



La Crosse Fire Department Strategic Plan (2019-2023)



Executive Summary

The La Crosse Fire Department (LCFD) serves the City of La Crosse and surrounding communities, providing emergency response and community risk management services in a highly professional manner. The department was first accredited by the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) in 2014, a distinction that is conferred based on achievement of high standards of readiness, training, operational performance, and continuous improvement. This strategic plan was created by the leaders of the LCFD to advance that spirit of the pursuit of excellence.

Situation Summary

The LCFD is organized into three primary divisions coordinated by the department Administration:

- **Community Risk Management** (*previously titled Fire Prevention and Building Safety Division-2019 transition*), delivering community education, fire and building safety code compliance, and fire investigations
- **Operations**, delivering a comprehensive emergency response
- **Training and Professional Standards**, strengthening operational competencies and maintaining overall readiness

As a department of the City of La Crosse, the department provides services in partnership with other City departments, neighboring agencies including mutual-aid and auto-aid partners, and other community stakeholders.

The LCFD's greatest strengths include the breadth and depth of its emergency response capabilities, its consistent and efficient delivery of code enforcement and community education services, and its longstanding commitment to continuous, rigorous training efforts. The department has been recognized regionally and beyond for its specialized rescue skills, and the expertise of the department's fire and building inspections group is routinely sought to inform potential changes to the State's fire and building codes. The LCFD Training Division likewise serves as a leader and asset in regional training efforts, and as a source of expertise in a wide range of technical areas of emergency response.

The LCFD's key areas for development include sub-optimal station facilities and IT infrastructure, as well as limited leadership capacity to sustain strategic and tactical continuous improvement efforts. The current stations do not support efficient response and training activities, nor are they conducive to worker safety and wellness. Locations are, in some instances, sub-optimal for expedient emergency response, and the age and configuration of the stations do not support the culture of inclusion and performance sought by the department. The department will also engage in leadership development efforts at all levels in the coming years.

The greatest strategic risks facing the organization are future resource constraints that would not enable it to continue providing its current breadth of services. This is a highly capable department, especially in light of the City's limited size and tax bases. Other key risks include potential challenges recruiting adequate numbers of qualified employees.

Strategic Initiatives

The following six initiatives are comprised of efforts to build on the above strengths and to address the above shortcomings and risks.

1. Community Risk Management and Outreach
2. All-Hazards Response Capability
3. Emergency Medical Services – Advanced Life Support (ALS) Response
4. Leadership and Organizational Development
5. Employee Fitness and Wellness
6. Infrastructure and Technology

Each of these initiatives is described in detail in the full strategic plan that follows this Executive Summary.

Introduction

Department leadership engaged personnel across the agency, while also soliciting feedback from multiple external focus groups, to lead a combined strategic planning process to guide both strategic investment and some day-to-day operating decisions we face over the next five years. This document is the result of those efforts. The strategic plan was developed in accordance with the following principles:

1. **The strategic initiatives are based on a thoughtful, internal assessment of the strategic status of the LCFD, as articulated in the plan.** Each initiative and all efforts are to be focused on achieving meaningful improvement in one or more of the following respects:
 - a. **Excellence in Service Delivery.** This includes the LCFD's readiness and capacity and is intended to include all aspects of service delivery, to include community risk management, public education efforts, emergency medical, fire suppression, and technical rescue responses.
 - b. **Sound Stewardship of Public Resources.** Investments are to be aligned with real benefits to the community, and made in ways that manage costs and benefits, both short and long-term. The LCFD will seek cost-saving collaboration with other La Crosse City departments as well.
 - c. **Fairness.** This includes advancing principles of justice and equity with respect to all stakeholders. Fairness also requires appropriate transparency and accountability in leadership at all levels of the department.
 - d. **Health and Safety.** The strategic plan recognizes firefighter safety and wellness as critical values and aims to protect our ultimate asset, our personnel, from the dangers of the profession.
2. **We are focused on feasible initiatives with a sharp focus on the next five years, as well as a much longer-range view of the department.** The LCFD recognizes that its departmental priorities must be considered within the broader context of the City's needs and plans. This plan contemplates longer-range implications for all initiatives, but projections are limited to a more foreseeable time horizon. Necessary, strategic investments such as facilities replacement and upgrades will have both immediate and long-lasting budgetary and operational implications.
3. **The final strategy must reflect the perspectives of departmental leaders at all levels (including union leadership and internal subject matter experts).** The Fire Chief is ultimately responsible and accountable for the content of this plan, and for leading in its implementation. At the same time, effective implementation requires cooperation from multiple stakeholders and, in some instances, from every member of the department. Therefore, the plan itself is informed by broad departmental input.

