



# EAST PIERCE FIRE & RESCUE

Strategic Plan 2021 - 2025

Adopted September 21, 2021



*"Where Compassion and Action Meet"*

# Welcome

Welcome to the East Pierce Fire & Rescue strategic plan. This document sets the direction for our organization over the next five years by building upon our strengths, prioritizing needs, and identifying opportunities for ongoing improvement. We will use our adopted strategic plan to align around shared priorities and allocate our resources.

Since our inception in 2000, East Pierce Fire & Rescue has had service and efficiency as our primary goals. As we move into our third decade of service, this strategic plan provides a strengthened set of goals that guide us to best serve the District. In achieving these goals, we will reinforce our commitment to excellent service and ensure we remain efficient by realizing the benefits of regionalized emergency services.

The words “where compassion and action meet” can be seen on the side of every emergency vehicle in our fleet. These words are more than a motto to East Pierce Fire & Rescue. Our residents are our family, and our community is our home. With this core belief in mind, our Mission becomes very personal in that we serve to protect our family and our home.

I am proud to present our strategic plan on behalf of the Board of Fire Commissioners and East Pierce Fire & Rescue personnel. Through the collaboration of our community, stakeholders, and personnel, we have solidified a strong vision for our future. Thank you for your continued support—it truly is an honor to serve you, and we look forward to doing so in the years to come with the guidance of East Pierce Fire & Rescue’s new strategic plan.

**Jon Parkinson**  
Fire Chief



“ Our residents are our family, and our community is our home. With this core belief in mind, our Mission becomes very personal in that we serve to protect our family and our home.”



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# Our Past, Present, and Future



## 2000-2005

### EPFR 1.0: FOUNDING

EPFR was founded in 2000 to provide seamless response to emergency situations by merging the following departments and agencies:

- » Bonney Lake Fire Department.
- » Lake Tapps Fire/Pierce County Fire District 22.
- » Pierce County Fire District 24.

During this first phase of the District, EPFR focused on establishing our organizational systems and culture.



## 2006 - 2020

### EPFR 2.0: GROWTH

EPFR and the community we serve grew significantly during this timeframe, due to the following mergers and annexations:

- » 2006: Pierce County Fire District 12 and South Prairie/Fire District 20.
- » 2008: Sumner/Fire District 1.
- » 2010: Edgewood/Fire District 8.
- » 2013: Milton Fire Department.



