

GEORGIA FIRE SERVICE

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN (LONG-RANGE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM)

The following document, issued January 1, 2005 is composed of four sections:

Section I: Executive. Summary

Section II: Five-Year Strategic Plan

Section III: Advisory Committee Approved Project Plans

Appendix: International Association of Fire Chief's publication - A Call for Action - The Blue Ribbon Report *Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service*

GEORGIA FIRE SERVICE

FIVE YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN I.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Plan Document

The purpose of this document is to convey information regarding the present status of the Georgia Fire Service, herein after referred to as the Service, and to identify programs necessary to improve the Service over the next 5 years. The anticipated readership for the plan includes: Stakeholders (elected and appointed local, state, and federal government representatives and government department officials), members of the Georgia Fire Service, allied emergency responders, municipal and county associations, local, regional and national fire service associations, the business community and the general public.

The plan identifies all members of the Georgia Fire Service.

The Challenge Facing the Service

The Georgia Fire Service is suffering from public perceptions and stakeholder misunderstandings regarding the present status of the Fire Service. Government sponsored research conducted in 2004 indicates that there are many serious problems within the Service. Leading the list is inadequate training for personnel, incomplete readiness planning, inadequate firefighter equipment, outdated firehouses and vehicles, and serious problems with the noninteroperability of communication equipment.

FACT

Standards or guidelines already exist for training, certification, equipment, disaster response, fire suppression, rescue, mitigation, mutual aid and a host of other matters. In many Georgia fire departments, existing standards or guidelines are not followed for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, unavailability of funds, the lack of political will and the related exercise of leadership to accomplish funding. This has hurt the effectiveness of the Fire Service and placed the lives of Georgia citizens in jeopardy.

FACT

There is no public information program in Georgia designed to educate citizens and their elected leaders regarding the problems faced by the Fire Service and solutions offered by the Fire Service and allied organizations. There has been no movement to continually recommend remedies to serious problems faced by the Service.

FACT

The work to assure effective regional response plans, establishment of specialty teams identified through resource typing and included in readiness response plans, and uniform administration of a statewide mutual aid program all need to be greatly accelerated. Baseline measures for the state's All Hazards Councils with regard to standard operations and applicability to terrorist incidents have not been established.

FACT

There is no organized statewide effort to manage all the various human resources necessary to handle man-made and natural disasters. Training, drilling, simulated exercises involving potential emergency responders and a host of other institutionalized activities are essential to readiness planning. In addition, coordination is important in order to assure that there will always be adequate numbers of qualified personnel available for the protection of lives and property. Specificity regarding numbers of qualified and available personnel is required in achieving highly effective mutual aid efforts. Funds spent to develop local fire department and regional readiness plans cannot be effectively implemented without coordinated efforts and continuing education of personnel. Therefore, planning and training become the key ingredients in assuring vastly improved public safety in Georgia.

The Consequences of Inadequate Planning

To date, there has only been short-term planning, resulting in the purchase of equipment and vehicles supportive of fire department work. There has been little long-range planning beyond the immediate needs of local departments and public safety agencies within counties. Regional and statewide long-range planning is needed to address the critical issues that have been identified to achieve effective, enduring systems required to manage large-scale incidents. These critical issues include incident command training, general management training, firefighter training, firefighter safety initiatives, the ability to communicate between fire departments and the development and attainment of comprehensive mutual aid agreements. Systems and related requirements developed by the federal government (Incident Command System, National Incident Management System) encourage detailed planning and continual refinement of plans based upon changing local conditions. In the future, funds will not be allocated by the federal government to communities that have not produced comprehensive mutual aid plans.

What the Georgia Fire Service Wants To Do

The Service has identified the following goal areas, suggested initiatives in support of each goal area and started projects to accomplish priority programs over the next twenty-four months:

1. **Stakeholder Support** [Calls for an aggressive communication effort to educate and work with stakeholders. A project has been initiated to secure support from stakeholders.]
2. **Training** [Calls for attention to course offerings and course content for fire chiefs, firefighters, incident commanders and for increased involvement and cooperation with local training

officers. The plan includes recommendations for a 2004-2005 project. A training advisory committee has been formed].

3. **Readiness and Disaster Response** [Calls for regional response plans for every Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) AREA. Supports a major pilot program in GEMA Area 7 which includes: quantifying information regarding personnel and equipment available to handle serious incidents, defines specialty task forces required in early response and mitigation, addresses mutual aid with emphasis on effective statewide management/administration and operational baselines necessary to incident command, and encourages coordinated communication between personnel involved in disasters. The pilot work is underway and is to be accomplished between September 2004 and June 2005]
4. **Incident Communications – Radios & Computers** [Calls for information and specifications for communication tools necessary to standard operations and incident command and recommends cooperation with the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS Office of Interoperability and Compatibility)]
5. **Computer Technology – Equipment Specifications** [Calls for promulgation of computer and computer equipment specifications for equipment needed to meet broad communication needs among fire departments and related administrative units within the state A project has been outlined and a grant request has been made for a pilot program within GEMA Area 2]
6. **Research, Best Practices, Lessons Learned** [Calls for systems to track best practices, and lessons learned to assist planners. Calls for continual contacts made with the federally sponsored Lessons Learned Information Sharing program]
7. **Cooperation Between Organizations; Image and Networking** [Calls for a unified effort among participating organizations to support the 5 year plan and each annual implementation effort]
8. **Physical Facilities** [Calls for repair and improvements to fire station facilities and for construction of new training facilities]
9. **Fire Prevention, Awareness and Enforcement** [Supports State Fire Marshal's office and calls for the Fire Service to support specified statewide programs leading to better fire and life safety prevention in all communities]
10. **Program Funding** [Calls for professional efforts to secure program funding from local, state and national sources regarding priority programs]
- 11 **Fire Service Structuring** [Calls for attention to the future of the Georgia Fire Service as an organizational entity and to coordinated program development and implementation of long-range improvement plans involving organizations within the Fire Service.]
12. **Volunteers and Volunteer Fire Departments** [Calls for priority attention to the plight of volunteers and volunteer fire departments and identification of specific programs to support recommendations contained within the International Association of Fire Chiefs Blue Ribbon Task Force report]

13. **Employee Remuneration** [Calls for programmatic efforts to attain and maintain competitive wages and benefits]
14. **Physical Fitness and Wellness** [Calls for programs designed to keep firefighters physically fit]
15. **Private Sector Support** [Calls for new working relationships with the Georgia business community with special emphasis on critical infrastructure readiness and disaster response preparation]

Credits for content of the 5 Year Strategic Plan: 50 contributing leaders within the Georgia Fire Service are recognized in the plan. Fire service representatives received support from the U.S. Fire Administrator and the Executive Director of the International Association of Fire Chiefs.

Sources of information in preparing this plan:

- 1.) Information collected in 2003 from local fire departments within the state,
- 2.) Extrapolation of information from the 2002 U.S. Fire Administration Needs Assessment of the Fire Service in the U.S. including the 2004 Georgia Fire Service Needs Assessment counterpart document,
- 3.) Committee work and recommendations from Georgia Fire Service leaders and 2004 Fire Service project advisors,
- 4.) Interviews with recognized local Fire Chiefs, and selected members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs,
- 5.) Overviews of consultant reports (with emphasis on lessons learned) from the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building-Oklahoma City Bombing, World Trade Center and Pentagon terrorist attack tragedies,
- 6.) The following reports and publications: the Hart-Rudman Council on Foreign Relations report entitled - America-Still Unprepared, Still in Danger, the Century Foundation's Homeland Security Project report entitled - The States and Homeland Security - Building the Missing Link, and three U.S. Fire Administration publications: Emergency Response to Terrorism, Advocating Shared Responsibilities for Improved Fire Protection, and A Call for Action, The Blue Ribbon Report – Preserving and Improving The Future of the Volunteer Fire Service.
- 7.) International Association of Fire Chiefs 2005-2006 Strategic Plan
- 8.) National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) research publications: U.S. Fire Loss for 2003 (Karter), Large Loss Fires for 2003 (Badger), Firefighter Injuries for 2003 (Karter, Molis).

Plan prepared by: Cobb County Fire and Rescue Chief Rebecca (Becky) Denlinger, Consultants Tommy Morgan, Arleigh Greenblat and the staff of Northstar Consulting, Inc., Washington, D.C.

GEORGIA FIRE SERVICE

Five-Year Strategic Plan

(Long-range Improvement Program)

II. Five-Year Strategic Plan

The following plan has been designed as a blueprint for Georgia Fire Service programs over the next five (5) years. This plan has been prepared to assist local communities to achieve highly effective fire services as they meet their responsibilities for homeland security. The plan includes fifteen (15) strategic goals and four (4) projects for 2005 on the subject of Technology, Training, Readiness & Disaster Response and Research & Development. The plan has been developed under the auspices of the Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs acting as the lead organization for all Fire Service organizations in Georgia. It is part of the long-range planning effort to strengthen the Georgia Fire Service, with special emphasis on local fire department effectiveness, regional readiness; statewide mutual aid arrangements and program support for all Georgia firefighters, whether career or volunteer.

Georgia Fire Service Defined

The Georgia Fire Service (herein after referred to as *the Service*) is composed of statewide fire service organizations which include: the Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs, the Georgia State Firefighters Association, The Georgia Mutual Aid Group, the Georgia Fire and Emergency Service Joint Council, Georgia Fire

Investigators Association, the Georgia Fire Inspectors Association, the Georgia Public Safety Educator's Association, the Georgia Rural Fire Defense Council, the Georgia

Firefighters Burn Foundation, Inc., the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, the Georgia Fire Academy, the Georgia State Fire Marshal's Office, and the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council.

