

Rockton Fire Protection District

Strategic Plan

FY 2014 - FY 2019



Kirk R. Wilson, Chief

Revised September 2014

“Loyalty-Pride-Tradition”

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Preamble

This plan is intended to act as a guide for both the Board of Trustees and Administration as they define the overall course they desire to chart for the District as they lead into the future.

The concepts set forth herein should be helpful to both groups when creating specific goals for the District., developing their annual scope of work, and formulating operating and capital budgets.

As a living document that is constantly evolving and responding to the changing needs of the Fire District, nothing in this plan should be considered as a “done deal”, irreversible, or, to be undertaken without first going through the standard approval process.

By giving recognition to and adopting this plan, the Board is not agreeing to enact any of the items contained herein; all matters must still be brought before the Board for deliberation and vote. Any items requiring expenditure of funds are still subject to the regular budget process.

Section 1 – Background and Overview

Introduction

This plan is the result of a collaborative effort between firefighters, officers, chief officers, and the Board of Trustees of the Rockton Fire Protection District. This document sets forth in a formalized fashion the district's vision for the future, outlining challenges as well as opportunities to be addressed.

The plan was developed within the context of the district's mission statement and core values. The committee remained vigilant throughout the planning process to be mindful that its final recommendations should further the district accomplishing its mission in a fashion faithful to its core values. This document should be read with this principle in mind.

As a framework for devising the scope of the plan, the committee chose to focus on evaluating areas of service delivery to the district's residents. This included programs currently in place as well as expansion of services that should be considered for the future. The committee began its work by engaging in a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) for each service area. This process allowed the committee to identify specific topics to be addressed and prioritized in the future to enable the district to deliver best in class services to its residents with the highest degree of professionalism and efficiency.

The strategic planning committee intends this document to be used as a guide to the future, to be followed where appropriate and to be revised as necessary. The plan provides a direction into the future for the district while remaining flexible to allow for unforeseen changes that will inevitably be necessary as new issues present themselves. This plan addresses the highest priorities of the district for the coming years. This plan will be evaluated on an annual basis to keep up with our ever-changing community.

Mission Statement

The Rockton Fire Protection District is dedicated to protecting the lives and property of the people in the district from man-made and natural emergencies by providing a range of services that include, but are not limited to:

- Emergency Medical Services
- Fire Suppression and Rescue
- Fire Prevention
- Hazardous Materials Response
- Public Education

Decisions and actions of the members will be in a competent, professional, efficient, safe, and fiscally responsible manner while reaching into the future but never forgetting the past.

Core Values

Core values are essential and enduring tenets, a set of general guiding principles, not to be compromised for short-term expediency.

In order to accomplish its mission with the highest degree of professionalism, integrity, efficiency and service to the community, the Rockton Fire Protection District has identified the following core values:

- **People** – the human individual is the most important resource of the district; this includes employees and volunteers who work for the district as well as those we serve and protect;
- **Respect** – the district openly accepts people as individuals, recognizing their fundamental worth, embracing them for all their qualities including differences of ideas and opinions, encouraging the expression of individuality and creativity;
- **Honesty** – the district promotes a culture of honesty and integrity, both internally (within the workplace environment) and externally (in its interaction with the public);
- **Loyalty** – the district instills in its people the spirit of individual support of one person toward another as well as organizational support of the individual; this is critical to maintaining emotional well-being in the high stress work environment of the modern firefighter; also, this support enables people to advance their careers and realize their highest potential of professional service;
- **Quality** – in all aspects of its endeavors the district promotes the value of quality: quality in performance of duties, quality in workmanship, quality in education, quality decision making and critical thinking skills, quality delivery of service to the public; the district requires a leadership commitment to a continuous quality improvement program.
- **Safety** – safety of our personnel while in the fire house, responding to a call, or delivering services to the community is of paramount importance; likewise, safety of those we serve is always at the forefront of decision making.
- **Pride** - is defined as a state of feeling of being proud, a reflection of credit upon oneself. Pride is feeling good after a job well done! It is a feeling of goose bumps as you recount your actions; by going somewhere nobody else can go. By making a rescue and saving a life by being a part of a unit that successfully achieves its goal. Pride is wiping a tear from your eye and swallowing a lump in your throat, as you are hugged and kissed by a loved one thankful you have returned safe and sound. Pride is a glow in your kids as they brag about you being a firefighter. Pride is wearing your uniform, proud of your colors, proud of your co-workers and fire department. Being a member of "THE NOBLEST BREED".

- **Tradition** - is defined as the handing down of statements, beliefs, legends, customs, and information from generation to generation. A long established or inherited way of thinking or acting “Courage in the face of danger is a tradition of the fire service”. Firefighters of the past stand by us today, passing on their legacy and dedication to us, and our fire departments. Tradition is the maintenance and connection of values with our heroes, pacesetters, and examples set by our idols! It is our foundation.

Major Functions Provided by the District

Fire and Emergency Medical Operations:

It is our mission to provide efficient service of the highest quality and care to the citizens of the district and it's visitors. Services are provided through emergency response to fires, rescues, emergency medicals and other emergency responses as requested.