## 2021 - ONWARD

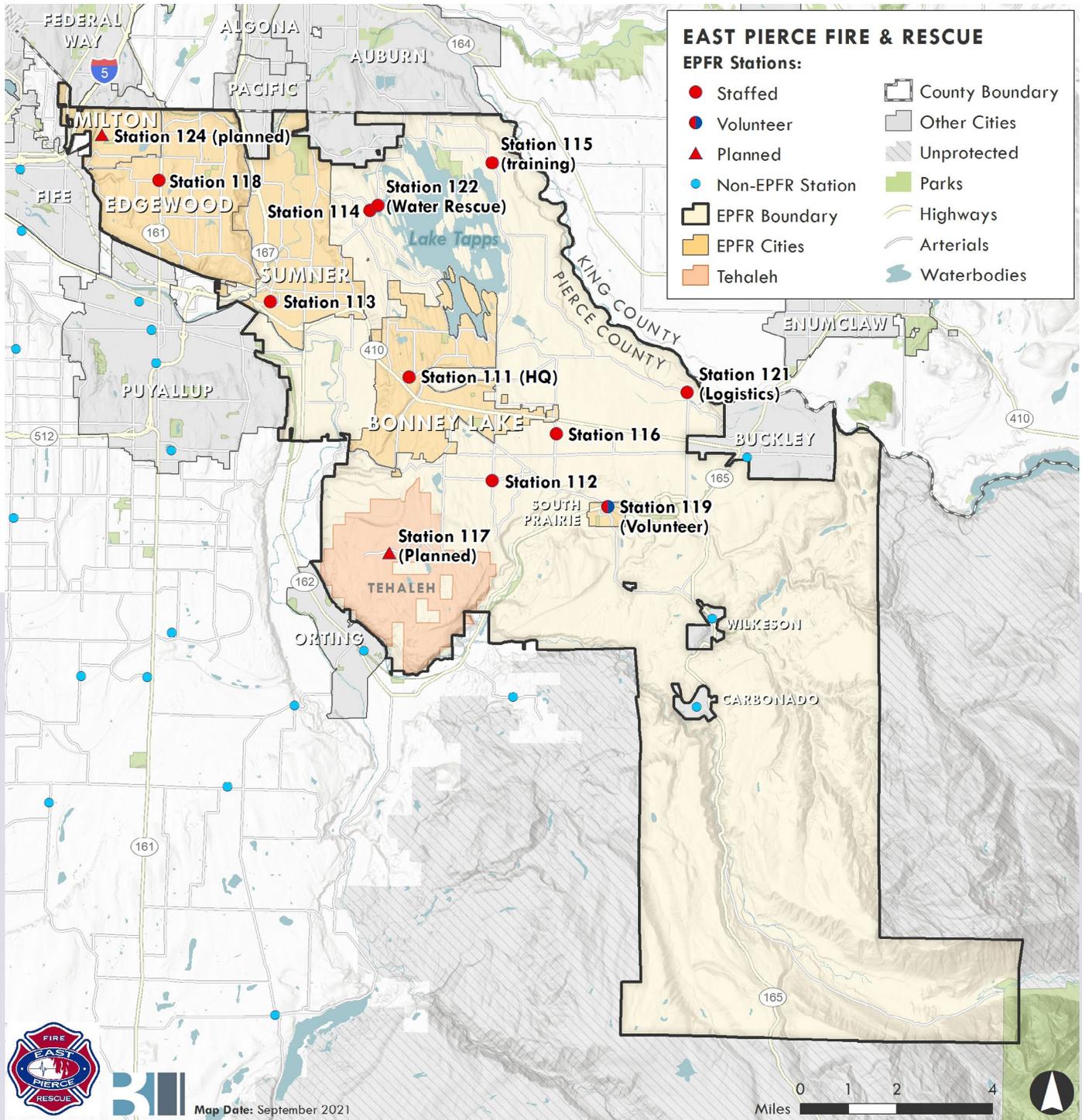
### EPFR 3.0: STABILITY AND MATURATION

EPFR now embarks on a new era for the District: one of stability and maturation. This Strategic Plan focuses on effective service provision during this third phase of the District's development.



# Our Community

EPFR serves the communities in and around Bonney Lake, Edgewood, Lake Tapps, Milton, the Ridge Communities, South Prairie, Sumner, and Tehaleh.



# Our Foundations

## MISSION

*Exceptional people providing compassionate service and rapid response to our community's diverse needs.*

## VISION

*East Pierce Fire & Rescue is a regional leader providing the highest level of fire, rescue, emergency medical, and prevention services to a diverse and growing community with:*

- » Mission-essential staffing and training.
- » State-of-the-art facilities, equipment and technology.
- » A strong, diverse, and sustainable funding base, while maintaining stewardship of taxpayer resources.
- » A safe environment for our citizens through effective and comprehensive prevention and public education programs.
- » A safe and healthy workforce.

## CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our community and our employees are our most important resource. We are committed to:

- » **Doing the Right Thing.** Integrity, trust, respect and commitment.
- » **Everyone Must Make a Difference.** Individual and organizational responsibility, accountability, teamwork, and collaboration.
- » **Anticipating and Meeting Our Community's Needs.** Proactive planning, innovation, creativity, responsiveness, and excellent customer service.



EAST PIERCE FIRE & RESCUE  
IS WHERE COMPASSION AND  
ACTION MEET.

# Our Strategy at a Glance

This strategy focuses on a new phase for the agency: one of stability and maturation. To this end, we will pursue four *Goals* during this strategic plan timeframe. While the plan's *Goals*, *Strategies*, and *Objectives* provide directional guidance, more detailed and actionable *Tactics* will be established each year to direct implementation efforts as described on the following page. The plan's four *Goals* and supporting *Strategies* are summarized below.

## GOAL 01 Support the wellbeing and development of our team.

- A. Create transparent and equitable career paths, *succession plans*, opportunities for professional development, and human resource functions.
- B. Support team health and wellness.
- C. Continue to cultivate an inclusive, supportive, and accountable internal culture.
- D. Create a dynamic recruiting process that removes *barriers to entry*.