The Fire Service is a coalition of

organizations dedicated to statewide public safety, and as such, devotes energy and resources to the betterment of all segments of the Service in the pursuit of the public's well

being. Most leaders within the Fire Service are also leaders of their separate organizations, bringing strength to the coalition and expertise from the various disciplines within their institutions. The term *stakeholders* as used in this document refers to all elected and appointed local, state and national leaders in policy development or policy refinement positions, organizational leaders involved in public safety programs and governmental managers supportive of the Georgia Fire Service and Homeland Security.

This plan has been developed to involve Fire Service organizations, their staff members and members of participating organizations in the continuing design of action plans required to support initiatives ultimately approved by Fire Service leaders. It is the hope of the Fire Service that the efforts necessary to accomplishing the goals contained herein will further unite members of the entire Fire Service and strengthen their roles and the associations they support.

The Challenge

The Fire Service in Georgia, like its counterparts in other states, has long suffered from false public perceptions and stakeholder misunderstandings. For the most part, the public appears satisfied with fire services provided within their communities, though in many cases, deficiencies in planning, human resource management,

equipment, training, and facilities exist. Public support is often based upon general, positive images seen on television, and to a degree, as a result of interactions with fire officials or firefighters following emergencies. As a result, local government leaders in many parts of the State see little reason to allocate additional funds to bring their departments up to national standards, of which they may not even be aware. Unfortunately, many fire service managers and leaders who are in the best positions to champion local fire service improvements often do not do so because of potential political or employment consequences that may result from requesting additional funding.

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- ■ **Positive TV images mask underlying problems**
 - **Local leaders unaware of standards**
 - **Employment consequences for leading**
 - **Public education programs non-existent**
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National standards and guidelines exist for nearly every aspect of fire service delivery, from human resource management, training and certification, vehicle and equipment specifications, fire station layout and construction, and a host of other matters including the important issue of homeland security readiness planning. The Fire Service in Georgia faces serious problems in achieving these standards; unbeknownst to the citizens they serve. Furthermore, there is no program or effort underway in most areas to educate the public on these matters. The result of this information gap has resulted in substantial numbers of under-funded departments, firefighters who are not adequately trained, and a general lack of resources to develop, refine or otherwise support disaster readiness plans.

There are exceptions. Fire departments that are adequately funded (mostly in suburban areas) have enjoyed enthusiastic public support by creating solid relationships with their stakeholders and, in general, have been viewed by the citizens they serve as exemplary organizations. This is not the case for the majority of fire departments. Approximately sixty-seven percent of the firefighters in Georgia are members of volunteer and combination (part paid, part volunteer staff) fire departments that have been financially hard-pressed or even unable to meet basic operational needs.

To further complicate matters, when grant requests are fulfilled and dollars are attained as a result of special or one-time appropriations, those funds are often spent on the tools associated with structural fire fighting as opposed to tools needed to provide the broad range of services

required to support homeland security initiatives. In addition, fire service personnel must be trained and prepared to work in disciplines that are relatively new to the Fire Service, and for which little local training is developed, available, and affordable.

Strategic planning is imperative in this State of 159 counties and an enormous geographical area to cover. The effort required to plan, organize and communicate with all management personnel within the Service, (Fire Chiefs and their immediate staff members) is underway. Stakeholder support in the effort to bring fire departments up to Fire Service standards is the challenge most referenced by the most committed and enthusiastic supporters of the Service.

This plan calls for Fire Service approved standards in all areas identified as necessary to achieve exemplary, local fire services. The concept is to arm local fire service management with information to help them build support for internal improvements leading to a single outcome . . . to save lives and property in their communities. The program priority most referenced by Fire Service leaders regarding homeland security is to create regional and statewide emergency response plans that will establish deployment guidelines for personnel and equipment from local fire departments with the most effective and efficient methods to respond to man-made and natural disasters.

Public information dissemination and media relations are critical to implementation of this plan. All Fire Service managers and organizational leaders have a responsibility to reflect the needs and aspirations of the Service and to highlight progress or barriers to achieving progress.

Strategic Planning, Long & Short Range and Implementation

The long-range plan contained herein is for five years. Short-term planning is to be for one-year and each annual plan is to include only those components of the long-range plan considered to be priority items for the year in question. It has been suggested that the initiatives for each annual plan begin on January 1 and conclude on December 31 for each year. The long-range plan is to be reviewed and refined on an annual basis. While the long-range plan may not produce immediate benefits to local communities, the implementation efforts for each short-term plan should keep Fire Service leaders on target. Implementation of annual efforts, including successes and barriers on strategic plan implementation, will require continual communication with community leaders, Fire Service members, governmental agency management and, as necessary, the general public. The aforementioned groups will be asked to support all, or parts of, the strategic plan.

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- Long and short-term planning defined
 - All goal areas to be supported with action plans
 - Priorities set by Fire Service leaders
 - Five annual implementation plans to be followed
 - Community leaders to be appraised of progress

The goal areas indicated are to be supported with objectives and action plans. For the most part, action plans will be cast in the form of projects. The four projects included in this plan are priority items and anticipated to be of 12-18 months in duration. Two pilot projects were recommended in 2004. Four goal areas were identified that year and advisory committees established. Timetables to accomplish objectives and projects are to be set after funding sources are established.

Fire Service Planning Content — A Life Saving Proposition

On the national scene, in 2003, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the U.S. Fire Administration, with the support of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Homeland Security, brought together more than 200 fire and emergency service representatives from more than 100 organizations and departments to participate in a planning summit. The attendees produced a preliminary report that detailed initiatives and recommendations for drastically reducing firefighter fatalities and injuries. It is noted that there is a direct correlation between the recommended project initiatives and the array of standards promulgated by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) regarding safety measures necessary to protect firefighters. Work on firefighter safety is all-pervasive, ranging from the adequacy of the number of personnel responding to incidents, deaths involving motor vehicle accidents, condition of equipment and the general health and physical condition of personnel.

R. David Paulison, the U.S. Fire Administrator, requested support from local communities, states and fire service organizations across the country to help accomplish the objectives of the plan. Momentum is now building toward accomplishing the foundation's mission . . . to reduce firefighter deaths by 25 percent within 5 years and 50 percent within 10 years.

The work of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation on the project contains all the components associated with implementation of a strategic plan: vision, mission, goals, objectives, action plans and assignment of implementation responsibility.

By developing a five-year plan that contains a similar structure, the Georgia Fire Service will be positioning itself to better serve communities and to save the lives of those they serve and those who put their lives on the line for others.

Inadequate Planning - Consequences for Georgia

The Georgia Fire Service recently celebrated legislative success as a result of planning and involvement of all Service members. In 2003, Service leaders worked together to promote SB 169-2003, which proposed a law to authorize the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council to institute a program of improvement for fire departments that included a requirement for a minimal level of training for all firefighters within the state. The first part of the plan was to seek support from the Georgia Municipal Association and the Association County Commissioners of Georgia. In winning the support of these organizations, Fire Service representatives raised the issue of the legal liability that exists as a result of acts of co-mission and omission in fire suppression cases. This was done to bring home the importance of minimal training standards and requirements for all firefighters. Next, while meeting with legislators, advocates offered the legal liability rationale once again. Ultimately, the law was passed and signed into law during a year when little else was accomplished in the legislative session.

- Stakeholders paying more attention to risk management
- Stakeholders aware of potential liabilities
- Acts of omission and co-mission better understood
- Better communication with stakeholders necessary

Today, stakeholders are spending more time understanding liability risks and the cost of legal claims. Constant review of legal cases involving fire code compliance, the fire safety inspection process, adequate firefighter training, insurance ratings, and the capacity and capability of local

fire department resources are often complex and time-consuming. Every community will benefit when coordinated, well-developed information regarding risks of fire are communicated to stakeholders.

A comprehensive mutual aid system that is capable of delivering trained personnel, equipment, and vehicles requires quality data collection and detailed planning is needed. It is the view that statewide planning involving all areas of the state and leading to a high degree of regional cooperation should be one of the highest planning priorities for the Service. Fire service planning on a statewide basis that causes Fire Service organizations and their leaders to continually review local and regional disaster plans will result in a broad range of fire department services being made available across the State.

Through well-developed plans, fire departments from urban and suburban areas will be in a position to rely on the support of their rural, regional neighbors and, at the same time, offer those neighbors in-kind support. Currently, the areas of the State typically involved in robust regional emergency planning are those perceived as possible "target" areas for potential terrorist attacks. Other areas of the State may fall victim to natural disasters, as has happened time and again, yet many of those areas do not have in place the plans that will be needed if man-made disasters occur.

Short-range planning often results in uncoordinated efforts that produce less than satisfactory results. The purchase of state-of-the art fire response vehicles using federal dollars without adequate provision for on-going financial resources to maintain those vehicles is a result of short-range planning. Sophisticated equipment requires initial and on-going training of personnel, another matter that is not always taken into consideration. In recent months, certain special operational hazmat and search-and-rescue

response teams have been outfitted around the State. The emergence of these teams is the result of the State's analysis of gaps in the availability of needed services, leading to millions of dollars in federal grants. These teams are now in place within some Georgia communities and are greatly appreciated by those being served. The Fire

Service recognizes the need for ongoing training, certification and continual refinement of operating procedures for those who work with each other as members of specialty teams. If support for these teams does not occur, the teams will not be able to maintain their operational readiness, and the extraordinary achievement to create these units will fade from view.

- Short-term planning has focused on equipment purchases
- Short-term planning often produces less than satisfactory results
- Gap analysis leads to responsible expenditures
- Long-term planning encompasses natural and man-made disasters

Systems and related requirements developed by the federal government (Incident Command System, National Incident Management System) encourage detailed planning and continual refinement of plans based upon changing local conditions. Funds will not be allocated by the federal government to communities that have not entered into comprehensive mutual aid plans.

What Does the Georgia Fire Service Need?