Fire Prevention:

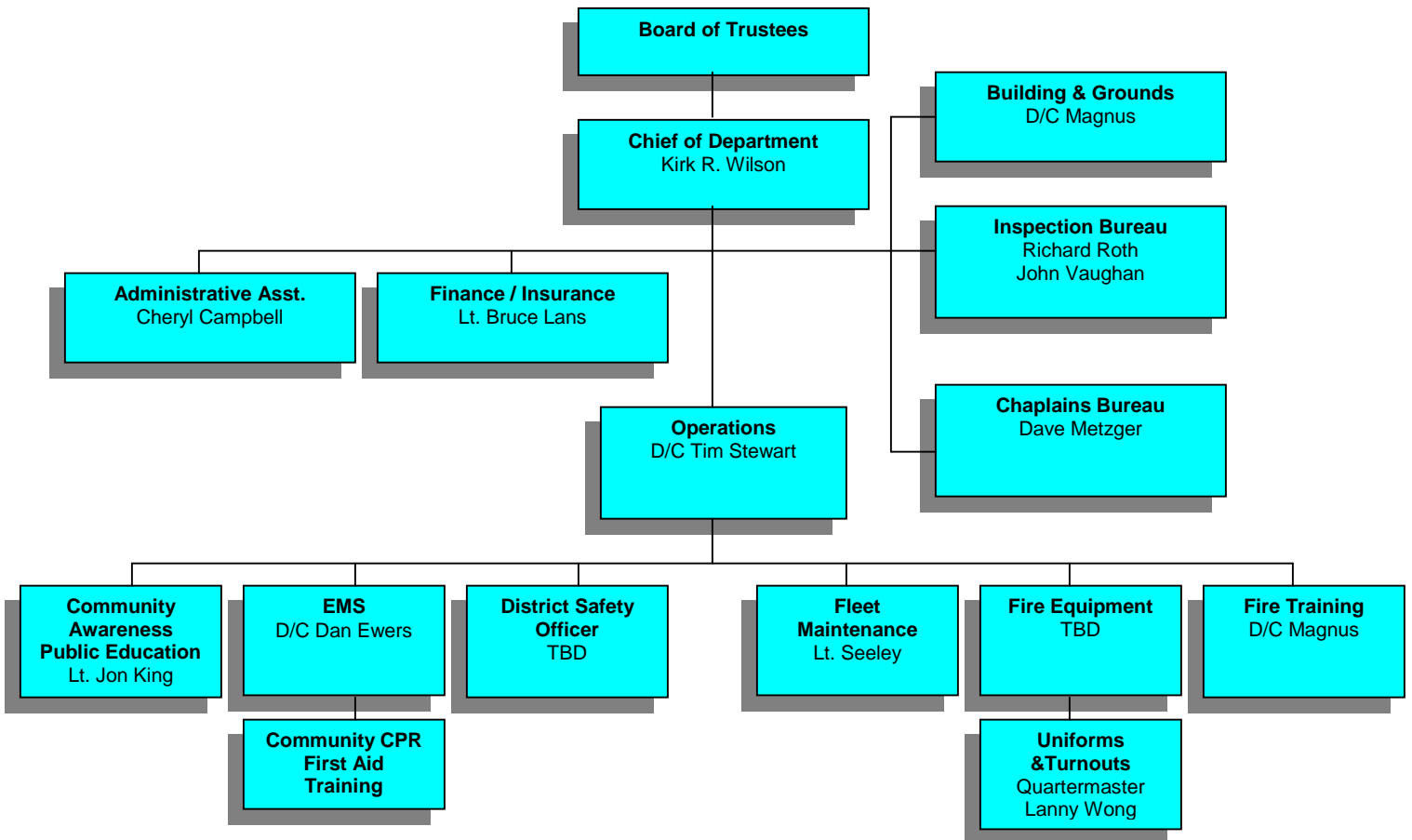
It is our mission to provide proactive community risk reduction programs, reducing loss of life and property. To minimize socioeconomic impact on the community through public education, prevention programs, safety surveys, investigation and code enforcement as it pertains to the district's mission.

Administration:

To provide excellent customer service, efficient record keeping, and other support functions necessary to carry out the mission of the district.

Rockton Fire Protection District

Organizational Structure



District Overview

The Village of Rockton, Illinois is located in the north central section of the state three (3) miles from the Wisconsin border. When incorporated in 1835, the population of the Village was less than 300. Since 1835, the population slowly grew to our current census, estimated at over 7,800 within the Village limits. Today, the fire protection district covers an estimated 19,000 people in a 54 square miles area.

The Rockton Village Fire Department was organized in 1908 after a disastrous 1907 Halloween night fire in the 100 block of West Main Street behind the Thompson-Baker grocery store. Historians note that the fire could have been extinguished with a garden hose; however, the fire spread quickly and engulfed the south side of the street.

In 1947, a fire occurred in the 2000 block of West Rockton Road, outside the Village limits. Being outside its boundaries, the Village officials would not allow the fire department to respond. To address this situation and prevent a similar occurrence, citizens decided to form a fire district, giving greater fire protection services to the area. Thus, in 1947 the Rockton Fire Protection District was created. The fire protection district has operated separately from the village since its inception.

Board Of Trustees:

When formed, the Rockton Fire Protection District was originally governed by a three-member board. Carlton Williams was the first President of the Board. Board members were appointed and served at the discretion of the County Board Chairperson. In 1990 the board structure was changed from a three member appointed board to a five member elected board.