## GOAL 02 Prepare for a growing population and increasing demand for services.

- A. Develop a robust *Community Risk Reduction program* to prevent and prepare for emergencies.
- B. Leverage data and planning to enhance our response to fires and medical emergencies.
- C. Ensure District facilities are well-located, efficient, and safe.
- D. Play a proactive and positive role in regional efforts to address the health and safety of the Pierce County community.

## GOAL 03 Cultivate strong relationships with the communities we serve.

- A. Strengthen our community presence.
- B. Communicate regularly with residents, workers, business owners, and organizations.
- C. Serve all community members with compassion and appropriate *cultural humility and competency*.

## GOAL 04 Be a highly efficient organization.

- A. Improve existing internal communications channels and develop new methods of sharing information.
- B. Ensure internal policies and functions are effective in supporting the organization.
- C. Steward District resources to best serve the community.

Terms in italics are defined in the Glossary on pages 20-21.

# Implementation

*EPFR will use the following annual process to advance implementation of our four Goals.*

## END-OF-YEAR PLANNING

**At the end of each year, we will review our past efforts and plan for the next year.**

### 1. Review: Assess and report on the past year's implementation progress.

We will review which *Goals* and *Strategies* have been substantively advanced and publish an annual report, including updates on each *Goal* and *Key Performance Indicators*.

### 2. Prioritize: Identify priorities and actionable *Tactics* for the coming year.

Based on Step 1 and in consideration of current opportunities and needs, EPFR will determine new priority *Tactics* for the coming year and update an internal, tactical version of this Strategic Plan. While the *Tactics* will change annually, the *Goals*, *Strategies*, and *Objectives* will remain constant throughout the duration of this plan.

### 3. Plan: Use the Strategic Plan to inform the next year's budget and work plans.

We will assign resources for implementation through the budget process. Staff work plans will focus on priority *Tactics*.



## ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION

**Throughout each year, we will advance *Tactics*, measure and monitor our progress, and provide regular updates.**

**Tactics:** We will advance this Strategic Plan through priority *Tactics*, which we will update annually in the end-of-year process outlined above.

**Measurement:** Each of the *Goals* includes a set of *Key Performance Indicators* to track progress. These indicators include a mix of **measures**, or the results we hope to see, and **milestones**, or the actions and products needed to achieve those outcomes.

**Reporting:** We will feature updates on implementation progress in communications materials and in meetings of the Board of Fire Commissioners, staff, and the community.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEADERSHIP

- » **The Fire Chief** will maintain and report on the Strategic Plan.
- » **A lead or pair of co-leads** will be responsible for each of the four *Goals*. Leads will establish implementation timelines and report on progress.
- » **A Strategic Plan Oversight Committee**, consisting of all leads and other key individuals, will track overall progress and report to the EPFR Board of Fire Commissioners.



## GOALS

- 10** Goal 01: Support the wellbeing and development of our team.
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# Goal 01

## SUPPORT THE WELLBEING AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR TEAM

Our people are EPFR's most valuable resource in providing compassionate and effective service to our community. EPFR cultivates a healthy team by providing wellness resources, strong mentorship, professional development opportunities, and a constructive culture of excellence.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### Milestones

- » Adoption of a health and wellness program with medical, physical, and peer support components.
- » Full adoption of the *succession plan* with ongoing review.
- » Implement a standardized meeting schedule to capture all employees.
- » Begin "true" entry level recruitment of new firefighters.

#### Measures

- » Number of positions with defined career paths.
- » Annual personnel survey: personnel who report satisfactory levels of mental and physical health.
- » Annual personnel survey: job satisfaction.

# STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES

## A. Create transparent and equitable career paths, *succession plans*, opportunities for professional development, and human resource functions.

1. Establish career paths for uniformed and non-uniformed personnel.
2. Expand *succession planning* efforts.
3. Expand formal and informal mentorship programs to identify and support individuals' professional motivations.
4. Continue to cultivate formal and informal leadership throughout the organization and encourage personnel to seek, accept, and provide feedback.
5. Continuously evaluate our promotional processes to minimize subjectivity, maximize transparency, and advance leaders with strong professional and management skills.