There are fifteen major goal areas identified by the Georgia Fire Service. A goal area is established when a consensus is reached by the members of the Fire Service regarding critical programming. The speed with which each goal is accomplished is dependent upon support from

Fire Service stakeholders, Fire Service leadership, receipt of financial appropriations through local, state, and national government auspices and most importantly, support and understanding from the general public.

Long-range overriding goals are established to accomplish four main objectives:

- 1) Assure the entire Fire Service is prepared to support any man-made or natural disaster requiring coordination and deployment of resources.
- 2) Assure that every local fire department is brought into voluntary compliance with agreed upon standards for communication systems, vehicle and equipment purchase, basic personnel practices including comprehensive training, fire station physical plant integrity, fire prevention programs for the general public and other critical issues identified by the Fire Service and applicable to residential and business needs, especially in emergency situations.
- 3) Participate and exercise leadership within the emergency responder community through communication and collaboration with Fire Service counterparts; e.g., law enforcement, emergency medical service (EMS), transportation directors, the private sector, etc.
- 4) Continually identify and share critical infrastructure and target hazard information in each locale.

In addition, federal grant awards have not been specifically oriented toward helping fire service organizations develop strategic plans to address the development and coordination of training, certification, operational guidelines and systems to manage statewide special operational teams. The Fire Service is supportive of changes in future grant programs that emphasize planning and coordination efforts.

Sources of information for goal area selection and facts contained in this plan were based upon the following informational resources:

- 1.) Information collected in 2003 from local fire departments within the State,
- 2.) Extrapolation of information from the 2002 U.S. Fire Administration Needs assessment of the Fire Service in the U.S. including the 2004 Georgia Fire Service Needs Assessment counterpart document,
- 3.) Committee work and recommendations from Georgia Fire Service leaders and 2004 Fire Service project advisors,
- 4.) Interviews with recognized local Fire Chiefs, and selected members of the International Association of Fire Chiefs,
- 5.) Overviews of consultant reports (with emphasis on lessons learned) from the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building-Oklahoma City Bombing, World Trade Center and Pentagon terrorist attack tragedies,
- 6.) The following reports and publications: the Hart-Rudman Council on Foreign Relation report entitled - [America Still Unprepared, Still in Danger](#), the Century Foundation's Homeland Security Project report entitled - [The States and Homeland Security - Building the Missing Link](#) and three U.S. Fire Administration publications: [Emergency Response to Terrorism, Advocating Shared Responsibilities for Improved Fire Protection](#) and the 2004 white paper: [A Call for Action, The Blue Ribbon Report – Preserving and Improving The Future of the Volunteer Fire Service.](#)
- 7.) International Association of Fire Chiefs 2005-2006 Strategic Plan
- 8.) National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) research publications: [U.S. Fire Loss for 2003](#) (Karter), [Large Loss Fires for 2003](#) (Badger), [Firefighter Injuries for 2003](#) (Karter, Molis).

The Georgia Fire Service has identified the following fifteen goal areas for program development and implementation over a five-year period

Goal Area 1 - Stakeholder Support

This goal is considered to be one of the most important because of the political, financial and moral support required from legislators and other policy makers at all levels of the government; local, state, and national. This includes organizations and associations supportive of emergency response readiness and disaster response planning. The Fire Service also includes those with administrative responsibility in local, state, and national governmental agencies responsible for management of policies and programs supportive of emergency responders in general, and the Fire Service in particular.

The initiatives suggested for support of this goal include:

- 1) Attainment of proclamations, resolutions, and letters of support from stakeholders**
- 2) Regular, formal communications in the form of electronic newsletters to stakeholders**
- 3) Fire Service visits and face-to-face communications at stakeholder offices, board meetings and annual conventions**
- 4) Awards and other recognition for exemplary stakeholder support and especially at Fire Service member events, e.g., GAFC, GSFA, etc.)**
- 5) News releases on critical issues requiring stakeholder support**
- 6) Strengthening the relationship between the Fire Service and the Office of Homeland Security! Georgia Emergency Management Agency and the Georgia Fire Marshal's Office**

Greatly improved stakeholder relationships was the top recommendation of the Fire Service Executive Sessions held in 2002 and 2003. Since those meetings, the Fire Service solicited support and received letters and proclamations supportive of the long-range improvement program from the following:

- The Georgia Congressional Delegation - U.S. Congress - All Members
- The Georgia Senate
- The Georgia House of Representatives
- The Governor
- The Lieutenant Governor
- The Speaker of the House
- The Georgia Municipal Association
- The Association County Commissioners of Georgia
- The Georgia Homeland Security Task Force
- The Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police
- The Southeastern Association of Fire Chiefs
- The Georgia City/County Management Association
- The International Association of Fire Chiefs

Georgia State Statute



June 23, 2004

Carl Smith
President
Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs
P.O. Box 906
Savannah, Georgia 31402-0906

Tommy Whitaker
President
Georgia State Firefighters Association 50
Lincoln Rd.
McDonough, Georgia 30253

To the Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs and the Georgia State Firefighters Association:

We write to you in support of the Georgia Fire Service Long Range Improvement Program. We recognize the Georgia Fire Service as a coalition made up of the following groups: The Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs, the Georgia State Firefighters Association, the Georgia Mutual Aid Group, the Georgia Fire and Emergency Service Joint Council, the Georgia Fire Investigators Association, the Georgia Fire Inspectors Association, the Georgia Public Safety Educators Association, the Georgia Rural Fire Defense Council, the Georgia Forestry Commission, the Georgia Public Safety Training Center, the Georgia Fire Academy, the Georgia State Fire Marshall's Office, and the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council.

The Georgia Fire Service has exhibited leadership in the establishment of master plans to strengthen the statewide emergency response effort. The Service has completed and shared with us the first phase of their master communication program, which strategically incorporates local, county, state and federal leaders considered stakeholders in protecting the public from natural and man-made disasters. The Service has made communications between all levels of government within the state, paying special attention to emergency response mutual aid agreements, a prime objective in their Improvement Program. In addition, a series of project charters to deal with critical needs in the areas of technology improvement, training coordination, readiness and disaster response, and research and development have already been completed and approved.

We commend the efforts of the Georgia Fire Service and support the goals of their Improvement Program. We are certain their long range strategic planning will lead to increased public confidence and strengthened homeland security for all citizens in the state of Georgia.

Respectfully,

(GA-06)

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Representative Mac Collins (GA-08)

Representative Charlie Norwood (GA-09)

Representative Nathan Deal (GA-10)

Representative Max Burns (GA-12)

Representative D (GA-13)

Georgia State Statute
SECTION 1-1-1. The Georgia State Statute shall be the supreme law of the State. Any law inconsistent therewith shall be void. The Georgia State Statute shall be the supreme law of the State. Any law inconsistent therewith shall be void. The Georgia State Statute shall be the supreme law of the State. Any law inconsistent therewith shall be void.



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Goal Area 2 - Training

The training goal is considered critical to the advancement of the men and women of the Fire Service. The consensus is that three top priorities must be achieved:

- 1) Minimum training for all firefighters based upon standards promulgated by the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council (emphasis on implementation of SB 169-2003),
- 2) Broadly based management training for Fire Chiefs and their managers with curriculum emphasis on: leadership training, incident command, incident management team supervision, stakeholder relations, budget development (administrative line-item and program budgeting), legal liabilities, risk analysis and management, internal operational system development and refinement, annual work planning, labor relations, human resource management with emphasis on employee recruitment/retention, workplace diversity, individual performance relations, human resource management with emphasis on employee recruitment/retention, workplace diversity, individual performance planning, equipment purchase, supply purchase, communication system management, cooperative agreement development with emphasis on mutual aid, trend analysis and communication with supporting associations and organizations and,
- 3) Exercise of incident command system responsibilities and thorough understanding of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and applications. Emphasis to be on coordination of responsibilities and emphasize State approved policies, procedures, resolution of jurisdictional cooperation issues, communication requirements and protocol dissemination. The USFA has released a web-based Incident Command System self study, 2nd edition [helps with understanding NIMS compliant ICS]

Training Goals:

- Minimum training for all firefighters
- Management training for all Fire Chiefs
- National Incident Management System (NIMS) training

Noted is one goal implementation matter that requires early attention. Training officers at the state and local levels are considered vital to the conduct of training activities. It is imperative that formal agreements exist between State training agencies and local training officers in order to assure uniform and basic curriculum content, uniform application of instructional standards and the most cost-effective methods to deliver courses. Due to the fact that training officers are in a good position to offer valuable information on the aforementioned matters, it has been suggested that in the future, they be included on Fire Academy or Public Safety Training Center advisory committees.

It is also important to note that newly approved courses, offered by the U. S. Fire Administration (USFA) and the National Fire Academy, include the Introduction to Unified Command for Multi-Agency and Catastrophic Incidents, All Hazards Incident Management, and Command and General Staff Functions in the Incident Command System. States and urban areas can use allocated Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funding to conduct or attend these approved courses. Additionally, states and urban areas can now use this funding to reimburse overtime and backfill costs associated with attending these courses.

Communications with Georgia stakeholders regarding the importance of training is imperative. Many high-ranking government officials do not know that thousands of Georgia firefighters, most of whom are volunteers serving in small communities, lack formal training in structural firefighting, the most basic service the volunteer fire service provides. While many firefighters have received some type of training, most lack certification in structural firefighting. An

estimated 27 percent of fire department personnel involved in delivering emergency medical services lack formal training in their duties. In the majority of Georgia fire departments, rescue personnel are not certified to the level of basic life support.

An estimated 40 percent of fire department personnel involved in hazardous materials response lack formal training in those duties; the majority of them serve in smaller communities. In 80 percent of fire departments, personnel involved in hazardous materials response are not certified to the operational level. Of fire department personnel involved in wildland firefighting, an estimated 41% lack formal training in their duties.

In summary, there are critical firefighter training and certification needs in Georgia communities of all sizes.

