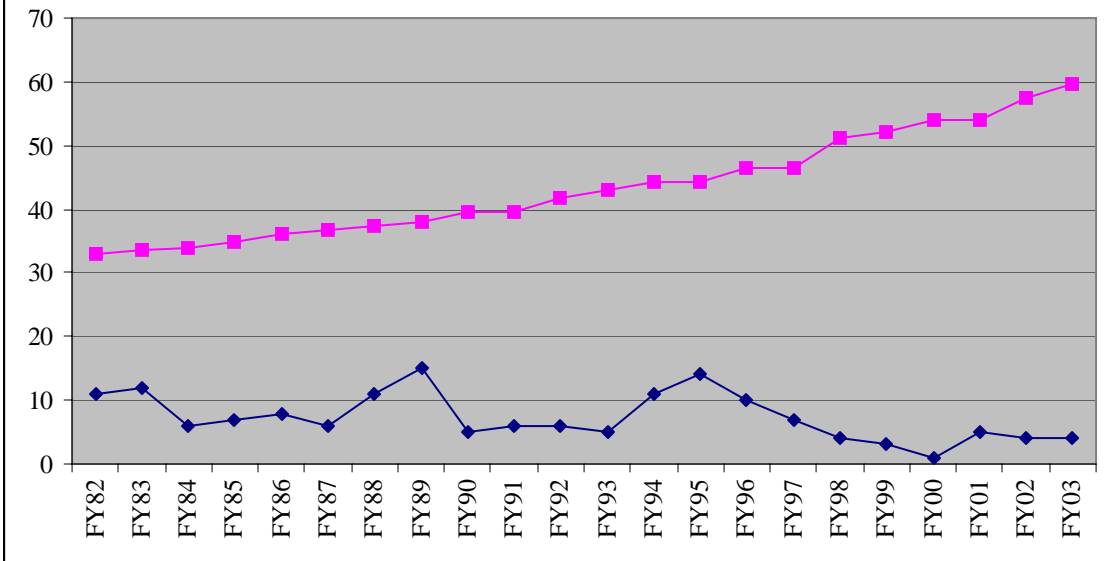
**Residential Structure Fires
Per Thousand Population**



**Fires Fatalities Per Million Population
FY80-FY03**



Fire Fatalities and Population (in ten thousands)



IV. Balanced Scorecard and Performance Measurement

The Charlotte Fire Department's goal is to have adequate resources in place to respond to the emergency needs of citizens timely and effectively. The Department uses its performance measures to track its progress and monitor the results of delivery of its services.

There are some areas that require special monitoring and additional effort to bring the Department's performance up to standard. Clearance of fire code violations is not where we would like to see it; improvements are also needed in the percent of fire code inspections conducted within state-mandated frequencies.

The Small Business Opportunities goal is a new requirement for all key business units. There are not many fire service vendors who meet the definitions of the SBO company, especially the geographical requirements, but the Fire Department will work to use qualified vendors as much as possible.

V. Conclusion

The Charlotte Fire Department is committed to providing excellent emergency and essential public safety services to its customers at a reasonable cost. The City's corporate strategy provides the Department a cogent model for defining and measuring those services to ensure that the need for improvements can be identified and acted upon. This business plan and request for resources are intended to show how the Fire Department will meet the City's goals and objectives through effective service delivery.

The Fire Department faces challenges in ensuring that adequate resources are available to respond to the growing emergency response needs of the city.

Appendix A: Fire Department Balanced Scorecard

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	

Serve the Customer	Strengthen Neighborhoods	Strengthen and prepare community	<i>Percent of third and fourth grade students receiving fire education programs.</i>		Lag	80%			
			<i>Percent of fire code inspections conducted within state-mandated frequencies.</i>		Lag	80%			
			<i>Residential fire rate.</i>		Lag	1.2/1000			
	Increase Perception of Safety	Provide emergency services (suppression, hazmat, etc.)	<i>Percent of fire companies responding in 6 minutes for first due.</i>		Lag	80%			
			<i>Percent of fire companies responding in 9 minutes for first alarm assignment.</i>		Lag	80%			
		Provide effective public safety services (code enforcement)	<i>Percent of fire code violations corrected within specified times.</i>		Lag	85%			
Run the Business	Improve Technology Efficiencies	Provide useful management information	<i>CAD and RMS will be fully operational by June 30, 2004</i>		Lag	100%			



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 <i>(To be completed at mid-year and year-end reporting)</i>
					Target	YTD	Status	

Manage Resources	Deliver competitive service	Maintain optimal staffing requirements	<i>Percent of time Minimum staffing of 226 on fire companies will be maintained</i>		Lag	95%			
		Monitor budget expenditures to ensure they are within budget appropriations.	<i>Percent of budget expended quarterly</i>		Lag	25, 50, 75, 100			
		Maintain resource availability	<i>Percent of fire companies in service during daylight hours Monday-Friday.</i>		Lag	80%			
		Meet SBE utilization goal	<i>Percent of operating budget to certified small business vendors</i>		Lag	%			

Develop employees	Recruit and retain skilled, diverse workforce	Maintain certifications	<i>Number of firefighters during a 30-day period with lapsed certifications</i>		Lag	>5			
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