Part-Time Employees:

The district currently employs five part-time personnel:

Position Title	Number of Personnel
District Fire Chief	1
Firefighter / Paramedics	3
Administrative Assistant	1

Personnel Roster:

The district has a roster of approximately 44 paid-on-call personnel. Prior to an individual being appointed as a member by the Board of Trustees, prospective candidates undergo an intensive recruit training curriculum which teaches them basic firefighter skill sets and prepares them for taking the State of Illinois Firefighter II test. Many of the members are also certified as Emergency Medical Technicians at either the Basic or Paramedic level. Continuing and advanced educational opportunities are offered and the members are encouraged to pursue training in fields of interest that appeal to them. Many have advanced certifications in specialized fire, rescue and EMS fields of expertise.

Contract Personnel:

Since 1994, the district has used contract EMS personnel from a third party to provide ambulance staffing. This has been necessary since there has not been consistent paid-on-call membership certified at the Paramedic level to provide staffing during daytime hours. The arrangement is for the contract service to provide one 24 hour Paramedic seven days per week and a second Paramedic is provided Monday through Friday, 6am to 6pm. Sunday-Saturday, 6pm-6am, the fire district members provide staffing for the primary ambulance and from 6am-6pm on weekends.

Fire and EMS Apparatus:

Apparatus represents a major capital investment for the district. The board's philosophy has been to keep a modern, late model fleet of equipment, realizing that the higher up front cost of this approach is more than offset by lower maintenance costs and increased reliability. This approach has served the district well by providing personnel quality, functional equipment with which to efficiently perform their tasks. Current apparatus owned by the district is summarized below.

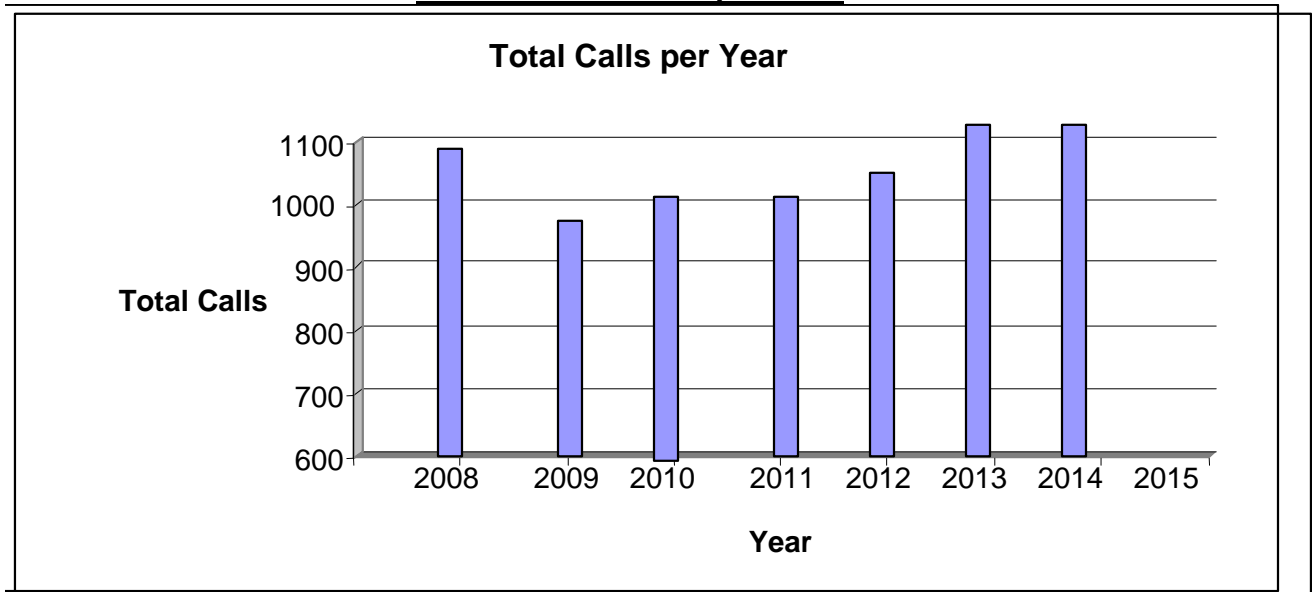
Description	Unit #	Manufacturer (Chassis / Body)	Model Year
Ambulance	1C22	Ford / Horton	2008
Ambulance	1C32	Ford / Horton	2014
Engine	1401	Spartan / Rosenbauer	2007
Engine	1402	Spartan / 3D	1987
Engine	1404	Spartan / 3D	1989
Truck	1451	HME / Smeal	1995
Heavy Rescue	1441	KME	2004
Tanker	1478	International / US Tanker	1999
Tanker	1479	International / Rosenbauer	2013
Grass Truck	1461	Chevrolet	2000
Grass Truck	1466	GMC	2012
Rescue Boat	1445		2008
Command Car	Car 1	Ford	2008
Command Car	Car 2	Ford	2008

Section 2 – Staffing Requirements

The issue of daytime staffing was identified through the SWOT analysis as an area of weakness. This is an area that requires a comprehensive study to determine the levels of staff necessary to meet the emergency and non-emergency functions of the district. A planning committee should be established to work in conjunction with the fire chief to address the staffing needs of the fire district.