## B. Support team health and wellness.

1. Develop a mental health support framework that includes proactive and reactive support for personnel and families.
2. Develop a physical health and fitness support framework.
3. Develop strategies to remove and manage the effects of sleep deprivation and workplace fatigue.
4. Provide resources, care, and support for cancer prevention among personnel.

## C. Continue to cultivate an inclusive, supportive, and accountable internal culture.

1. Regularly update foundational documents to ensure they reflect our desired culture and seek opportunities to link them to decision-making, accountability measures, and operations.
2. Maintain and improve onboarding processes and standards for new hires to ensure integration into EPFR culture and operations.
3. Conduct annual surveys of personnel satisfaction and gather insights from exit interviews.

## D. Create a dynamic recruiting process that removes *barriers to entry*.

1. Continuously evaluate our recruitment process to encourage applicants from a diverse range of backgrounds.
2. Continue to raise awareness of career opportunities in the fire service.



### Our foundational documents include:

- » Vision, Mission, and Values
- » *Leadership Philosophy*



# Goal 02

## PREPARE FOR A GROWING POPULATION AND INCREASING DEMAND FOR SERVICES

EPFR's service area population grew by 21% from 2010 to 2020 and is anticipated to grow by an additional 8% by 2025. With this population growth, some portions of the District are shifting from rural to more urban development. We stay ahead of these changes by strengthening our planning and use of data to refine our ability to prevent emergencies when possible and respond effectively when they occur.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### Milestones

- » Completion of identified plans.
- » Update *Standard of Cover*.
  - Update Community Risk Assessment.
  - Evaluate how we deploy resources and evaluate benchmarks.
- » Adopt EPFR-specific response benchmarks (e.g., turnout times, travel times).
- » *Prefire Program* implementation.
- » Completion of *Bond for Capital Facilities, Vehicles & Equipment* Phase 1 projects.

#### Measures

- » *Washington Surveying & Rating Bureau (WSRB)* rating.
- » Volume of public education efforts.
- » Customer satisfaction.
- » Percentage of low acuity calls addressed by *Community Resource Paramedic program*.
- » Percent of commercial occupancies with prefires by the end of 2022, 2023, and 2024.
- » Response times.
- » Turnout times.

# STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES

## A. Develop a robust *Community Risk Reduction program* to prevent and prepare for emergencies.

1. Establish a program of annual fire and life safety inspections to increase building safety and reduce costs for businesses by improving the *WSRB* rating in urban and unincorporated areas throughout the District.
2. Grow EPFR's public education program, including going out into the community and sharing information via our website, social media, and PC-NET.
3. Support city, town, and county leadership in emergency preparedness efforts.
4. Grow the *Community Resource Paramedic program* to best serve the increasing number of low acuity calls.
5. Cultivate greater staff self-sufficiency in senior living facilities.

### Our public education program focuses on:

- » CPR and first aid training
- » Child passenger safety
- » Older adult injury prevention
- » *National Fire Protection Association's Firewise USA® program*

## B. Leverage data and planning to enhance our response to fires and medical emergencies.

1. Establish a framework for using *Key Performance Indicators* and data analytics to maintain a real-time understanding of operations and changing demand for services.
2. Establish and implement a sequence of planning efforts needed to support operations, including:
  - Update EPFR *Standard of Cover* and establish intervals for ongoing updates.
  - Actively monitor key response metrics (e.g., dispatch call processing times, turnout times, travel times, or unit reliability).
  - Create and actively update pre-incident plans for all commercial occupancies.
  - Develop metrics and triggers for staffing additional stations and units, including Station 124 (Milton), Station 117 (Tehaleh), field based Medical Services Officers (MSO), and one or more additional medic units.
  - Develop triggers for adjusting staffing based on dynamic changes in the service area such as weather or civil unrest.
  - Build skillset and capacity to implement data-informed deployment such as predictive modeling software (Code 3).
3. Evaluate and adjust the *Volunteer Firefighter program* as appropriate.
4. Establish systems and a culture of continuous improvement and customer satisfaction.

## C. Ensure District facilities are well-located, efficient, and safe.

1. Implement plans for developing a new station in Tehaleh and staffing the Milton station.
2. Update the Capital Facilities Plan and identify long-range facility needs, including improvements needed to existing stations.
3. Establish funding for Phase 2 capital projects and ongoing maintenance of new buildings, including remodeling or expanding Station 113 (Sumner), new Station 124 (Milton), Station 116 (Foothills), a training facility, and a fleet maintenance facility.