This report consists of the following sections:

1. The above **Executive Summary**, providing a high-level overview of the entire strategic plan.
2. This **Introduction**, including the Table of Contents, below.
3. A statement of the LCFD's newly revised **Mission and Organizational Values**
4. **Strategic Situation Summary** and **SLOT Analysis**
5. **Strategic Objectives and Initiatives**
6. **Budgetary Implications**
7. **Conclusion**
8. **Appendix:** Strategic Plan development process and inputs

This plan is intended to reflect the above framework, focused primarily on objectives and initiatives.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	3
Table of Contents	4
La Crosse Fire Department Mission and Core Values	5
Strategic Situation Summary and SLOT Analysis	6
Overview	6
SLOT Analysis	7
Strategic Objectives and Initiatives	12
Initiative 1: Community Risk Management and Community Outreach	13
Initiative 2: All-Hazards Response Capability	16
Initiative 3: EMS/ALS Response	18
Initiative 4: Leadership and Organizational Development	19
Initiative 5: Employee Fitness and Wellness	20
Initiative 6: Infrastructure and Technology	22
Conclusion	24
Appendix: Strategic Planning Process Overview	25



La Crosse Fire Department Mission and Core Values

As part of this strategic planning process, the Planning Committee determined that the departmental Mission Statement and Core Values merited an update. The primary goals of this update were to remain consistent with the spirit of the previous document, while creating something that was more concise and therefore easier for members to recall and apply. The committee also determined that a statement of vision was not necessary given the composition of the draft mission statement and statement of values. The vision of the department is to achieve its mission and to exemplify its core values.

The following is the result of the committee's efforts: a draft mission statement and statement of core values for the La Crosse Fire Department.

Mission Statement

We promote safety, reduce risks, and respond to calls for fire suppression, all-hazard rescue, and emergency medical services.
We earn the community's trust through preparedness, professionalism, and dedication to service.

Core Values

- **Respect** reflects our belief that all persons have equal value and deserve our due attention.
- **Integrity** leads us to honor our commitments and to do what is right.
- **Service** drives us to put the needs of the community first.
- **Excellence** encompasses our professionalism and dedication to continuous improvement of knowledge, skills, and abilities.



Strategic Situation Summary and SLOT Analysis

Overview

The La Crosse Fire department is an all-hazards response organization. The City and surrounding areas include a full range of public and private occupancies, from heavy industry to houses of worship and from large educational and health care institutions to storefronts and other small businesses. Housing stock is equally diverse, from large historic homes to modern multi-unit housing. The surrounding area includes the Mississippi River and other lakes and waterways, as well as bluffs, forest, wetlands, and other rough terrain. The La Crosse Fire Department is equipped and prepared to respond to emergencies in each of these settings, under any and all circumstances.

The Fire Department responds to over 6,500 emergency calls each year. In addition to emergency response, the department has a robust Fire Prevention and Building Safety division that is expanding to address city-wide emergency management, building inspection, fire investigation, and community risk management goals.

The agency operates out of its four fire stations and City Hall:

- Station 1: Engine 1, Quint 1, Rescue 1, USAR, HAZMAT, and Battalion 1
- Station 2: Quint 2, Rescue 2, and Tender 1
- Station 3: Quint 3 and Rescue 3
- Station 4: Engine 4
- Department Administration, Emergency and Community Risk Management, Fire Investigators, and Building Inspection personnel work out of offices at Station 1 and City Hall.
- The department also manages a Training Site with live burn training facility and technical rescue props.

The department provides Emergency Medical Service response department-wide at the Basic Life Support (BLS) EMT-Basic level. Starting in the fourth quarter of 2018, the department engaged in a pilot program to provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) Paramedic level first response service in partnership with Gundersen Health System and Tri-State Ambulance.



The agency provides specialized technical rescue and emergency services to include:

- Hazardous Materials (HazMat) response
- Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), including
 - High-angle and low-angle rope rescue
 - Confined space rescue
 - Trench and below-grade collapse rescue
 - Structural collapse rescue
- Water and Ice Rescue, to include Underwater (dive team) rescue and recovery
- Tactical Emergency Medical Services (TEMS), delivered in partnership with the La Crosse Police SWAT team

The department is a recognized regional leader in many of these disciplines, and has earned a reputation for excellence in all manner of emergency response. This exceptional range of services and breadth of competencies are delivered due, in large part, to the dedication and skill of the LCFD workforce.