Over the past several years, the district has experienced an increase in the number of calls for emergency services (see Table 4.). This, coupled with ever increasing non-emergency activities, has caused the district to evaluate the daytime staffing necessary to carryout the mission of the district. Also, compliance with NFPA 1720 and IDOL regulations governing emergency deployment on fire scenes will impact future staffing levels.

Table 4. Total Calls per Year



Paid on premises personnel are used from Monday through Friday from 06:00 to 18:00 hours to bring minimum staffing levels to 3 for the engine company. POP member's staff the ambulance from 6pm-6am on week nights and around the clock on the weekends. The positions are presently being filled with district personnel whose schedules do not exceed 212 hours in a 28-day cycle.

Goal: To professionally staff the district at a level that will enable it to deliver consistent services to citizens in an effective, efficient, timely, and safe manner.

The Rockton Fire Protection District is comprised of an outstanding group of people dedicated to providing emergency services to the community. While the bulk of manpower for fire suppression is, and will remain, the responsibility of the paid on call

(POC) personnel, there is an ever-increasing need to address additional part time and paid on premises staffing. POC personnel are experiencing increasing demands on their professional and personal lives and many are not able to respond to incidents during day, night, and weekend hours.

During the hours between 06:00 until 18:00, the department provides an initial response of 3 firefighting personnel to the call for service (on duty engine company), an ambulance with 2 personnel and the Duty Chief.

Currently the trend has been that Monday through Friday, 06:00 to 18:00, the availability of POC personnel is reduced to a point where it is uncertain whether there will be sufficient personnel responding to an incident while adequately staffing additional support apparatus to respond in an effective and safe manner.

On weeknights from 6pm-6am and during daytime and night-time weekend hours, the engine is not staffed. POC members respond from home to the fire station to staff the apparatus. There are times when it takes several minutes to get apparatus out the door causing a delay of needed emergency / fire suppression services to the community.

Mutual aid is used frequently to compensate for Rockton’s manpower shortage. Utilizing mutual aid increases the time an adequate number of firefighters are assembled and in position so offensive fire operations can begin in a safe manner.

Staffing Recommendation

The Rockton Fire Protection District is a combination part – time / paid-on-call organization and this will not change in the foreseeable future. Yet, the Rockton Fire Protection District must expand staffing to adequately meet the needs and expectations of the community while providing quality fire and EMS services. Staffing must meet compliance with NFPA and OSHA standards. The following recommendation can be met by expanding to a staffing model using part time, paid on premises and paid on call personnel.

Action Plan – Staffing

Target	Action	Anticipated Cost
May 2015	Evaluate adequate staff levels and adjust as necessary. Evaluate future night engine staffing from 6:pm / 6:am – 365. Evaluate future day engine staffing (Saturdays & Sundays).	160,000.00

Section 3 –Member Personnel Recruitment and Retention

Goal: To staff and retain a talented, committed, and diverse membership for the Rockton Fire Protection District in an effort to continue the strong legacy of service to the community and sustain the organization for the future through tradition and progress.

The Rockton Fire Protection District has a proud history of being a professional paid-on-call fire department. With the demands on personnel increasing over the years it has become extremely difficult at times to retain paid-on-call personnel needed to serve the public. The Rockton Fire Protection District views our public perception as a very important indicator of the department’s long-term success. When the members of the department and the community perceive that the Rockton Fire Protection District is well managed and provides outstanding services, then it becomes our job to make sure their perception is the reality.

Retention and Recruitment Root Problems	
Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency, United States Fire Administration, 1998	
Source Problems	Contributing Factors
Time Demands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-income families and working multiple jobs • Increased training time demands • Higher emergency call volume • Additional demands within the department
Training Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher training standards and new federal requirements • More time demands • Greater public expectations of fire department’s response capabilities • Additional training demands to provide broader range of services • Re-certification demands
Increasing Call Volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire department assuming wider response roles • Increasing EMS call volume • Greater reliance by public on fire department services
Recruitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to evaluate recruitment goals to ensure the department retains the appropriate number of personnel to meet the needs of the community • Develop and maintain a program for testing, interviewing of new recruits

Action Plan– Recruitment and Retention

Target	Action	Anticipated Cost
Annual	Continue to evaluate recruitment goals to ensure the department retains the appropriate number of personnel to meet the needs of the community.	\$0
Annual	Continue to evaluate the recruit program for testing, interviewing of all new recruits and make appropriate improvements.	\$0
Annual	Implement programs to host annual open houses and attend community minded organization.	\$0
Annual	Continue implement programs to recognize and reward members for their dedication to service and duty.	\$1,000
Annual	Continue a marketing program in an effort to attract new recruits.	\$1,000

Section 4 – Health and Safety

Goal: To protect the health and safety of department members through effective training, education, programs, and management. Continue the development of policies and procedures that prevent injuries, illness, and maximize overall health.

Health and safety are of primary concern to all department members. Health and safety are affected by many factors including training, equipment, facilities, operating procedures, staffing, medical supervision, government regulations, environment, lifestyle, nutrition, as well as attitude, awareness, and perception.

