



***Charlotte Fire Department
FY05
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 Resources

	FY03 Budget	FY04 Budget	FY05 Budget
Budget	\$63,676,007	\$67,205,092	\$68,065,135
Positions	966	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

Meeting rising demands for emergency and public safety services with finite and static resources is the Charlotte Fire Department's most significant challenge. All divisions are

working diligently to manage their resources efficiently and effectively, to ensure that primary services are provided in a timely manner. Fire Prevention has made significant strides in reducing the overdue inspections workload; inspectors are commended for the extra effort that resulted in catching up and keeping up. On the other hand, the Operations overtime, uniforms and protective clothing, and apparatus maintenance accounts have less in them than in previous years, although there are more firefighters and trucks, with the predictable result of deficits.

Ensuring timely response to emergencies with the proper resources is an important challenge for the Operations Division. We now have a year's experience with our new information systems. For the first time, we can measure the entire sequence of an emergency incident, from the moment a telecommunicator answers a 911 call until the last company on scene clears. Although we do not yet have all the management reports that we need, the initial data indications are that we have issues in dispatching and turning out, which we will be working to manage. We also anticipate better data on when companies are out of service and for what reasons, which will help up manage company availability for response to emergencies.

Timely, pertinent management information is an essential challenge for FY05. As noted above, our new CAD and records management system have been in place for over twelve months, but they did not come with management reports. Our challenge is to define and program the reports that we need to manage processes efficiently. For example, our early data indicate that fire companies are being slow to turn out of the station to respond to an incident; we need to define the report and make the information available to battalion chiefs, so that they can impact the response process.

Recruitment and retention continues to be an issue, especially in the Operations and Communications Divisions. We are finding it difficult to recruit and hire enough firefighters to fill all the vacancies; therefore, the overtime account is overspent. Most of the Operations vacancies are due to growth and retirements, but we need to expand our recruitment efforts. Diversity is a problem; no female candidates have passed the candidate physical abilities test since we instituted it. Salary and schedule are problems in Communications. Four telecommunicators resigned in 2003, three to take better-paying jobs and another to concentrate on his small business.

Homeland security is a growing issue, with many challenges beyond just the Charlotte Fire Department. We have a primary need for a dedicated, fully functional emergency operations center, to replace the facility at MEDIC which is normally a classroom that is converted when the EOC is needed. Emergency Management has been successful in getting the grants for training and equipment from the Federal Homeland Security Department, and we can be proud of the ALERT team and its work to prepare this community for effective response to an act of terrorism or weapons of mass destruction. However, we anticipate the need for additional funding for maintenance of the new equipment.

The Office of Homeland Security has designated Charlotte as one of the fifty Urban Area Security Initiative cities, which places the City as one of the top for threat assessments for terrorism. The urban area is identified as the nine counties surrounding Mecklenburg, including Cabarrus, Gaston, Catawba, Iredell, York, Lancaster, Union, Stanley, and Lincoln. The Charlotte UASI received \$7.4 million in a 2004 grant, to be used to strengthen the urban area in planning, preparation, and equipping the region's first responders for terrorist acts.