As is often the case, the department's strengths and limitations are inter-related. Department personnel are pulled in many directions, and execution of administrative duties and internal projects sometimes suffers. Leaders likewise struggle, at times, to communicate as fully as they otherwise might, and to support the culture development that is essential for the department's long-term, continued success. Finally, the breadth of capabilities supporting a significant regional population of more than 120,000 people strains available funding, which reflects a considerable investment for a city of just over 51,000 people.

Each of the above topics is described in more detail in the following factor analysis.

SLOT Analysis

Input from department members and community focus groups directly informed the following SLOT analysis, which describes the status of department relative to the above strategic mission and scope. (A more common acronym is SWOT, where "limitations" is replaced by "weaknesses.")

- **Strengths** – Factors internal to the LCFD that contribute to its ability to succeed.
- **Limitations** – Factors internal to the LCFD that inhibit, limit, or threaten its ability to succeed. Traditionally called "weaknesses."
- **Opportunities** – Factors primarily outside the LCFD that promote or contribute to success. These function as "tailwinds."
- **Threats** – Factors primarily outside the LCFD that tend to inhibit success. These function as "headwinds."

In a very meaningful sense, this SLOT analysis represents a consensus of how department stakeholders see the organization. As such, it is intended to serve as a baseline for discussion of strategic priorities, and to inform operational decisions as well. Even as these factors change over time, grounding leadership discussions in the mission and circumstances of the LCFD is a useful technique for focusing all participants on a shared perspective of the department.



Strengths

- The LCFD's **Operations Division** capabilities are truly exceptional, in terms of both breadth and depth. The LCFD truly offers a full, all-hazards response force. Officers and firefighters are highly committed to full proficiency and sound execution of all technical disciplines. As a result, LCFD's special teams have achieved state and regional recognition. Finally, these capabilities exist due to sound operational practices and consistent strategic execution, as demonstrated by the department's Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) accreditation, first achieved in 2014.
- The LCFD's **Community Risk Management Division** is likewise cited as an exemplar of efficient and effective code enforcement, working in concert with other city groups and outside stakeholders. The LCFD building inspectors, fire inspectors, and leadership are regarded as regional experts, and are engaged to inform future state code changes, as well as providing the City with a consistent expectation of code enforcement to aid City Planning and Leadership teams.
- The LCFD's **Training and Professional Standards Division** has continued to expand its influence on the total organization and beyond. With significant focus on organizational goals related to safety and professional standards, the work of this division ties all of the pieces together to meet a consistent strategy. This LCFD division, coordinating with technical experts throughout our ranks, is also raising the bar for our regional partners and providing support and resources beyond the internal needs of just the LCFD. As a regional training asset to neighboring agencies and our technical college system partners, the LCFD is positioned to influence safety, interoperability, and best practices to a wide audience.
- The reputational benefits described in the above statements strengthens the LCFD in multiple ways:
 - Peer agencies think highly of LCFD capabilities, which can lead to effective collaboration and can enable the LCFD to be of service in an automatic-aid or mutual-aid capacity.
 - The LCFD's reputation makes it an employer of choice among highly qualified recruits.
 - The public's support can facilitate funding and other forms of institutional support.
 - The department's capabilities are due primarily to the quality of its employees. This is the result of multiple factors. Strong labor-management relationships and processes promote engaged and committed teams. Workforce quality is also bolstered by the department's standards and hiring practices, and by the department leadership's willingness to use the probationary employment period to truly assess suitability of the employees. Though challenged by a significant wave of retirements in recent years, retention of quality personnel is up.

- Community outreach efforts are consistently and uniformly positive. As a result, external focus groups convened in 2018 to inform this strategic planning process, and the groups consistently expressed high levels of support for the LCFD. The focus groups strongly encouraged the department to sharpen its public relations practices to better share its successes with the broader community.
- The LCFD is equipped and trained for interoperability with neighboring departments. Though relationships have historically been challenged, new leadership philosophy amplifying throughout the organization has provided the regional partners new opportunity for strengthened interoperability, partnership initiatives, and a safer focus on public and responder safety.