The ability to serve as a firefighter is a privilege. Being able help others during a time of personal tragedy is the reward. Firefighters do what many are not able to do and what many others are not willing to do. The Rockton Fire Protection District is committed to maintaining the safety and well being of all department members.

Action Plan – Health and Safety

Target	Action	Anticipated Cost
Annual	Continue mandatory TB testing, and Hepatitis vaccinations.	\$1,500
Annual	Encourage members to take advantage of department provided health club membership. This includes establishing a department physical fitness health and wellness program.	\$7,000
Annual	Develop programs that provide regular fire safety, life safety and general safety messages to the community.	\$2,000
Annual	Driver training re-certification for all personnel who are Drivers/ Operators.	\$1,000
Annual	Provide respiratory fitness testing annually to encourage and support physical fitness, health, wellness and safety.	\$1,900

Section 5 – Training

Training SWOT Analysis	
<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for grants to assist in off-setting expenses • Knowledge/experience of training officers • Computer access and availability • Public perception of fire districts skills and abilities is good • Quality personnel 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of participation/attendance at training • Training in leadership development, driver operations, and special operations minimal to none • Greater demand in training creates larger impact on POC personnel • Limited training facilities/props/equipment • Lack of available space/acreage at current station location • Lack of adequate training documentation • Lack of master training plan
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased training-outside/inside • New training facilities/props/equipment • Creation of resource library to aid in comprehensive/organized trainings • Utilization of forms already created by OSFM/NFPA for tracking training activities • Utilization of drill plans/exercises from various established sources • Emerging technologies 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing budget restrictions • NFPA regulations • Ever increasing costs of equipment, etc. • Volunteer turnover • Injury/death due to “skill degradation” • Increased demand for services • Age of community increasing

Ongoing fire training is essential for Rockton Fire Protection District ‘s successful execution of its mission. It is also mandated by various organizations. The Rockton Fire Protection District training should be as often as necessary to ensure that members can perform their assigned duties in a safe and competent manner but no less frequently than specified by governmental bodies.

Rockton Fire Protection District must identify areas of need and develop training programs to assist its members to become more proficient in leadership abilities and advancement, emergency service delivery and customer service.

Goal: To allow for the necessary development and maintenance of fire fighting skills, a modern training facility should be built within the district.

The strategic planning committee identified the need for a training facility where fire suppression, EMS, technical rescue, extrication, hazardous materials, and classroom sessions may be utilized. Concentration will include but not be limited to such tasks as: hose advancement, interior firefighting skills, ventilation, multiple company operations and ladder training. Further training can include apparatus placement and hydrant connection. This committee believes that a plan must be created to generate

specifications and plans for a training facility within the Rockton Fire Protection District boundaries scaled to the needs of this organization. One of the consequences associated with the lack of a fire training facility and the low outbreaks of fires within our community is the loss of necessary skills and likewise the lack of ability to use them when a fire or specialized incident occurs. The previously stated realization does not occur due to lack of initial training, but because of a phenomenon referred to as "skill degradation." This phenomenon occurs due to reduction in the ability to perform skills that are not frequently practiced. Without any adequate reinforcement of periodic drills, especially in the area of interior attacks, skills often deteriorate over time. This plan might include a building such as that offered by Wesco, 911 or Werno-Herbison-Padgett (WHP) as long as they followed the recommendations of NFPA 1402. A training facility would aid in the development and maintenance of fire fighting skills, fire fighting rescue, and other skills needed.

The training facility should incorporate learning resources including textbooks, training aids, simulators, and audio/visual and multimedia presentation hardware. These resources will stimulate the educational process, thereby increasing the competency and effectiveness of the students.

Goal: Develop and implement an Officer Development Program to ensure that there is a strong nucleus to guide the Rockton Fire Protection District into the 21st Century.

Currently Rockton Fire Protection District has approximately 44 personnel on its roster. A high percentage of the senior, experienced personnel are approaching the age where they can be expected to retire in the next five to seven years. The district must address this impending loss of manpower and experience through a comprehensive officer development curriculum. Without this training the district will not be able to fill impending vacancies in the officer ranks and this will lead to an inability to adequately serve the community. With the creation and implementation of such a program, the Rockton Fire Protection District can provide entry-level personnel with general direction for acquisition of knowledge, experience, skills and abilities, to ensure preparation for a higher level of responsibility.

Goal: Implementation of comprehensive record keeping system to ensure records are as accurate and up to date as possible.

Implement a comprehensive record keeping system that identifies individual fire department personnel participation and compliance with mandated and elective training requirements. This will allow the Rockton Fire Protection District to all have complete and accurate records for every member of the organization and to monitor their activity and progress. This will also aid in improvement of the ISO rating, benefiting the taxpayers of the district.

Action Plan – Training

Target	Action	Anticipated Cost
2015	Fire Officer I program offered to Deputy Chiefs & Lieutenants	\$8,000
On-going	Assess current hardware and software needs	\$700
	Review current driver/operator certifications and training for baselines. Create standards and guidelines for driver program.	\$1,000
	Continuous Quality Improvement / review of record keeping process	\$0
	Schedule specialized training	\$3,000
On-going	Review and perform training inventory. Create projected list.	\$0
	Perform formal review of programs and modify as indicated to meet needs of the district	\$0
	Review levels of training for RFPD personnel	\$0

Section 6 – Apparatus / Equipment

Recent practice of the district has been to modernize its fleet, replacing older firefighting equipment with new, state of the art tools. While costs due to acquisitions are elevated due to a more frequent replacement schedule, overall operational cost of the fleet has been minimized by operating late model, modern equipment requiring minimal repair. More importantly, having modern equipment has lead to minimal down time and has made personnel more effective in performing their jobs by giving them the newest and best tools to work with.