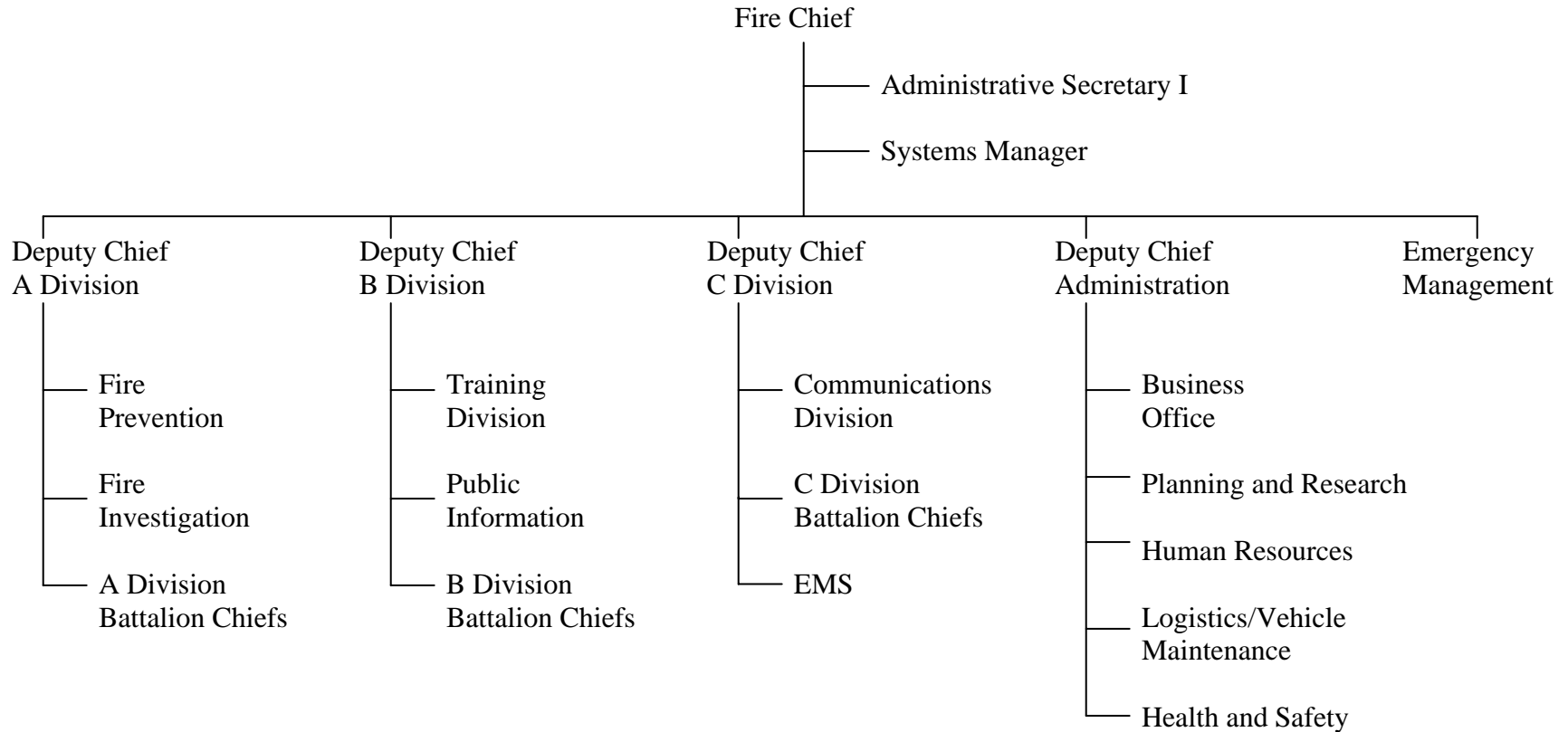
As the Charlotte Homeland Security Director, Chief Fincher heads the Urban Area Regional Coordinating Council and works with Mecklenburg County's Homeland Security Director to coordinate activities in the ten counties. He is also the contact person for the UASI to the Office of Homeland Security in Washington, DC.

The Department of Homeland Security has asked the City of Charlotte and the City of Orlando to develop plans for what they call catastrophic incidents, fifteen scenarios ranging from a release of a nuclear device to a cyber attack. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Office of Emergency Management is coordinating the plans from all the emergency response agencies. These plans address activities that would have priority in a catastrophic event and the community needs that must be met for the fourteen days following the event. They will help identify equipment needs and shortfalls in our current planning. A tabletop exercise will be conducted in late summer 2004 to test some of the plans. The Office of Homeland Security is considering pre-positioning some Federal assets or supplies which are identified as being needs. Also, DHS is considering changing the automatic response of some Federal assets to reduce the response time to affected cities.

The Advanced Local Emergency Response Team (ALERT) has grown in size and capabilities over the past year. The team is now comprised of over 150 personnel from public safety and public health agencies, including eighty Charlotte firefighters. The Charlotte Fire Department continues as the lead agency for ALERT. ALERT's funding has been generated through operating budgets and DHS grants. In the foreseeable future, additional funding will be required to maintain ALERT at an acceptable level of readiness.

A biological terrorism tabletop exercise was held in June 2004 to test plans for identification, containment, and treatment of a smallpox release. This exercise tested the cooperation and working relationships among public health and emergency responders. Through a DHS grant, a private company was hired as a consultant to conduct the exercise, to give us a true evaluation of a plans and capabilities. The report from the exercise will be released to DHS in accordance with new Federal guidelines for terrorism exercises; this will allow us to compete for future funding from DHS.