The initiatives scouted for achievement of this goal include:

- 1) **institutionalizing Fire Service advisory services to all state and regional training programs to assure strategic plan priorities are followed,**
- 2) **Systematizing assessment of training results and offering suggestions on an annual basis for improvements to curriculum offerings,**
- 3) **Advising on structure and accessibility of course completion data necessary to state and regional mutual aid administration and incident commanewith emphasis on NIMS.**
- 4) **Pilot program development of training systems utilizing cost effective measures, with emphasis on computer use as part of coursework and test taking by computer once security problems have been resolved,**
- 5) **The 2004-2005 project containing specific, achievable objectives.(see below)**

Goal Area 3 - Readiness and Disaster Response

The 9/11 Commission Report (page 314) states the following:

"While no emergency response plan is flawless, the response to the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon was mainly a success for three reasons: [first], the strong professional relationship and trust established among emergency responders; second, the adoption of the Incident Command System; and third, the pursuit of a regional approach to response. Many fire and police agencies that responded had extensive prior experience working together on regional events and training exercises . . ."

A critical component of long-range Fire Service strategic planning is disaster readiness planning. Disaster plans take into consideration facts regarding population centers, critical infrastructure, food, water and medicine distribution, emergency housing, water supply for fire services, medical treatment centers, roadway management and transportation issues, supply lines, coordinated communication systems and clearly written processes and protocols as well as other important aspects of public safety management. In order to be prepared for response to a large-scale incident, it has been suggested that every Fire Chief must:

1. Become fully knowledgeable with the components of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS)*
2. Participate in disaster planning efforts, preferably in the geographical areas to be served
3. Have been provided with information to fully understand how to continually refine readiness plans based upon changing conditions
4. Benefited from disaster response "lessons learned" in other parts of the country.
5. Participated in mutual aid planning, training and exercises.

This goal area addresses the need for every Georgia community to support a regional response system. Baselines for each operating component contained in a given system should be clear and communicated to incident command. Local plans should complement and otherwise support response systems crafted with the help of local fire department management and allied emergency responders. Each participant in a planning effort should fully understand their responsibilities in supporting disaster response

plans. Each local plan should address the specifics of mutual aid with adjoining communities and reflect the standard content of

statewide plans. Plans should include contact information for those required to serve as incident commanders where a large-scale incident response may be required. Methods to ensure effective communications between fire

department managers and managers within the allied emergency response community should be identified. The process to be used by fire departments in notifying the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) regarding incidents and carefully following communication requirements applicable to incident command and the use of GEMA support organizations (Georgia Mutual Aid Group, Private Contractors, etc.) needs to be clarified.

- Every Georgia community part of regional response plan
- Baselines for each component of response plans by necessity
- Entire emergency response community works on plan
- Effective communication system an overriding consideration

Also, the communication process necessary to assure that an entire emergency response community is reached on a timely basis needs to be fully understood. Such procedures should be agreed upon, placed in writing and continually updated. The importance of building solid relationships with the business community needs to be underscored. It is noted that a majority of the critical infrastructure in the State is owned by the private sector, and for that reason alone, cooperative planning and training is of critical importance. The private sector is also often involved in efforts to return a community to normal function.

NIMS should be understood and the subject matter contained within the document should be supported by potential incident commanders. Links to websites offering NIMS training opportunities and common files of command sheets for use at incident scenes are to be offered on Fire Service-approved web sites. Encrypted web sites or other means to access guidelines, protocols, maps and other vital information are necessary. Standardization of stand alone, interoperable communication equipment remains the highest priority in this goal area.

Protective clothing, respiratory equipment, thermal imaging cameras, chemical and biological testing equipment and a host of other emergency responder aids are to be addressed under this goal area. Continual refinement of minimal operating standards and specifications for equipment are also part of the goal area.

The initiatives suggested for achievement of this goal include:

A plan to attain appropriate safety gear for all personnel in every department (basic safety gear as defined by the Fire Service), basic state- of-the-ad functional apparatus (as defined by the Fire Service), and fire station facilities that closely approximate basic Fire Service standards,

2) Development of a white paper proposing a well- defined statewide mutual aid administrative program that requires no fees (e.g, GMAG membership fee) and offers a comprehensive mutual aid agreement template compliant with federal guidelines,

Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) or GEMA funding of a pilot program on readiness and disaster response in GEMA Area 7 with special emphasis on quantifying information necessary to incident command (personnel and equipment, establishing the composition of each specialty task force, standard communication protocols, etc,) The outcome of the pilot program should result in a portable template for disaster response planning that can be adopted by all Georgia All-Hazards Councils and made applicable within all GEMA Areas [founded 911/04]

- 4) Funding for a mutual aid administration program that can monitor the location and status of all vehicles, apparatus and equipment,
- 5) Funding for a project on the identification of all special-teams personnel, by area, who can be deployed when needed (accurate, continually updated database),
- 6) An information program requiring a thorough explanation of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MAIMS) and how it will benefit local fire departments. (See Goal Area 3 - Readiness and Disaster Response).*
- 7) identification of a liaison to the NIMS Integration Center (NIC) as part of the effort to fully support NIMS.

* The International Association of Fire Chiefs issued a memo on the responsibilities of state and local NIMS compliance. DHS expectations regarding NIMS are clear. Local compliance with NIMS by 2006 will be tied to federal funding.

Goal Area 4 - Incident Communications – Radios & Computers

This goal area is critical to every aspect of fire service work and especially homeland security support. Fire departments do not have enough portable radios to equip more than half of the

State's emergency responders. This is a particular problem in small communities. Only 25 percent of fire departments can communicate on scene with all of their public safety partners at the local, state and federal levels. Forty percent of all fire departments

lack internet access, an extremely important matter when attempting to follow incident command guidelines, protocols and critical information.

Incident Communications:

- Only 25% of fire departments can communicate on scene with necessary public safety partners
 - 40% of all fire departments lack internet access
 - Computer technology underutilized
 - Master Plan for computer utilization required
-

To date, there is no perfect portable radio communication system. Even if funds were available to purchase the best that money could buy for every community, there would be no guarantee that a given system could achieve 100 per cent efficiency. Radio interoperability for the fire service and allied emergency responders is a major challenge for every emergency management agency. Land-based systems requiring towers for 800 MHz radios are in some locales, mobile

vehicles with the capability to effectively handle multiple frequencies are now being utilized (they are in short supply) and the old, but reliable, uhf/vhf systems are still being used.

The Fire Service has a responsibility to support a statewide radio compatibility master plan, not only for fire and rescue work, but for all allied emergency responders. Technological advances make it difficult for even the best planners to reach solid conclusions on this subject. The problem is that very few Fire Service leaders are aware of any master plan on this subject, even though it is the most written about issue in every report on lessons learned and readiness preparation. While State planning exists on the subject, most of the leaders within the Fire Service are unaware of plan funding, implementation activities, timetables, evaluation criteria, pilot projects or related work. The same holds true for evaluations of systems that have been installed within the last 24 months.

On another important issue, advances in computer technology are not being fully utilized by the Fire Service. In addition to ever increasing administrative workloads within a substantial number of fire departments, high capacity computers are necessary for planning, reading geographic imaging systems (GIS) computer generated maps, disaster simulation exercises, and web-based training. Rugged computers for incident command vehicles are also necessary. Wireless linking between computers, satellite access through special links, and a host of other technological innovations, when put to full use, could save thousands of lives. Vital information on the location and qualifications of firefighters in a region, available firefighting equipment and other data that has been classified and stored on a central database is a requirement for quality incident command work, therefore, data development, data access and encryption systems are all subjects of long-range planning.

The initiatives suggested for achievement of this goal include:

- 1) Collaboration with the Georgia Technology Research institute, national and state fire service organizations and private sector technology consultants to ascertain cost effective methods to design and manage Fire Service databases,**
- 2) Professionally conducted surveys of fire departments to determine present status of computer technology applications,**
- 3) Pilot program work similar to the Wilson, North Carolina Fire Department's technology model (GIS based tech. system utilizing geospatial information),**
- 4) Closer liaison with the Georgia Office of Homeland Security and GEMA on the issue of the portable radio challenge,**
- 5) 2005 project work as developed by the Fire Service Advisory on Technology Improvement**
- 6) Liaison with the new ODP Office on Interoperability**
- 7) initiation of an information-sharing program approach for target hazard preplan, incident command approaches, etc., between GEMA areas and the All Hazards Councils.**

Goal Area 5 - Computer Technology – Equipment Specifications

A rationale for providing information age, state-of-the-art computer tools to Georgia fire departments is no longer necessary. The computer issues confronting fire department management deal with computer capacity, speed, connectivity, software designed to meet the multi-faceted needs of homeland security planners and training of personnel to manage data,

understand systems and operate computers. Unfortunately, some computer systems have been purchased on the basis of cost alone, without serious consideration to Fire Service requirements, specifications and future needs.

The Fire Service has a responsibility to set minimal specifications for servers, desktop and laptop computers as well as printers, internet access requirements and operator training.

A permanent committee needs to be established to continually ascertain fire department needs and track advances.

A communication outreach effort by the Fire Service to the technology oriented business community should be considered as an important part of a statewide effort to bring about acceptable levels of computer supply and support. Georgia should be a model state for others to emulate

because computers are an important component in emergency response communication systems. State resources like the Georgia Technology Authority could be helpful to the Fire Service regarding such a program.

Outreach work on acquiring hardware should not negate the role Fire Service leaders should play in establishing standards and specifications for software, internally developed and controlled databases and on-line training opportunities for firefighters.