Goal: To replace apparatus in an orderly, timely, cost effective manner to meet the requirements of the district.

Action Plan – Apparatus

The following table shows a recommended replacement schedule for major apparatus operated by the district. This schedule will need to be adjusted over time depending on obsolescence caused by multiple factors, including apparatus utilization, operational wear and tear, vehicle durability, NFPA requirements, upgrades necessitated by technology advances.

Vehicle	1401	1402	1404	1441	1445	1451	1461
Purchased	2007	1987	1989	2005	2008	1996	1999
Lifespan (yrs)	25	25	25	25	20	25	20
Next Purchase	2032	2015	2017	2031	2028	2026	2019
Estimated Replacement \$	\$1.1 million	\$535,000	\$600,000	\$1.2 million	\$50,000	\$1.8 million	\$60,000

Vehicle	1466	1478	1479	1C22	1C32	Car 1	Car 2
Purchased	2012	2000	2013	2008	2014	2008	2008
Lifespan (yrs)	20	25	25	7	7	6	7
Next Purchase	2032	2025	2038	2015	2021	2014	2015
Estimated Replacement \$	\$90,000	\$451,000	\$600,000	\$199,000	\$220,000	\$55,000	\$57,000

Section 7 – Communications / Computer Technology

Goal: To improve radio communications equipment providing safe and effective communications through the district.

Provide additional radio / repeaters / receivers in areas of the district. Research placing laptops / I pads in command cars & front line apparatus.

The fire district has often struggled with communications with traveling Northwest and Southwest of the fire district. Mobile radio communication is sufficient however when communicating on portable radio, communications to dispatch may be reduced or lost. This can be detrimental to firefighter safety during incidents.

Technology is available to aid fire units with mapping and locating areas in and outside the district. The use of pre-plans can also be useful when responding to incidents involving industry within the district. Pre-plans and sketch programs may be installed to aid the incident commander of target hazards with industry / businesses within the district.

Action Plan –Communications Equipment

Target	Action	Anticipated Cost
December 2014	Research and purchase radio equipment to enhance communications and firefighter safety. Continue to monitor communications equipment and make improvements where necessary.	\$60,000.00
2015	Research available programming and software to enhance response with mapping programs and preplanning target hazards in the district	\$0.00

Section 8 – Facilities

Identified through the SWOT analysis as a critical area of concern is the district’s physical facilities. Over the next several years there are areas of focus that should be addressed in order to prepare for adequate delivery of future services.

The district continues to experience a steady population growth, particularly in its South and Southwest sections. This growth, although occurring at a slow pace, is expected to continue. Response time, measured from time of call to time of the first unit on scene, to these outlying areas of the district is lengthy due to travel time. EMS response time to these areas just meets acceptable standards; fire response times fall short of NFPA guidelines for the same reasons outlined earlier in this plan in the section on “Staffing”. The department is presently just getting by with the level of service delivered to these areas only because of the relatively modest call volume to these locations. As housing units are built and population density increases in the South and Southwest portions of the district the department will be unable to deliver acceptable service without establishing a second station, which affords better geographic proximity to the location of the call. Exactly when call volume will require the building of this second station is unknown today; there are too many variables to accurately forecast this. What can be identified now is the general site for location of this station. While the need to build a second station is sometime in the future, the opportunity to secure land for this purpose is approaching. The district should soon turn their attention to acquire land suitable for locating a second station. This should be done before desirable locations are bought up by developers and are no longer available for fire department use. Either by outright purchase or donation can acquire Land for this purpose. Grant dollars may be available to assist with the cost of this project, especially if location of the second station is coupled with creation of a training facility.

Goal: *Plan for the future and the expansion of the district facilities to protect the safety of the personnel, handle ever-increasing demand for services and to provide timely response to all emergency incidents.*

Action Plan – Facilities

Target	Action	Anticipated Cost
On-going	Assess need for future fire station / facility	\$0

Addendum

Expanded History of the Rockton Fire Protection District

Rockton Illinois is located in the North central section of the State three (3) miles from the Illinois/Wisconsin Stateline. Rockton was incorporated in 1835. Steve Mack, a fur trader met and married Princes Hononegah. They settled on the South side of the Rock & Pecatonica Rivers, now known as Macktown. Today, there still stands the some of the original trading post.

Incorporated in 1835, the population of the Village of Rockton was less than 300. During the next 157 years the population grew at a very slow rate. Around 1993 the population began to explode to our current population estimated at over 7,500 within the Village limits. Today, the fire protection district covers an estimated 18,000 people in a covering 54 square miles.