Charlotte Fire Department Organization Chart



II. Strategy and Key Business Unit Planning

Accomplishments

The Charlotte 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 timely service to the southern part of the city. In May 2004, Engine 32 was modified to respond as HazMat 4.
- 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 USAR team was deployed to Cape Hatteras during Hurricane Isabel and provided services during that terrible time.
- The new Training Academy opened in June 2001.
- The Department's new computer-aided dispatching system and records management system were implemented in June 2003. CAD is working well, and we have implemented a CAD-to-CAD link to MEDIC which enables us to dispatch fire companies to medical emergencies more efficiently.
- The Public Fire and Life Safety Education section of the Fire Investigation Task Force is the lead agency for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg SAFEKIDS Coalition. They won a one of ten grants given nationally for a cargo van and equipment to provide carseat safety checks and other injury prevention programs aimed at children.
- The Fire Department participated in the funding and construction of the defensive driving range and Fire employees have already made positive use of the training available at the range.

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

As we work with the data from the new records management system, we anticipate that some of our targets will change to reflect accurately what the data describes. For example, our new CAD begins tracking time when the E911 telephone rings, rather than when the telecommunicators have an address and a problem, as in the old system. This better reflects the entire process and also has a significant impact on how we measure response time.

Strengthen and prepare neighborhoods (Strengthen neighborhood corporate objective)

- Reach 80 percent of all third and fourth grade students with fire and life safety programs.

Provide emergency services (Increase perception of safety corporate objective)

- Telecommunicators will answer emergency calls within three rings or 12 seconds 90 percent of the time.
- Telecommunicators will dispatch fire companies within 60 seconds of answering the telephone 80 percent of the time.
- Fire companies will be en route to emergencies within 60 seconds of being dispatched 80 percent of the time.

- First-due fire companies will be on-scene to 80 percent of all emergencies within 4 minutes of the time an alarm is dispatched.
- A first alarm assignment will be on-scene at 80 percent of all first alarm emergencies within 7 minutes from the time an alarm is dispatched.

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

- Inspect 85 percent of non-residential properties within the frequencies mandated by the North Carolina Fire Code.
- Investigators will clear arson cases at a rate twice the national average for arson clearance.

Provide useful management information (Improve technology efficiencies corporate strategy)

- Implement needed management reports and install appropriate software to support Emergency Management response to large-scale emergency incidents by June 30, 2005.

Monitor budget expenditures (Deliver competitive service corporate objective)

- The Fire Department's SBE utilization goal is 2 percent of discretionary funds.

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

- Ensure minimum staffing of 226 firefighters and officers on duty daily 95 percent of the time.
- 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)

- Ninety-eight percent of firefighters, engineers, and captains will receive 24 hours of in-service EMT training annually.
- Maintain a turnover rate of less than 1 percent among African American and minority firefighters.
- Attend at least four targeted diversity recruiting events over the course of the year (including African American schools, women's colleges, and the military.)

KBU Special Plans

Technology

Basic implementation of CAD and RMS has occurred, including the implementation of the link between the Fire Department and MEDIC which enables us to respond effectively to medical emergencies. In FY05, we anticipate the implementation of E-Team and E-Plan software to support Emergency Management. We will be continuing the implementation of an intranet, which will be the most efficient method of supporting

departmental communications and an integrated tool to provide management reports and analysis. A significant project will be the installation of mobile data computers in fire apparatus and battalion chiefs and inspectors' vehicles. Also on the programming side, we expect to implement a sign in/out module for Operations, a recruit database, and a status board for fire companies, as well as to update the patient care reporting module and rewrite the Logistics inventory module. We are also exploring teleconferencing as a delivery medium for fire company training. This would allow companies to get training at the station and stay in service for response to emergencies.

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.