## D. Play a proactive and positive role in regional efforts to address the health and safety of the Pierce County community.

1. Partner with cities and the County to ensure planned growth can be supported with effective and efficient fire and EMS services.
2. Engage regularly with neighboring jurisdictions to address issues of regional concern, including planning for growth, training, recruiting, information technology, and purchase of equipment.



# Goal 03

## CULTIVATE STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

To provide compassionate and effective service to our community's diverse needs, EPFR must be seen as a trusted resource within the community. We build relationships with community members of all backgrounds through regular presence at community events, consistent communications, and cultural awareness and humility.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### Milestones

- » Begin targeted annual community meetings for:
  - Cities.
  - Communities (e.g., Tehaleh, Prairie Ridge, Lake Tapps, and others).
  - Non-English speaking communities.

#### Measures

- » Number of email recipients, social media followers, and website visits.
- » Number of partnerships with community-based organizations.
- » Number of community meetings hosted or attended at each station.
- » Community support for EPFR funding measures seen by increased passing rates at the ballot box.

# STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES

## A. Strengthen our community presence.

1. Collaborate with community partners to determine the most important local events for us to join within each community.
2. Host regular in-person and virtual open houses at fire stations within each community to offer opportunities for community members to meet EPFR personnel and Commissioners, provide feedback, learn practical skills, and become informed about issues related to EPFR.
3. Identify new opportunities to expand community engagement efforts.

## B. Communicate regularly with residents, workers, business owners, and organizations.

1. Continue to share information via our website, printed newsletter and email.
2. Increase regular communications on social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor.
3. Use multiple platforms to communicate emergent information.

## C. Serve all community members with compassion and appropriate *cultural humility and competency*.

1. Track community demographics to understand changes in the communities EPFR serves.
2. Develop and maintain relationships with *trusted community liaisons* and leaders of EPFR's member communities based on community demographics, and adjust outreach efforts based on their input to ensure messaging and activities reach all community members.
3. Evaluate the feasibility of creating a position for a dedicated community outreach specialist.
4. Ensure messaging is inclusive and culturally relevant for EPFR's range of member communities.
5. Continue to train personnel in trauma-informed care and cultural humility to ensure community members receive appropriate and effective care.

### Our community partners include:

- » Cities
- » Homeowner association groups
- » School districts
- » Service providers
- » Unincorporated planned communities
- » Others





# Goal 04

## BE A HIGHLY EFFICIENT ORGANIZATION

As a publicly funded entity, EPFR responsibly stewards district resources through skillful internal administration, effective technology, and streamlined communications.

### KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### Milestones

- » Equipment replacement policy complete with ongoing review, including *Technology Replacement Plan*.
- » *Facility Maintenance Plan* adoption.
- » *Lexipol* policies and procedures fully implemented.

#### Measures

- » Annual personnel survey: proportion of personnel reporting they receive the information they need to do their job effectively.
- » Annual personnel survey: job satisfaction among non-uniformed personnel.
- » Number of personnel-generated ideas for innovation and improvement.