The Rockton Village Fire Department was organized in 1908 after a disastrous Halloween fire in the 100 block of West Main Street on Halloween night in 1907 behind the Thompson-Baker grocery store. It has been noted that the fire could have been extinguished with a garden hose. However, the fire spread extremely fast and engulfed the South side of the street. This area was known as the "Stone Block". Fire departments from Beloit and Rockford were summoned to fight the fire due to the fact that Rockton had no fire department at this time. The Village of Rockton Fire Department was officially formed in September of 1908, and functioned until 1947. Equipment included only a 1937 International pumper. Rockton's first fire chief was Clayton Stiles. He reported to the elected officials of the Village.

In 1947, a fire was reported in the 2000 block of West Rockton Road. The Village would not allow the fire department to respond to the fire, in –turn, the building burnt down. As a result of the in-action of the Village there was action taken to form a fire district. This was achieved in 1947. The first president of the Board of Trustees was Carlton Williams. The first Fire Chief of the district was Merlin Wensel.

Board Of Trustees, Presidents:

When the Rockton Fire Protection District was formed in 1947, a three (3) member board was established. Those board members were appointed by the County Board Chairperson and served at his/her will. By referendum vote in 1990, the board changed from three (3) to a five (5) member elected at large board. The district has operated separate from the Village of Rockton since 1947.

Fire District Board Presidents:

Carlton Williams	1947-1970
William Payne	1970-1981
Stanton Phelps	1980's
Robert Turner	1990
Gary Reffett	1990-1991

William Campbell 1991-2009
Dennis Stien 2009 - Present

Fire Chiefs:

Village of Rockton Fire Department

Clayton Stiles was the first Fire Chief on record
Jack Lovelace "Wens" 1908-1947
Slim Boyendall,
Harry Beck
Laurel Graves

Rockton Fire Protection District

Merlin Wensel 4/1945 - 4/1970
John May (assisting) 1955
Robert Turner 1 / 1972 – 8 / 1978
Russ Patterson 8 / 1978 – 4 / 1979
Gary Reffett 4 / 1979 – 1 / 1980
Jim Gentz 6 / 1980 – 5 / 1986
Tom Marks 6 / 1986 – 1 / 1988
Randy Olson 6 / 1988 – 1 / 1989
Mickey Rykowski 1 / 1989 – 12 / 1994
Ronald E. Weavel 12 / 1994 – 1 / 2009
Kirk R. Wilson 2 / 2009 – Present

Fires & Rescues:

As with any fire department, the Rockton Fire Protection District has seen its share of major emergencies...be it a fire or major accident. The first major fire was at in the 100 W. Main Street. Others incidents include: United Methodist Church in 1926, Wagon Wheel Resort (besides the numerous minor fires from 1944, there had been over five (5) five-alarm fires fought before the complex was torn down in 2003. There were seven paper mill fires. One noted was the Rockton Paper Company in late October of 1909. There has been numerous residential and barns, Shopping Bag super market and the Rockton Inn fire.

In addition, the Rockton Fire Protection District has responded to area departments for assistance. Since the establishment of (MABAS-Division 8) Mutual Aid Box Alarm System, the Rockton Fire Protection District is more active than ever before. There has been response as far away as Utica, IL in 2004 after a tornado struck the small community and to New Orleans, LA. In 2005 to assist after hurricane Katrina torn apart the in-tire gulf coast region.

During the history of the fire protection district, many people have contributed to its growth, not only by providing the services, but also to those who taught our staff so that the educational growth of each person who has past through the doors is of the highest degree possible at the time. We honor each person so not to miss anyone.

Fire Stations And Fireman's Hall:

Rockton's first fire station and hall was located in the 200 West Main Street. Now known as Rockton Dental Care.

Rockton's second fire station was located at West Main and South Center Street. This station was constructed cost of \$58,000. In 1978, the fire station was sold to GTE, now Frontier.

The Rockton Fireman's Association for many years held one of the best fish dinners in the area every Friday. The Rockton Fireman's Association has been chartered since 1946. The history of the association, a concrete lintel stating "Rockton Fireman's Association 1947" was taken from the hall and is now located at the rear of station one.

In 1978 our current fire station was dedicated and open for business at a cost of over \$350,000. Located at 201 N. Blackhawk in Rockton its location has served the district very effectively.

In March 2011, the fire district finished a 1.6 million dollar addition to the current station adding a full training room to accommodate up to 50 persons, sleeping quarters for 6 members, a larger kitchen and day room, a turn out gear room, and an additional bay for apparatus.

Response Times:

Currently, average response times are good for both fire (7:29) and EMS (4:20). However, as the Village and district grows there must be in place a plan for expanding services to our citizens in a fashion that reflects a pro-active department.

Fire and EMS Vehicles:

Engines:

Rockton's first fire engine made its maiden response at 1:30 A.M. to the October 1909 fire at the Rockton Paper Company. (Documentation. November 16, 2006 Herald).

In both 1987 and 89 the district purchased an engine from 3D out of Shawano, WI. These units have been refurbished and serve the district today as engine 1402 and 1404.

At the Board of Trustees regular meeting in May of 2006 approval was granted to purchase a new rescue pumper at a cost of \$380,000 plus equipment. This is to replace a 1975 Howe/ Hendrickson pumper. The Howe unit cost \$38,000 in 1975.

The association purchased the Howe/Hendrickson in 2005 and donated it to the Joiner AR. Fire Department. In August 2014, the district approved \$528,000.00 to purchase a new Rosenbauer pumper to replace the 1987 3D Engine 1402.