The initiatives suggested for achievement of this goal include:

- 1) **identification and selection of Fire Service technology oriented members, governmental agencies and educational institutions specializing in computer technology,**
- 2) **Meetings with experts in the field to develop specifications and to recommend system configurations (emphasis on equipment compatibility),**
- 3) **Interaction with Fire Service representatives in adjoining states on computer communication compatibility,**
- 4) **Meetings with computer manufacturers and system designers to assess advances in technology and future cooperation in attaining equipment.**

Goal Area 6 - Research, Best Practices, Lessons Learned

Knowledge regarding survey report outcomes, e.g., [A Needs Assessment of the Fire Service-Georgia, 2004](#) and regular communication with agencies offering vital information for Georgia planners [DHS/SLGCP (State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness) LLIS Lessons Learned Information Sharing] and utilization of information regarding priority legislation [International Association of Fire Chiefs and International Association of Firefighters] is critical to strategic planning. Fire service planning requires continuing refinements to short and long-term plans. Technological advances alone bring about dramatic changes in plans based upon information known at the time a given plan is developed.

-
- **Computer systems have been purchased on the basis of cost alone, without serious consideration to Fire Service requirements**
 - **Fire Service outreach to IT business community recommended**
 - **Fire Service should set minimal specs for all purchasing agents**
 - **Minimum software requirements should be established**
 - **Database creation, management and access critical to incident command**
-

Carrying out the responsibility to achieve legislative victories and preserve hard won policies and funding mechanisms often becomes a barrier to addressing big picture items such as dramatic changes in management-labor relations, serious concerns facing the management of volunteer fire departments, the personnel retention issue, and the all-pervasive training challenge.

A strategic planning unit within the Fire Service is necessary. An initiative in this goal area would be to track and disseminate information resulting from annual evaluation of effort, fact-finding, trend analysis and member opinions. The concept is to assure that fire service leaders remain on top of current needs, trends, information necessary to both short and long-term planning including assessments of local and state agencies and their actions in support of the Fire Service program.

Constant review:

- Survey outcomes from agencies and national associations
- Best practices and lessons learned
- Big picture items need to receive full attention
- Strategic planning unit recommended

The initiatives suggested for achievement of this goal include:

- 1) **Establish regular communications with administrator of LLIS Lessons Learned Information Sharing program,**
- 2) **Create a strategic planning committee for the Fire Service,**
- 3) **Export executive summaries of vital information to Fire Service leaders via Internet,**
- 4) **Conduct 2004-2005 project on research and development priorities to support implementation of the 5 year plan**

Goal Area 7 - Cooperation between Organizations; Image and Networking

This goal is necessary to assure long-term cooperation and productive relationships between Georgia Fire Service organizations. The charters, articles of incorporation and by-laws of the three most recognized organizations within the Georgia Fire Service: the Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs, the Georgia State Firefighters Association and the Georgia Mutual Aid Group reflect genuine organizational support for public safety as well as the interests of their individual members. [note: GMAG is not a membership organization. It does have fire departments and other agencies as members] If the 2003-2004 year was any test of cooperation between the groups, there was no question that all passed with exemplary performance ratings. SB 169-2003, which, as of July, 2004, brought about new authority for the Georgia Firefighter's Standards and Training Council and set minimum training requirements for all firefighters, was fully supported by all three organizations and as a result, passed by a unanimous vote of the Georgia Legislature.

The four top 2004 projects for the Fire Service were staffed with advisors recommended by each of the organizations. The cooperation of the teams and their work resulted in a substantial contribution to the long-range planning effort and are reflected in the, committee-approved project plans in Section III of this document.

The implementation of any master plan rests with committed leadership and therein exists a formidable challenge for the Georgia Fire Service. The questions regarding ongoing organizational cooperation become:

- How can the cooperating organizations keep the long-range goals and supporting action plans at the center of their programmatic efforts?

- What should be done to assure that new leaders within each organization regularly collaborate to assure that all organizations fully support the long-range plan?

The images of all three organizations could stand some improvement. Interviews with present and future leaders indicate that progress in building membership is now evident. Whatever has existed in the past regarding relationships, program goals, conference content and public relations efforts should be set aside and a collaborative effort undertaken. After the five year strategic plan is adopted, those government agencies and elected officials who interface with the organizations will realize that the *speaking with one voice* concept encouraged by Fire Service leaders is proof they are dealing with a formidable segment of the emergency response community that is well organized.

Suggestions for organizational refinements:

GAFC could develop two or three recurring themes that would continually appear on web-pages, publications and meetings. Those themes could underscore the need for cooperation between leadership, management, personnel and

stakeholders and why the attention to fire chief training will be so important in years to come, especially for incident command.

Regarding GSFA, more balance is needed in

publications to convey that programs are in place to improve field conditions, e.g., nearly 1/4 of all Georgia firefighters need self-contained breathing

apparatus (SCBA), and 37% do not have personal alert safety devices (PASS). The *three or less firefighters on an initial response vehicle issue* vs. the recommended four, should continually receive attention both from GSFA and GAFC. A joint project with GAFC on safety issues regarding firefighters has been suggested.

- 100% membership for both GAFC and GSFA critical to policy development
- All Fire Service organizations need to stay focused on agreed upon goals
- Images of associations need polishing
- Role of GMAG needs clarification
- Speaking With One Voice essential

The role of GMAG and its importance to mutual aid should be a concern to the entire Fire Service. For example, GMAG should be considered as an administrative arm of GEMA with a specialty in the development and administration of mutual aid pacts including centralized data including personnel and equipment availability and potential resource deployment. GMAG should strengthen its reputation as an effective informational resource for incident command. GMAG should have working knowledge of local disaster plans and compliment the work of local and area planners as well as incident commanders. Every community in the State should be served by GMAG. GMAG should be staffed in line with their statewide administrative responsibilities and financially supported through state government auspices. GMAG should maintain day-to-day working relationships with GEMA and the GEMA All Hazards Councils. Future GMAG work should be guided by the results of the GEMA Area 7 pilot.

While great strides in joint efforts have been accomplished in the last 18 months, GAFC and GSFA should concentrate their efforts on support of major initiatives jointly agreed upon by both organizations. This means joint staffing of committees, projects and pilot programs. Participating members of both organizations should be continually recognized for their contributions within official publications and at official events. All communication venues should be reexamined for both content and member appeal. Special communications with stakeholders are in order. Conference planning should take into consideration yearly goals and conference workshops

should support and reinforce program implementation strategies. Far more attention should be given to members involved in contributing to the overall success of the Fire Service and their organizations.

A closer working relationship with the International Association of Fire Chiefs has been suggested. Promotion of membership in the organization and support for their programs directly benefits fire department management. The research, forums, contacts and legislative reforms supported by the IAFC strengthen the Georgia Fire Service.

GAFC and GSFA should be striving for 100% membership participation. As champions of strategic plan program content directly benefiting their individual members, each organization should be highlighting their accomplishments and continually educating their members on the reasons why the Georgia Fire Service is striving to be the best service in the United States. This goal may be one of the most challenging. It should be a strongly held viewpoint by all leaders that speaking with one voice and on behalf of more than 30,000 association members will be the secret to Fire Service success. Recently, the entire Georgia delegation of the U.S. Congress signed a support letter for the Service based, in part, on the fact that the Fire Service was unified and goal oriented. The political ramifications of a unified Fire Service should not be overlooked. If each member could count on a spouse, or a friend, and only one voting age member of the family, the Fire Service could produce 100,000 votes for a state-wide candidate or generate extraordinary attention with a petition to support a legislative initiative! The collective strength of a cohesive Fire Service with clear vision should not be underestimated.

The initiatives suggested for achievement of this goal include:

- 1) Highly organized, well-developed membership campaigns for both GAFC and GSFA,**
- 2) Recommendations to GEMA for funding of GMAG based upon a clear statement of GMAG responsibilities, and a campaign to communicate the outcome of the new arrangement to all local communities,**
- 3) Review of content and layout for home pages, newsletters, and publications for both organizations by an ad hoc committee with help from a communications expert,**
- 4) An increase in individual and organizational recognition programs with special emphasis on stakeholders and association leaders.**
- 6) Closer working relationships with other associations involved in emergency response, and specifically, the Georgia Association of Emergency Medical Services, the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, and the Georgia Sheriffs' Association.**

Goal Area 8 - Physical Facilities

A public information program is necessary to educate the public and stakeholders regarding the condition of fire stations in the state. In 2004, nearly 45% of all fire stations were assessed as substantially below national standards. Non-existent ventilation systems, back-up emergency power, heating and A/C systems, space to house and maintain vehicles, emergency supply storage space, and personnel support facilities were deemed to be inadequate and/or outdated in many jurisdictions.

Studies indicating the suggested locations of new fire stations in order to achieve response time guidelines offered by the U.S. Fire Administration have received little attention by city planners. A systematic approach to dissemination of

information on the construction of fire stations does not exist. A related matter on the issue of adequate staging areas necessary to regional response receives little attention. Fire officials are often uninformed about the specifics of new

construction plans in their own communities. Fire officials have reported that their lack of

involvement in new construction planning has, in a number of cases, led to serious logistical problems resulting in loss of fire department effectiveness. Standards for response times to fires and recommended fire station placement regarding residential and commercial building locations have been developed and should be used by community planners.

- Condition of fire houses below national standard
- Location of new facilities remains an issue
- Burn (live fire) training facilities needed
- Regional training centers (for all emergency responders) needs feasibility study

On another priority issue, burn (live fire) facilities necessary to firefighter training are needed in a number of rural locations. Volunteer firefighters are not in a position to travel long distances for training. Communities relying on volunteer service are often in no position to reimburse volunteers for loss of salaries and benefits as a result of taking unpaid leave from regular employment to travel to such facilities.

Another major point has been overlooked on the aforementioned subject. When a disaster strikes, (2004 California forest fires) thousands of firefighters have to be mobilized. Waves of firefighters and back-up personnel are required. Live fire training becomes an important matter regarding how such personnel are assigned in critical situations.

It has been suggested that firefighter training facilities should be part of proposed regional public safety training centers serving the entire public safety family (Law Enforcement, Fire Service, EMS, etc.). Bringing training centers closer to those who need to be trained, certified and recertified needs to be addressed.