# STRATEGIES & OBJECTIVES

## A. Improve existing internal communications channels and develop new methods of sharing information.

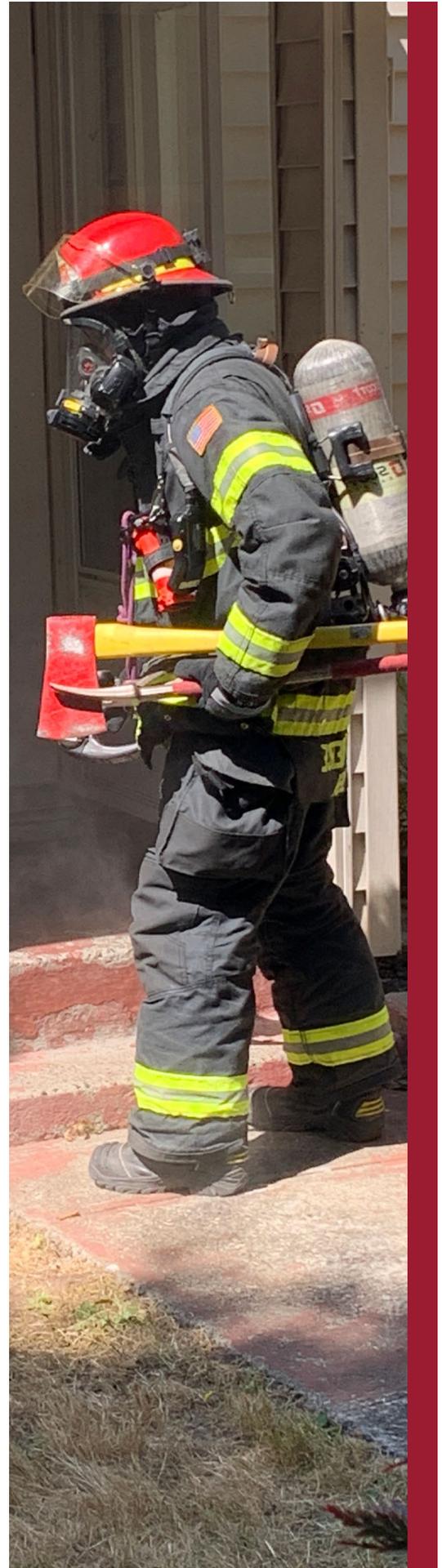
1. Improve effectiveness of top-down communication, including communicating the reasoning behind decision making, via the chain of command.
2. Encourage ongoing organizational learning and improvement by encouraging bottom-up questions and feedback.
3. Adopt internal communications software to support file sharing, instant messaging, and team-based communications.

## B. Ensure internal policies and functions are effective in supporting the organization.

1. Ensure internal processes are as effective and efficient as possible for both uniformed and non-uniformed personnel.
2. Determine long-term staffing needs needed to support the organization.
3. Communicate the vital role of internal functions in EPFR's service delivery and acknowledge accomplishments of the administrative team.
4. Cultivate high morale and job satisfaction of non-uniformed personnel by providing mentoring and opportunities for growth.

## C. Steward District resources to best serve the community.

1. Ensure our policies, processes, and culture support the efficient use of resources.
2. Explore regional opportunities as a method to reduce costs.
3. Evaluate and update the *Equipment Replacement Funding Plan and Replacement Schedule* on an ongoing basis, including updates to staffing requirements.
4. Establish a *Technology Replacement Plan* for operations hardware and software.
5. Create a *Facility Maintenance Plan* that captures the full resources required to operate and maintain existing and future facilities.
6. Evaluate options for long-term funding stabilization, including opportunities to generate non-tax revenues, to meet operational resource needs.



# Acknowledgments

*This Plan was developed with the support of EPFR's Board of Fire Commissioners, partners, staff, and community stakeholders. A Strategic Planning Team comprised of 21 staff guided the creation of this plan.*

## LEADERSHIP



**Jon Parkinson**  
Fire Chief



**Bill Mack**  
Deputy Chief

## BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Jon Napier, Chair, Position 2

Ed Egan, Vice Chair, Position 4

Kevin Garling, Position 1

Mike Cathey, Position 3

Pat McElligott, Position 5

Randy Kroum, Position 6

Cynthia Wernet, Position 7





## STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM MEMBERS

Bud Backer, Fire Chief (Ret.)

Jeff Berry, EMS Lieutenant/Paramedic

Mike Blaylock, IT Manager

Brad Dyson, EMS Battalion Chief

Matt Gilbert, Training Battalion Chief

Tera Green, Firefighter/Paramedic

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Mike Malland, Firefighter

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Jeff Moore, Assistant Chief

Ben Paradis, Union President

Jason Sanders, Captain/Paramedic

Kevin Stabenfeldt, Assistant Chief

Dina Sutherland, Public Education Specialist

Mike Westland, Lieutenant/Paramedic

# Glossary

## A - C

**Barriers to entry** Items or practices which may unintentionally eliminate applicants. Examples include required certifications (paramedic, EMT, fire academy), educational requirements, travel requirements for testing, or internet access.

**Bond for Capital Facilities, Vehicles & Equipment** In November of 2018, voters passed Proposition 1, a Bond for Capital Facilities, Vehicles & Equipment, to finance the first of two phases of fire stations, land, vehicles, and equipment for EPFR.