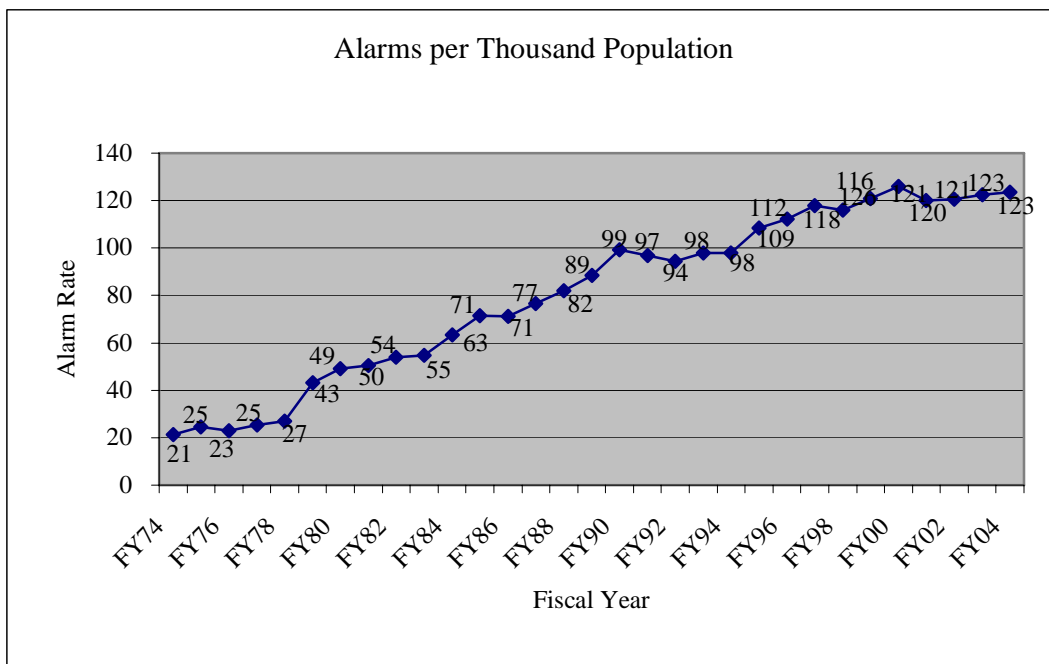
III. Service Delivery

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.

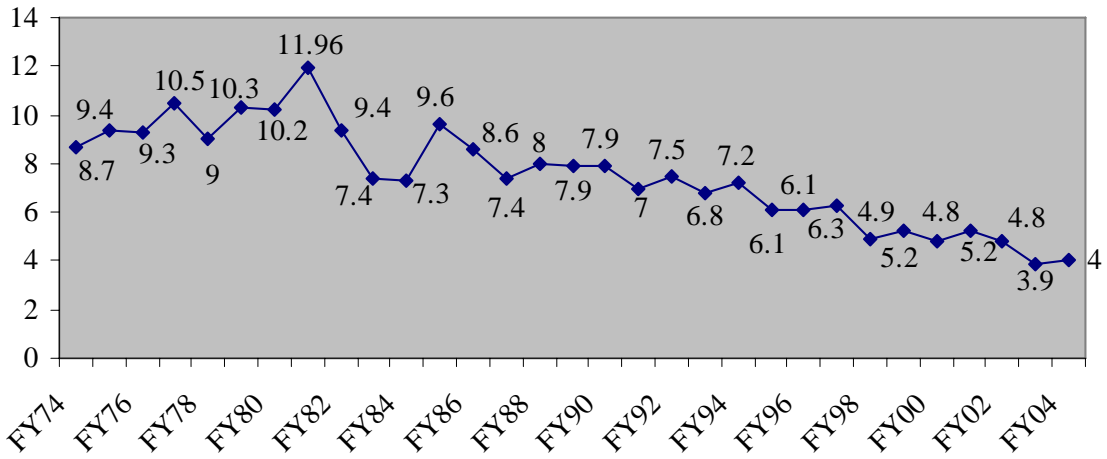
Core Service Areas

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.