The initiative suggested for achievement of this goal:

Create a special Fire Service task force on facilities with priorities on fire station improvements, staging areas, establishment of additional burn facilities, and the construction of regional public safety training centers.

Goal Area 9 - Fire Prevention, Awareness and Enforcement

Involvement of local fire departments in fire prevention is valuable from two major standpoints: 1.) it has been proven that an informed public benefiting from local fire department educational programs will act responsibly to dramatically decrease incidents of fire; saving lives and property and, 2.) comprehensive fire prevention efforts bring fire personnel into community organizations and classrooms causing future citizens and their parents, community leaders, and professional educators to fully understand the importance of fire prevention.

Fire code development, inspections, and enforcement are important components within the fire prevention, awareness and enforcement arenas. The statewide minimum fire codes and standards

in Georgia establish the minimum standards for all construction and related activities except for one and two family dwellings. These adopted codes and standards are under constant review by the Fire Service. Fire Service representatives compare Georgia's adopted codes and standards to national codes and standards as part of the ongoing code refinement process. The State Fire

Marshal's Office has taken a lead in recommending code refinements in Georgia.

The Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council and the Georgia Fire Academy require

input from the Fire Service as training and certification programs are refined and

strengthened. Fire prevention as part of training for all fire personnel is a high priority for the Fire Service and an important component of management training and local fire department program planning.

- New dimensions to traditional fire prevention programs have been added
- Fire prevention (new dimensions) as part of management training is required
- Product transmission pipeline ID is an example of high consequence area attention remains a top priority
- 'School safety

The Georgia State Fire Marshal's Office is working with the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM). The mission of NASFM is to protect life, property and the environment from fire and other hazards. NASFM members are usually the most influential fire safety officials in the various states.

NASFM is providing guidance to local first responders regarding the identification of High Consequence Areas (HCA's) for product transmission pipelines. In 2002, the Pipeline Safety Improvement Act was passed and approved. The Act calls for increased standards for pipeline safety. As part of the law, pipeline operators are required to identify areas along their product transmission lines where people are likely to congregate. The pipeline operators are being urged to consult public safety officials, who typically have an in-depth understanding of the communities they serve. NASFM was contracted by USDOT Office of Pipeline Safety to develop training aids to assist local officials in understanding their responsibilities and liabilities.

Attention to school safety is a top priority for the Georgia State Fire Marshal's Office. A coordinated terrorist attack on Georgia schools would paralyze affected communities and have a chilling effect on the State. Beyond terrorism, schools face a long list of potential threats to the well-being of children and adults within their facilities. Administrators report there is confusion and frustration as to what, why and how they can make their schools safe based upon the limited resources they have.

In late 2000, NASFM sought to investigate causes of the 5,500 reported major school fires. This inquiry resulted in a grant proposal to the Federal Emergency Management Agency to recommend and test no-cost and low-cost approaches to improved school fire safety. The events of September 11, 2001, changed how the public safety community viewed its challenges. In subsequent consultations with the new Department of Homeland Security, NASFM was encouraged to include public health, environmental and law enforcement dimensions to the program and NASFM's school fire hazards project was extended to address a broader range of hazards in schools.

The Safe & Secure Schools (S3) Project is designed to help schools achieve greater levels of safety, security and health through a multi-hazard approach to reducing and managing risks. S3 will assist schools in identifying and addressing risks through three types of resources: 1) A decision tool to help school administrators as well as state and local school boards to prioritize safety and security needs, corresponding technologies, performance recommendations, best practices and other measures effective in reducing risks; 2) A set of communication resources to help school systems demonstrate positive safety actions taken, thereby building public confidence in the system; and, 3) Guidance on safety and security budget priorities, including grant information and assistance to help schools afford improvements recommended by S3.

Juvenile fire setting intervention and prevention is being addressed by a project started by NASFM and has led to a partnership between the Georgia State Fire Marshal's Office and the Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation. Together, these organizations are working with the U.S. Department of Justice and NASFM to bring to Georgia a new intervention program that will bring together professionals from the fire service, mental health, social services, education and law enforcement to build a strong coalition to assist local communities with the issues of juvenile fire setters. This project will also develop programs leading to a coordinated effort in understanding life threatening behaviors. The hope is to reduce and eliminate the serious problems associated with juvenile fire setters.

The U.S. Fire Service Needs Assessment of 2002 asked specific questions of fire departments regarding their fire prevention efforts. Listed is subject matter content used in assessment work:

Which of the following programs or activities does your department conduct?

- A. Plans review
- B. Permit approval
- C. Routine testing of active systems (e.g., fire sprinkler, detection/alarm, smoke control)
- D. Free distribution of home smoke alarms
- E. Juvenile fire setter program
- F. School fire safety education program based on a national model curriculum
- G. Other prevention program (specify)

Who conducts fire code inspections in your community?

- A. Full-time fire department inspectors
- B. In-service firefighters
- C. Building department
- D. Separate inspection bureau
- E. Other (specify)
- F. No one

Who determines that a fire was deliberately set?

- A. Fire department arson investigator
- B. Regional arson task force investigator
- C. State arson investigator

- D. Incident commander or other first-in fire officer
- E. Police department
- F. Contract investigator
- G. Insurance investigator
- H. Other (specify)

The questions above provide a checklist and an agenda for the creation of a Fire Service committee to bring about a uniform, basic approach for fire prevention programs throughout the state. Communication with community leaders regarding fire prevention at the local level will also allow Fire Service personnel to discuss related topics within this five year strategic plan.

Initiatives suggested within this goal area:

- 1) **Creation of a Fire Service advisory committee to the State Fire Marshal's Office on the subject of Fire Prevention with priority attention to:**
- 2) **Strengthening public awareness programs**
- 3) **Strengthening efforts to provide guidance to school officials in the areas of safety, security and health (risk analysis, budget development, safety programs, grant opportunities, etc.)**
- 4) **Strengthen programs designed to dramatically decrease the number of juvenile fire setters**
- 5) **Support High Consequence Safety Programs in cooperation with government agencies. Place priority attention on the Pipeline Safety improvement Act during FY 2005 and prioritize critical infrastructure issues to be included in the 2006 Fire Service Strategic plan.**
- 6) **Co duct fact-finding (assessments) of local fire departments regarding their community fire prevention efforts.**

Goal Area 10 - Program Funding

This goal area addresses the need for consistent review of funding opportunities and tracking of appropriations and requests for monetary support. Whether or not, Georgia receives a fair share of Federal funds for Fire Service programs will always be an overriding issue. More importantly, is the question of funding based upon Fire Service identified needs. The possibility of fire departments with the best grant request writers vs. regional needs where dollars properly allocated will do the greatest good for the greatest numbers is a Fire Service concern.

Approved grant requests for necessary vehicles and equipment have far outpaced allocations for protective clothing and respirators, thermal imaging cameras and specialized training needed for successful incident command. Funding to routinely run table top scenarios emulating disasters in a given region are not possible if local operational budgets are the only source of revenue. What is to be requested and the best agency to do the requesting is an issue. Ideally, Fire Service leaders in a given region should be encouraging requests for funds to be funneled to GEMA or the Homeland Security Office, and in turn, those requests should reach state and/or federal funding sources.

More attention needs to be placed on provision of grant preparation seminars and professional grant writers to assist local and regional Fire Service personnel with applications.

The initiatives suggested for achievement of this goal:

- 1) **A special committee to design a comprehensive program to provide guidelines for funding and grant request activity and to make recommendations to state and federal agencies responsible for providing financial support.**
- 2) **Broaden Fire Service legislative efforts to support the Congressional Fire Service Institute and similar organizations as they seek funding for assistance to firefighter grant programs, 9/11 Commission implementation and other measures supportive of Georgia emergency responder efforts.**

Goal Area 11 - Fire Service Structuring

This goal addresses how the Fire Service is to continue as an effective coalition and how it is to operate in the future.

The following questions need to be addressed by Fire Service leaders:

- 1) Should the Fire Service only be a coalition concentrating on five or six areas of program emphasis, e.g., Public and Stakeholder Relations, Statewide Projects to Support Official Goals, Legislation, Image Building, Information Management and Mutual Aid, or
- 2) Should the aforementioned activities be assigned to participating organizations authorized to represent the Fire Service? or
- 3) Should there be Fire Service employees or a management contract with a firm to guarantee program continuity, or will an all-volunteer operation be effective in serving the needs of the participating organizations? or
- 4) What are the most effective state models in existence today and how are their operations structured and funded? What are the implications for Georgia? or
- 5) Should an examination be made to ascertain whether or not the Fire Service should be part of a government operation, e.g., State Fire Marshal's Office, GEMA, etc? and
- 6) In the future, how should the Fire Service be financially supported?

The initiative suggested for achievement of this goal:

Create a task force of leaders from participating organizations to study and make recommendations for the future.

Goal Area 12 – Volunteers and Volunteer Fire Departments

[Edited extract from [A Call for Action](#) *Volunteer and Combination Section IAFC*

Unfortunately, despite their tremendous contribution to American society, volunteer fire departments are often under funded and ill-equipped, putting many in a position where they must raise their own operational funds to provide apparatus and safety equipment. In addition, the number of volunteer firefighters is declining across the country. America's volunteer fire service is deeply woven into the basic fabric of our nation. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), there are close to 800,000 volunteer firefighters across the United States, and the majority of this nation's geographical area is protected by volunteer fire departments. Of

all the fire departments in America, 73 percent are all-volunteer departments and in Georgia the number is estimated to be 67%.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, America has learned that local emergency responders are the community's FIRST line of response, regardless of the event. Community protection and well-being depends on the experience, expertise and tenure of local emergency service providers. The volunteer fire service faces significant challenges in overcoming basic lack of resources - both financial and in human capital. Only by aggressively confronting both of these issues will Georgia create the necessary atmosphere of stability that will allow volunteer fire and rescue departments to meet the new expectations and challenges of the 21st century.