**Community Resource Paramedic program** In 2018, EPFR launched a new Community Resource Paramedic program, in which a specially-trained paramedic helps assist frequent 9-1-1 callers and patients with unmet, chronic medical conditions. The Community Resource Paramedic helps patients navigate a complex health-care system, connecting them with resources and case managers who often can provide services to assist these “at-risk” patients. This program helps improve the quality of life for patients and helps them continue to live safely, and independently, while reducing 9-1-1 calls, keeping fire and EMS units available for other emergencies.

**Community Risk Reduction program** Efforts to reduce risk associated with fires, natural disasters, and health emergencies. Examples include building codes, emergency preparedness planning, and fall prevention.

**Cultural humility and competency** Cultural humility and competency include a self-awareness of one’s own perspectives and a respect for an openness to learning about others’ cultures.

## E - K

**Equipment Replacement Funding Plan and Schedule**  
A plan to replace equipment on a regular basis.

**Facility Maintenance Plan** A document that establishes a regular maintenance schedule for each facility.

**Goal, Strategy, Objective, and Tactic** The Strategic Plan’s framework includes four overarching **Goals**, which state EPFR’s top themes of focus for the Plan’s timeframe.

**Strategy** Each Goal has multiple Strategies. These are aspirationally-stated ambitions that help advance the larger Goal.

**Objective** Each Strategy has multiple Objectives, which lay out actionable areas of work.

**Tactic** Each Objective will be advanced by specific, actionable Tactics that can be completed within one or two years. These Tactics will be updated each year, and as a result are not included in this published version of the plan.

The Goals, Strategies, and Objectives will remain constant throughout the five years of this plan. Tactics will be updated annually.

**Key Performance Indicator** Each of the four Goals includes a set of Key Performance Indicators that will be used to track progress. These indicators include a mix of measures and milestones, with measures being the results we hope to see and milestones being the actions and products needed to achieve those outcomes.

## L - Sta

**Leadership Philosophy** The East Pierce Leadership Philosophy is our expectations of our leaders: it describes how we are expected to treat each other and those we lead. The Leadership Philosophy helps to create a culture that reflects our core value that our employees are our most important resource in providing compassionate service.

**Lexipol** Lexipol is a company that provides operating policies used by fire and law enforcement agencies across the country.

**National Fire Protection Association's Firewise USA® program** The national Firewise USA® recognition program provides a collaborative framework to help neighbors in a geographic area organize, find direction, and take action to increase the ignition resistance of their homes and community and to reduce wildfire risks at the local level. The program is administered by the National Fire Protection Association and is co-sponsored by the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

**Objective** See "Goal, Strategy, Objective, and Tactic."

**Prefire Program** Efforts, such as commercial building reviews, to reduce the risk and impact of fires.

**Pre-incident plans** A visual schematic showing the outline of a building and associated items of interest to fire ground operations. Examples include hazardous materials storage, alarm panel locations, stairwells, or fire hydrant location.

**Standard of Cover** A plan to deploy fire stations, personnel, and equipment to best meet a community's anticipated fire and emergency medical services needs.

## Str - Z

**Strategy** See "Goal, Strategy, Objective, and Tactic."

**Succession planning** Systematic efforts to ensure that institutional knowledge and capacity are retained when individual staff members retire.

**Tactic** See "Goal, Strategy, Objective, and Tactic."

**Technology Replacement Plan** A plan to replace computers and other equipment on a scheduled basis.

**"True" entry-level recruitment** Recruitment of individuals without prior volunteer or professional fire experience.

**Trusted community liaison** An individual who is trusted by a given community and can support effective two-way communication between EPFR and that community.

**Volunteer Firefighter program** EPFR's Volunteer Division is designed to improve service to the citizens of East Pierce Fire & Rescue, while providing an opportunity for those that want to give back to their community and gain additional training and experience for a future career in the fire service. Volunteers are on call to respond to a wide array of emergencies including fires, medical incidents, vehicle collisions, water rescue and natural disasters.

**Washington Surveying & Rating Bureau (WSRB)** WSRB is an independent rating bureau that provides data and ratings on fire-related property risk to insurers. Improved WSRB ratings can lead to reduced insurance premiums for property owners.



## East Pierce Fire & Rescue

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