Limitations

- Funding is a perennial challenge, given the breadth of services and the necessity to maintain high quality standards. The community is well-served by a department that meets the standards of CPSE accreditation, but operating at those high standards also requires considerable resources.
- Station facilities, all built between 1941 and 1967, are aging and present significant operational and strategic challenges:
 - Apparatus bays are too small, hampering access to some equipment and slowing deployment of some vehicles.
 - Interior spaces are not conducive to healthy on-shift working conditions, nor do they provide equitable accommodations for men and women alike.
 - Some station locations are no longer optimal for expedient and consistent city-wide response, given how the City has developed since the stations were built.
 - Despite diligent upkeep, station conditions do not support a culture of high-performance and pose a challenge for recruiting firefighters who seek to join a high-performing organization like the LCFD.
- Leadership capacity must be improved, in order to assure continued operational excellence and to strengthen an organizational culture that supports firefighter engagement.
 - Chief Officers and Staff Captains are task-saturated with projects. The same is true for a segment of the department that bears more than their proportional share of the project work. Due to this saturation, execution is sometimes flawed – “Things fall through the cracks.”
 - The capacity of senior leaders is especially limited during this period of tremendous change, which limits the Chief Officers’ presence at stations and at community events. Some crews at Stations 2, 3, and 4 feel like they don’t see the Fire Chief, which puts engagement at risk, and leaves an impression that there is “an in crowd” and “an out crowd” for promotions and assignments.
 - While the department is characterized by a strong commitment to service, internal feedback surveys reveal that there appears to be a relatively small group of employees who do not demonstrate that commitment through their engagement in training and other activities. Company and Chief Officers have limited resources for addressing these leadership issues.
 - The age of senior leaders, and the overall youth of the organization’s seniority list, creates a need for succession planning and accelerated officer development.
- Breadth of technical skill areas puts continued excellence at some level of risk. Some department members see this as a function of maintaining “many trades,” while others believe that the root cause is the number of other duties that compete with readiness in technical areas.



Station 2 – 2018



Station 2 – 1957

Opportunities

- The City of La Crosse continues to demonstrate high levels of support for the efforts of the La Crosse Fire Department. The department recognizes that the budgetary requirements of the department represent a considerable commitment of taxpayer dollars.
- Other community stakeholders, including local business leaders, also support and seek to partner with the LCFD to support a sustainable and high-functioning organization.
- The LCFD relies on strong relationships with other agencies. These relationships include Gundersen Health Services and Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance Service, neighboring fire departments, and other La Crosse City Departments. These strong relationships promote effective and efficient service delivery.
- Collaboration with the Onalaska Fire Department and the Holmen Area Fire District is supported by labor union affiliation, wherein the union locals serving each of these municipalities are affiliates of the combined La Crosse Area Professional Firefighters IAFF Local 127.
- The LCFD's upcoming 2019 transition to be the fire suppression and emergency services provider covering the La Crosse Regional Airport represents a strategic opportunity to better serve the community.
- Likewise, 2019 negotiations to provide long-range fire and emergency medical protection to the Town of Medary have the potential to create a significant shift in the region's priority for a more robust emergency response capacity. Similar to the LCFD contractual fire protection areas in the Town of Campbell, the Town of Medary geography would position the LCFD to better partner with neighboring jurisdictions while providing a stronger level of service to our neighbors.
- The ongoing expansion of the department's ALS Paramedic first response capacity will also provide a higher level of safety and service to the community, will provide better retention of future firefighter paramedics, and strengthen the regional response capacity of our project partner Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance.
- Over the next five years, there will be significant focus on new fire station plans and construction, and strong partnerships will be a critical component of this strategy. Working in coordination with City Planning, the LCFD will be building new fire stations as neighborhood anchors for generations to come. These fire stations have the potential to facilitate additional public/private revenue generating ventures. We will also be looking for opportunities to provide additional community centers, police precinct offices, and a host of other critical neighborhood support opportunities. These decisions made in the next five years will have a tremendously positive impact for the next 50-100 years.