Proponents of recommendations to dramatically improve the lot of volunteer fire departments are depicting potential savings to local communities to prove that a relatively small investment by stakeholders brings about substantial financial savings, over the long-term. See Section IV: 2004 report entitled: A Call for Action, Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service.

The initiative suggested for achievement of this goal:

Create a task force on preserving and improving Georgia Volunteer Fire Departments. Prioritize suggestions and recommendations as contained in the !AFC publication: A Call for Action.

Goal Area 13 - Employee Remuneration

This goal area is necessary in support of fair wages for every employee within the Fire Service. A system to compare Georgia wages with other states and locales (taking into account the regional differences in cost-of-living) should be instituted. Such an effort would support local public safety administrators as they champion competitive wages for local Fire Service personnel. Factual information on how wages and benefits compare is always part of management's rationale for attracting and retaining personnel. While remuneration issues have traditionally been within the purview of management and sometimes employee organizations, the Georgia Fire Service, as part of its overall mission for quality programming as well as the goal of achieving a national reputation for excellence, realizes that satisfied employees and high employee retention are fundamental to the success of the Fire Service in supporting homeland security.

The initiative suggested for achievement of this goal:

Create a Fire Service wage and benefits committee to establish a -system to assist local Fire Service management, budget directors and negotiators develop solid rationale for improvements in remuneration and benefit offerings.

Goal Area 14 - Physical Fitness and Wellness

Firefighter fitness and health does not appear to be a priority for fire departments in the U.S. Nearly three fourths (3/4) of firefighters across the country do not benefit from physical fitness programs even though their jobs require physical agility, body strength, alertness and stress

management. It would follow that employers do everything possible to promote and support programs that contribute to the health and fitness of their employees.

The Georgia Fire Service should provide guidance to fire departments and their personnel interested in improving personal health. Specific guidelines and suggestions, as well as examples of successful programs instituted in Georgia as well as other states, should be distributed or otherwise made available to local fire departments.

The initiative suggested for achievement of this goal:

Create a task force to develop a program(s) to guide fire departments and firefighters regarding personal fitness.

15) Goal Area 15 - Private Sector Support

There are two telling reasons why the statewide business community would want to enthusiastically support Fire Service improvement programs. Georgia is a growth state, continually attracting new business entities. The safety of the communities where new workers will live is vital in the decision making process to locate or relocate a business into the State. The second reason has to do with the safety of any business establishment. An emergency response community that has leaders with national reputations for handling man-made and natural disaster incidents becomes an attraction for any business.

The Fire Service could work with the business community in joint readiness planning around critical infrastructure components, promoting fire safety programs, supporting citizen corps/fire corps programs, participating in pilot programs to design and test communication programs and a host of other ideas.

Leaders in the business community are often leaders in community improvement efforts. The Fire Service should have regular dialogue with business leaders as the long-range improvement program is implemented.

The initiatives suggested for achievement of this goal:

- 1) Create a task force to develop a master plan for working with the business Community. Establish program suggestions and solicit concerns from business leaders.**
- 2) Prepare recommendations for the 2006 strategic plan.**

NOTE: The IAFC 2005-2006 Strategic Plan content closely parallels many of the goals contained in this plan. Fire Service members are encouraged to read the IAFC plan. The plan calls for sharing of best practices, support for research (National Institute of Standard and Technology), support for National Fire Protection Standards, minimizing the number of firefighter injuries and fatalities, encouraging firefighter programs designed to keep staff physically, medically and behaviorally healthy, workplace diversity, encouragement for the all-hazards approach to readiness and response, incorporation of NIMS and the National Response Plan into Service programs, conduct of member surveys and a myriad of other programs. www.iafc.org

Credits for Recommendations Contained in 2004 Project Charters, 2004 -2005 Projects and Five Year Strategic Plan

James Bailey, Chief	Bartow County Fire Department
Elmer Barrett, Chief	Yellow Creek Volunteer Fire Department
Andy Brantley, Chief	Oconee Volunteer Fire Department
Tony Brinkley, Chief	Jesup Fire Department
Roger Browning, Coordinator	Georgia Forestry Rural Fire Defense
Eddie Buckholts, Chief	Forest Park Fire Department
Randy Camp, Chief	Walker County Emergency Services
Alan Conger, Chief	Ben Hill County Volunteer Fire Department
Johnny Crawley, Assistant Chief	President State Firefighters Association Thomson Fire Department
Perry Dalton, Chief	Banks County Fire Department
Rebecca Denlinger, Chief	Cobb County Fire & Emergency Services <u>Georgia Homeland Security Task Force Representative</u>
Thad Dixon, Captain	Savannah Fire Department
Alan Dozier, Chief	Georgia Forestry Protection
Faye Duckworth, Chief	Tift County Volunteer Fire Department
Henry Edwards, Chief	Waynesville Volunteer Fire Department
Hugh Futrell, Assistant Chief	<u>President, Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs</u> Southside Fire Department

Larry Few, Deputy Chief	Fulton County Fire Department
Dwayne Gariss, Assistant State Fire Marshal	Georgia State Fire Marshal's Office
Wayne Hadden, Chief	Grady County Fire Department
Howard Hansard, Captain	Cherokee County Fire Department
Jimmy Hansford, Past Director	Georgia Firefighter Standards & Training Council
Jimmy Hartley, Chief	Macon-Bibb County Fire Department
Billy Hayes, Chief	Riverdale Fire Department
Gordon Henderson, Assistant Chief	Rome-Floyd County Fire Department
Barry Jenkins, Chief	<u>Past President, Georgia Mutual Aid Group</u> Henry County Fire Department
Jack Krakeel, Director	Fayette County Fire and Emergency Services
Mike Lee, Deputy Chief	Rockdale County Fire Department
Bill Lewis, Executive Director	Georgia Mutual Aid Group
Ray Lunsford, Chief	Crisp County Fire Department
Dale Mann, Director	Georgia Public Safety Training Center
Terry Martin, Division Chief	Cobb County Fire and Rescue
Bobby McKenzie, Chief	Rome Fire Department
Jeff Meyer, Assistant Chief	Columbus-Muscogee County Fire Department
Tommy Morgan, Chief, Ret.	Rockdale County Fire Department

Ronnie Payne, Chief	<u>President, Georgia Mutual Aid Group</u> Monticello Fire Department
Joe Pollock, Chief	Lee County Fire Department
Warren Popp, Chief	Antioch Volunteer Fire Department
Alan Poss, Chief	Washington Fire Department
David Pritchett, (Past) Director	Georgia Fire Academy
Ronnie Register, Deputy Chief	Houston County Fire Department
J.D. Rice, Chief	Valdosta Fire Department
Dennis Rubin, Chief	Atlanta Fire Department
Alan Shuman, State Fire Marshal	Georgia State Fire Marshal's Office
Lawton (Carl) Smith, Chief	<u>Past President, Georgia Association of Fire Chiefs</u> Thunderbolt Fire Department
Craig Tully, Chief	Colquitt-Miller County Volunteer Fire Department
William Ware, Assistant Chief	Atlanta Fire Department
Johnny Wilson, Interim Director	Georgia Firefighters Standards and Training Council
Tommy Whitaker, Battalion Chief	<u>Past President, Georgia State Firefighters Association</u> Americus Fire & Emergency Services
Glenn Williams, Chief	Flovilla Volunteer Fire Department
Randy Windham, Assistant Chief	Warner-Robins Fire Department

Plan prepared by: Rebecca (Becky) Denlinger, Tommy Morgan and Arleigh Greenblat with assistance from Northstar Consulting, Inc., Washington, DC.

III. Advisory Committee Approved Project Plans

Project plans have already been committee-approved for the following goal areas:

- Goal Area 2 – Training
- Goal Area 3 – Readiness and Disaster Response
- Goal Area 5 –Technology Improvement
- Goal Area 6 – Research Development

2004-2005 Training Project

Project Goal:

The overall goal of this project is to assure that the Georgia Fire Service establishes a system whereby formal liaison activity is established with recognized fire service and emergency responder training institutions including technical colleges. The Fire Service has a quality control responsibility to track curricular offerings, communicate training needs of members and prioritize as well as communicate those needs with key personnel within the various educational and training institutions.

The information collected regarding local fire department requirements for qualified personnel becomes critical to the success of any training initiative. The best information possible to make informed decisions regarding training offerings, methods to conduct training, scheduling and best places to hold training sessions is not only necessary, but required, as Fire Service leaders strengthen readiness and disaster response systems. Effective mutual aid agreements between jurisdictions depend, in part, upon trained and certified personnel.

- I. Create and maintain a Fire Service advisory panel to selected training institutions in order to assure comprehensive and balanced input regarding curriculum offerings, suggested training methodologies, training venues and related matters including alternate delivery methods, e.g., web-based training and delegation of authority to local fire departments and community colleges.

Objectives:

- 1.) Form (or participant in) an advisory group for the Georgia Fire Academy
- 2.) Conduct outreach work to determine needs of key user groups (Fire Chiefs, Firefighters, Training Officers, etc.)
- 3.) Determine needs of supportive institutions to assure institutionalized training is offered for potential incident commanders (GEMA, GFSTC, GFA, and GMAG)
- 4.) Support GFA advisory board decisions

- II. Utilize Fire Service resources to accomplish training institution data articulation ultimately resulting in a master training database reflecting training experiences of every member of the Georgia Fire Service.

Objectives:

- 1.) Design database fields to reflect all training completed by Fire Service personnel
- 2.) Examine options for encrypting central database protecting privileged information
- 3.) Examine methods to allow local Fire Departments greater access to training experiences and certifications for Fire Service personnel

III. Under Fire Service auspices and with support from the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council, achieve coordinated information sharing resulting in an information system built upon matching databases allowing sharing of basic data useful to the Council and to the Fire Service.