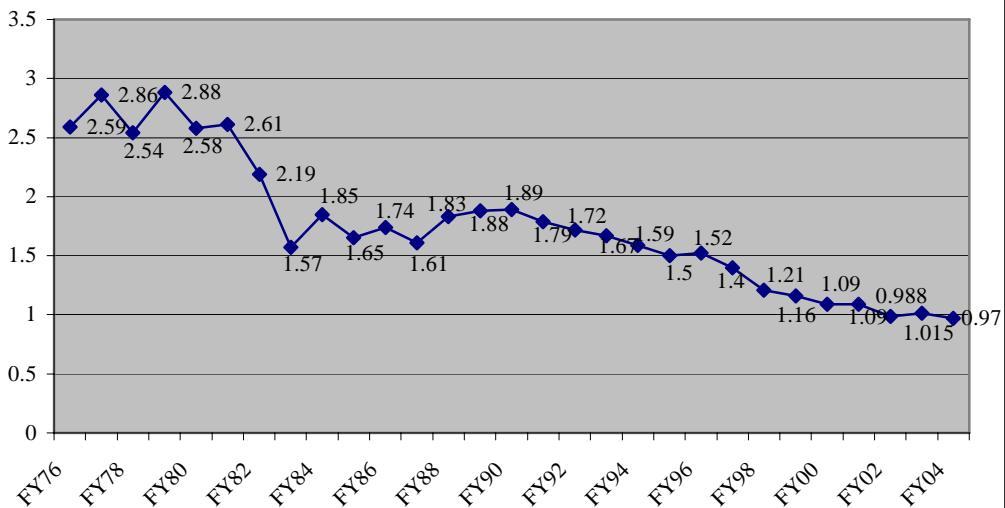
Service History and Trends



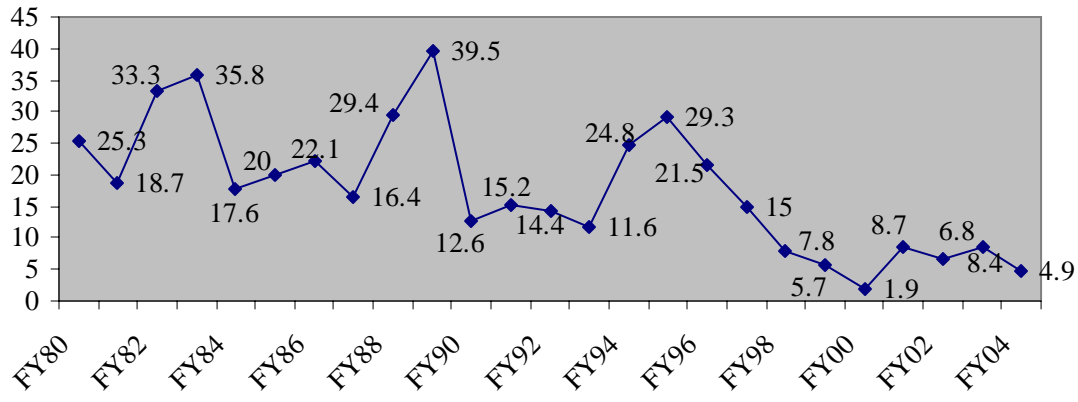
Fires per Thousand Population, FY74-FY04



Residential Structure Fires Per Thousand Population FY76-FY04



Fires Fatalities Per Million Population FY80-FY04



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. Our goal for informal purchases is 2 percent of discretionary funds.

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 with 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 to ensure that adequate resources are available to respond to the growing emergency response needs of the city.

Appendix A: 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%			
	Increase Perception of Safety	Provide emergency services (suppression, hazmat, etc.)	<i>Percent of telecommunicators answering phone within 3 rings or 12 seconds</i>		Lag	90%			
			<i>Percent of alarms telecommunicators dispatch within 60 seconds of answering the phone</i>		Lag	80%			
			<i>Percent of alarms fire companies will be en route to within 60 seconds of being dispatched</i>		Lag	80%			
			<i>Percent of alarms first-due fire companies will be on scene within 4 minutes of being dispatched</i>		Lag	80%			
			<i>Percent of first alarms to which an effective firefighting force will be on scene within 7 minutes</i>		Lag	80%			
			Provide effective public safety services (code enforcement)	<i>Percent of fire code inspections conducted within state-mandated frequencies.</i>		Lag	85%		
	Provide effective public safety services (fire investigation)	<i>Percent of arson cases investigators will clear</i>		Lag	34%				



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	

Run the Business	Improve Technology Efficiencies	Provide useful management information	<i>Implement needed management reports and install Emergency Management software by June 30, 2005</i>		Lag	100%			
Manage Resources	Deliver competitive service	Monitor budget expenditures to ensure they are within budget appropriations.	<i>Fire Department's SBE utilization goal</i>		Lag	2%			
		Maintain optimal staffing requirements	<i>Percent of time Minimum staffing of 226 on fire companies will be maintained</i>		Lag	95%			
		Maintain resource availability	<i>Percent of fire companies in service during daylight hours Monday-Friday.</i>		Lag	80%			

Develop employees	Recruit and retain skilled, diverse workforce	Maintain certifications	<i>Number of firefighters, engineers, and captains who will receive 24 hours of in-service EMT training annually</i>		Lag	98%			
		Recruit diverse workforce	<i>Turnover rate for African American/minority firefighters</i>		Lag	<1%			



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