Tankers:

The fire district is in possession of two 3500-gallon tanker units. 1478 is a 1999 elliptical tanker mounted on an International chassis. 1479 is a 2013 dry side (box) tanker mounted on an International chassis and cost the district \$296,000.00.

Aerial Ladders:

Our first aerial ladder was purchased used. Past Chief and Trustee Robert Turner found the 1960 International/Grove 75 foot straight aerial at West Dundee, IL. for \$10,000. It was in service until June 6, 1996 when the new Smeal 85 foot platform was placed in service at a cost of \$475,000 plus \$30,000 in equipment. This was Chief Weavel's first purchase as Fire Chief.

Ambulances: Today, we have two modern and fully equipped paramedic ambulances. Our latest purchase is a 2008 Horton.

Squads:

Squads better known as "the tool box". (The reasoning is that the unit carries a great amount of power tools such as Jaws of Life and much more). Rockton's first squad was formed in 1969 operating an old donated mail unit as its mode of transportation. Among the first staff members to beg, borrow and steal what they could to get the unit and make it work were: Sam Schafer, Ray Ramsby, Jim Griffin and Ron Bailor. Both Griffin and Bailor served the district as Trustees after their journey with the "squad". Under Chief Turner, the Fire District took on the responsibility of the squad in 1971. Ray Ramsby was Rockton's first EMT.

In 1980, a ¾ ton GMC carried a large box that served as a squad from 1980 to 1985. During this the heavy squad was a 14-foot walk-in on an International chassis.

In January of 2005, Rockton obtained its current squad from KME constructed at a cost of \$386,000. The unit is truly a heavy squad and carries a far greater amount of rescue equipment than our other squads did. Included are; water rescue, auto extrication, confined space and firefighting equipment. Its maiden run was a MABAS alarm to North Park on a working house fire.

Ambulances:

Rockton Fire prides itself on providing high quality EMS services to the community. Ambulances are replaced every 7 years due to their high use.

Command Vehicles:

The fire district has two (2) command vehicles. Command car-1 is assigned to the fire chief, while command car-2 is assigned to the duty officer.

Water Rescue and Recovery:

We have a 16-foot john - boat fully equipped. Additionally, we have four certified rescue divers.

Grass Rigs:

The district has two (2) pick up units that have been modified to function as a grass rig. In February 2012, the district approved to purchase a 2012 GMC pick up to be modified into a grass / brush vehicle.

Community Services:

All in all, fire history with the Rockton Fire Protection District has been known as a safe community. Our educational program has advanced since 1998 through the attendance at the National Fire academy. We have obtained a 35 ft. trailer for the purpose of better education to the citizens of our district. This unit was delivered in 2005 via a grant from FEMA.

Today, the educational opportunities are great for those that so desire to advance further than Basic Firefighter certification through the Office of the State Fire Marshall. With Board of Trustee action, our staff have been to: NIPSTA (Northern Illinois Public Safety Training Academy in Glenview, IL, Fire Department Instructors Conference in Indianapolis, Monroe and Tomahawk, WI, Meret, East Dubuque, Sauk Valley, Rock Valley Colleges and Champaign, IL, National Fire Academy programs at Emmetsburg, MD. from EMS to Public Ed. to Executive Fire Officer and many, many more.

Today's Community Services Division has work in conjunction with the Rockton Police to support the Bike Rodeo held here at the fire station. We also support our local Lions Club with their community Old Settlers Days event. Our Fire Prevention Week activities are greater than every before.

Emergency Medical Services:

Emergency Medical Services account for approximately seventy-five percent of our responses annually.

Since April of 1994, the District and OSF (St. Anthony Hospital) have had an agreement in place to provide the staff needed to man one EMS units. That contract stated that there be one (1) Paramedic on duty 24/7 with an EMT-I Monday –Friday 6 A.M. to 6 P.M. Acute Transport Services (ATS) took over the contract service January 2007 and staff as above except that the 12-hour position is contracted as Paramedic.

Associations:

The Rockton Fire Protection District is a member of many fire and EMS associations on the local, State, National and International level.

Rockton Fire Chiefs who have served on the executive board of the Winnebago Fire Chiefs Association are: Kirk Wilson; 2008 – 2011 / Interim Vice President in 2012, Ron Weavel; 1996 & 97, Mickey Rykowski; 1993-1995, Merlin Wensel; 1954, and Robert Turner 1959-1961.

Higher Education:

Today, we are fortunate to have a large number of staff members who have attained degrees from nationally recognized educational institutions. In addition, several members have or are currently working toward their AAS degrees in Fire Science.

Insurance Services Office (ISO):

ISO is an agency that rates a communities fire defenses on a scale form 1-to-10. One is the best and 10 is the lowest rating. From 1982 until 2000 Rockton's ISO rating was a (6) six in the Village and a (9) nine in the rural. The 2014 ISO survey awarded us a classification of (4) four in the Village, and a (4Y) four Y in the rural areas.

"This strategic plan is a tool to guide the district while striving to continue the goals of the organization. This plan must and will be reviewed to measure our accomplishments. We, as a team, will build on this plan for future development so that we remain a proactive fire protection district with high standards and superior fiscal management."

Kirk R. Wilson, Fire Chief