Objectives (Options):

- 1.) Prepare grant applications to appropriate Federal agency
- 2.) Prepare grant applications to appropriate State agency
- 3.) Prepare requests for funding (equipment and personnel) to State Legislature
- 4.) Seek foundation grant applications if options (1-2-3) are unavailable.

IV. Establish a program to review and recommend training software and on-line courses supportive of basic training, certification and recertification of firefighters.

Objectives:

- 1.) Conduct meetings with advisors, training institution personnel and Fire Service organizations to determine ideal software offerings
- 2.) Assess training institution best practices conducted by other states
- 3.) Support efforts to attain high speed interne installation in all fire departments

V. Establish a system to guide and otherwise assist selected training institutions in preparing annual reports to Fire Service managers and stakeholders on the status of training efforts, successes, and problems encountered in crafting innovative approaches to training.

Objectives:

- 1.) Concentrate on the administration of the SB 169-2003 (basic training) for 2004-2005
- 2.) Issue a report on Fire Chief training content as agreed upon by selected training institutions
- 3.) Conduct a series of meetings with U.S. Fire Administration officials (Office of Domestic Preparedness) regarding anticipated support for training offerings with emphasis on weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and terrorist acts

VI. Establish a formal system whereby Fire Service - training institution exchanges regarding institutional needs lead to policy recommendations or legislative action.

Objectives:

- 1.) Assess needs of training institutions and prioritize specific requests
- 2.) Secure funding for pilot work designed to reduce time-losses and costs connected with traditional off-site training

2004-2005 Readiness and Disaster Response Project

Project Goal:

The objective of this project is to assure that emergency response leaders benefit from the formalization of systems designed to facilitate readiness planning and incident command work, specifically, the designation and descriptions of teams or task forces in each major area of risk, e.g., suppression, haz-mat, EMS, decontamination, WMD, wildland fires, rescue and mitigation. In addition to meeting Fire Service standards, any equipment used by these teams must be quantified and described. The distribution of information relevant to the formation of task forces, their locations, availability, descriptions of equipment and related management issues are projected outcomes of this project.

- I. Define and formalize composition of hazard mitigation teams or task forces in the areas of suppression, haz-mat, EMS, decontamination, rescue, WMD and wildland fires for eventual use

throughout the State.

Objectives:

- 1.) Conduct meetings with Fire Service leaders to reach agreement on composition of teams as referenced in goal statement. Recommend outcomes to GAFC and GSFA Boards for approval
- 2.) Apply findings on composition of disaster task forces to pilot project in GEMA Area 7
- 3.) Develop a system to periodically review credentials and availability of members on various task forces

II. Regarding vehicles and equipment, assess capacity and willingness of every fire department to commit resources to serve communities in need (inter and intra state) without jeopardizing basic needs of each participating department and the communities they serve.

Objectives:

- 1.) Establish ongoing information collection system. to quantify all classes of vehicles and equipment (master database)
- 2.) Establish method to immediately access information regarding equipment availability and qualified personnel to be deployed to a given at-risk site
- 3.) Establish information conveyance and dissemination system designed to immediately support incident command

III. Continually assess capability (credentials, certifications) of personnel identified by local fire department management and their availability to assist with incidents outside a given local service area.

Objectives:

- 1.) Develop system to include specific information on master database regarding highly skilled personnel eligible for inclusion on specialty task forces
- 2.) Develop system to continually update database information
- 3.) Code information on potential task force members within at-risk areas (emphasis on critical infrastructure, dense population)

IV. Review and refine present communication system(s) of incident assessment and procedures for requesting assistance.

Objectives:

- 1.) Map present system (flow chart)
- 2.) Assure procedures for system utilization are in writing, included on Internet web sites and updated as necessary
- 3.) Recommend inclusions for incident commander training programs emphasizing clear guidelines on functional responsibilities, how to carry out responsibilities, use of communication systems and assessing data with emphasis on protocols

V. * Identify a pilot region, develop a project charter, contract for technical assistance, complete work and convey project outcomes to Fire Service leaders, promulgate templates, assess implementation efforts, and address future training needs for disaster teams, future purchase of critical vehicles (result of GAP analyses) and future technology needs required for on-scene instant communications.

Objectives:

- 1.) Select pilot area (*selected in 2004 – GEMA Area 7)
- 2.) Establish pilot project plan
- 3.) Convey outcomes to those with need to know (emphasis-All Hazards Councils)

2004-2005 Technology Improvement Project

Project Goal:

The goal of this project is to assure that Georgia Fire Service leaders have the best information possible to make informed decisions regarding the purchase and installation of technology tools within each local fire department. The tools deemed necessary to the effective management of human and physical resources in emergency situations are to be identified and recommended by the Fire Service as required in the handling of natural and man-made disasters. The goal is to provide minimum specifications to purchasers of equipment and software that either match or exceed Georgia Fire Service standards for quality, compatibility (reference mutual aid cooperative agreements between jurisdictions), user ease, cost effectiveness and reliability.

- I. Achieve the installation of computer equipment, peripherals and software that meet minimal Fire Service standards within every local fire department:

Objectives:

- 1.) Set minimal standards (specifications) for desktop and laptop computers
- 2.) Set minimal standards (specifications) for high speed printers
- 3.) Set minimal standards (specifications) for local area network (LAN) and wide area network (WAN) computer hook-ups
- 4.) Set minimal standards for Internet connectivity

- II. Create and implement a master plan for assuring the installation of desktop/laptop computer software or access to software contained in Fire Service endorsed sites for each local fire department. The software is to cover, but not be limited to, incident command guidelines and relevant resource oriented databases, incident protocols for identified hazards, training materials necessary for personnel involved in meeting required training and/or certification, and access to information on guidelines and trends within the state and nation's emergency response community (includes links to Homeland Security Office, FEMA/US Fire Administration, International Association of Fire Chiefs, etc.).

Objectives:

- 1.) Identify best methods for assuring software is installed based upon manufacturer specifications
- 2.) Identify remote sites (central servers) to assure comprehensive software content requirements are met (training, incident command, protocols, etc.)
- 3.) Develop a system to assure product registration and software upgrading is uniform throughout the Fire Service

- III. Establish a system to guide purchasing agents regarding Fire Service computer technology equipment and software standards.

Objectives:

- 1.) Develop link for Home Pages (sponsoring organizations) to Fire Service recommended specifications (hardware and software)
- 2.) Interview prospective providers of Internet services and identify those who meet minimal standards
- 3.) Compile a listing of purchasing agents within the Fire Service responsible for the purchase, maintenance and replacement of equipment
- 4.) Set up a software review advisory panel to determine whether or not suggested software meets Fire Service standards

- IV. Identify and support state-of-the art radio communication systems required for effective incident

command. Communicate Fire Service guidelines for purchase of such equipment.

Objectives:

- 1.) Establish regular communications with State and Federal officials responsible for establishing guidelines for radio equipment
- 2.) Establish methods for securing best practices in radio communication experienced by local, county, or regional Fire Service officials (other states)
- 3.) Develop specifications for use by purchasing agents in procuring radio equipment (emphasis on interoperability)

V. Survey and otherwise assess local fire department needs for technology tools and training necessary for the use of those tools.

Objectives:

- 1.) Develop on-line questionnaires
- 2.) Interview Georgia fire chiefs and firefighters
- 3.) Review fact-finding efforts, consultant reports and other information (other states)

VI. Identify a pilot region, install systems and report findings on outcomes, management and administrative challenges (GEMA Area 2 selected in 2004).

Objectives:

- 1.) Assess feasibility of conducting a pilot in an at risk GEMA Area (under funded, substantial volunteer base, lacking fiber-optic and/or minimal access to internet providers through other than telephone modems)
- 2.) Organize participants in pilot areas, develop project guidelines, assign personnel, develop implementation calendar and project evaluation criteria
- 3.) Survey needs within pilot area; assure needs are reflected in pilot project remedial plan

2004-2005 Research and Development Project

Project Goal:

The overall goal of this project is to establish a number of systems to collect and distribute information to Fire Service members, stakeholders and the general public. The information collected is to be considered necessary to the management of major incidents, readiness planning, and support for training reforms, and strategic planning activities. Important project outcomes will also include the strengthening of Fire Service legislative activity, improving communication with stakeholders and tracking best practices, within and outside of Georgia.

I. Create and maintain a central data base.

Objectives:

- 1.) Form an advisory group on research and development
- 2.) Conduct outreach work to determine data needs of key user groups (fire chiefs, firefighters, etc.)
- 3.) Determine data needs of supportive institutions
- 4.) Select a location for housing servers and related computer peripherals
- 5.) Determine personnel needs to maintain and distribute data

II. Develop and maintain an encryption program to protect information provided by institutions and individuals.

Objectives:

- 1.) Determine remote users (fire chiefs, incident commanders, trainers, etc.)
- 2.) Examine options for encrypting central database protecting privileged information
- 3.) Examine methods to allow local fire departments access to training records and certifications of Fire Service personnel

III. Support Training Project Goal 3 (*Under Fire Service auspices and with support of the Georgia Firefighter Standards and Training Council, achieve funding for a central relational database containing individual (comprehensive) training information, to be permanently housed and maintained*)

Objectives:

- 1.) Coordinate efforts with training project advisors through regular communications
- 2.) Combine training and research and development projects (database development) when seeking underwriting grants

IV. Determine all data needs by major categories and sub-sections as specifications for the database are developed.

Objectives:

- 1.) Conduct outreach communications to Georgia Fire Service organizations to determine their needs for data
- 2.) Conduct pilot work to assess end-user ability to utilize system

V. Provide executive summaries of best practices (throughout U.S.) for use in home pages sponsored by Fire Service organizations

Objectives:

- 1.) Achieve agreements with GSFA, GAFC and GMAG on article content
- 2.) Report progress on projects, outcomes, etc.