Threats

- As a public agency and similar to any fire department, La Crosse depends on support from policy-makers for its operations and for its long-range sustainability. While the City has steadfastly supported the department, it is important to note that long-range projects within the fire department require longer-range commitments from city policymakers.
- The City of La Crosse serves a very large community relative to its tax base. This is due in part to the number of people commuting into the city, and to the number and size of tax-exempt organizations functioning in the community. The potential risk factors concern the feasibility of budgeting for the LCFD and competing priorities for limited resources.
- The city's needs for other infrastructure investments competes with the fire department for funding.
- The pool of qualified job applicants continues to shrink, both locally and nationwide.
- The fire service nationwide has experienced a cultural shift as the workforce of younger firefighters is less willing to work extra shifts, take on additional duties, or otherwise compromise personal and family time for work responsibilities beyond the standard scope of their positions. This is a risk factor to which La Crosse leaders must remain sensitive.
- Demand for emergency response services could exceed capacity. La Crosse is thriving; housing density is increasing markedly, mostly in higher-density occupancies. Multi-unit housing and assisted living facilities not only increase call volume, but also increase the complexity of access. The growing and aging population will generate more calls for service, and these calls may take longer, on average, than is the case today.
- While serving the La Crosse Regional Airport and potential expansion into the Town of Medary is noted as a strategic opportunity, the transition effort in particular also presents a threat to achievement of other concurrent strategic initiatives.
- While the department cites the cooperation with neighboring departments as a strength, efficient shared operations require that the departments become interoperable, using compatible equipment, tactics, and training. This requires that all parties be willing and able to make this investment.
- Likewise, as decisions are made on new fire station locations, neighboring jurisdictions seem reluctant to discuss regional location needs analysis to better support the greater community. With neighboring jurisdiction fire stations as close as one-mile away from current LCFD fire stations and running independently from each other, it begs for analysis of a more regional analysis of effective emergency service coverage. While positive support for this idea was offered by external focus group members who live in these neighboring communities, some of the communities and members of their fire departments seem reluctant to engage in this discussion in earnest.

The strategic initiatives framed in the following section are intended to guide the actions that will help LCFD pursue the mission defined above, in light of these strategic factors.



Strategic Objectives and Initiatives

The La Crosse Fire Department is committed to professionalism: to doing the work right, in a spirit of service to others.

Delivering on this commitment requires ongoing investment; it pays off directly in terms of lives and property saved, risks averted, and problems addressed. Indirect benefits include enhanced community vitality through public safety and sound risk management, as well as incremental benefits of lower insurance premiums for businesses due to the department’s relevant ISO rating. This strategic plan is comprised of the following initiatives, undertaken in light of the strategic self-assessment explained in the previous sections. Above all, our strategic aim is to assure that the department remains capable and ready to meet the community’s needs in the future.

The work of implementing the strategic plan over time is organized in terms of the strategic initiatives defined below:

1. Community Risk Management and Outreach
2. All-Hazards Response Capability
3. Emergency Medical Services – Advanced Live Support (ALS) Response
4. Leadership and Organizational Development
5. Employee Fitness and Wellness
6. Infrastructure and Technology

Each of these is described in terms of (1) overall objective, (2) high-level tasks, and (3) timeline.

These initiatives are framed to be flexible; most include key decisions that will affect how the initiatives are to be pursued. This uncertainty is intentional; our aim is to continue to learn throughout implementation of our plans, and to adjust course based on that learning. Moreover, the department recognizes a high level of dependency on outside factors for the achievement of many objectives: this includes city funding, as well as cooperation from other stakeholders. For these reasons as well, flexibility is a built-in feature of this strategic plan.

A Balanced and Integrated Portfolio of Initiatives

External Focus



Internal Focus



Initiative 1: Community Risk Management and Community Outreach

Overall Objective: Alleviate and minimize community-wide safety risks. Raise awareness among community stakeholders; study and assess risks and implement strategies to reduce risks on a strategically prioritized basis. Goals are fire prevention, injury prevention, and improved emergency responses based on sound data and analysis. The department also seeks to achieve an ISO rating of 1.

Major tasks:

1. Add leadership capacity to administrative, communication, and strategic efforts.
 - 1.1. Establish “Captain of Administration Technical Services and Community Relations” position. (2019)
 - 1.2. Establish “Community Risk Reduction Education Specialist” position. (2019)
 - 1.3. Develop and support the new “Captain of Administration Technical Services and Community Relations” position. Define parameters of position. Support organizational information technology and data management goals. Support public information, marketing, and social media efforts (April 1, 2019 start date.)
 - 1.4. Develop and support the new “Community Risk Reduction Education Specialist” position. Define parameters of position – roles, responsibilities, location, etc. Develop and market new programs. Develop sustainable funding means for the programs. (July 1, 2019 start date.)
2. Reorganization of property inspections processes. Begins with EnerGov transition and training. Redefine inspection districts and inspection frequencies. We will optimize our inspection frequencies and resources to comply with, but not exceed state standards. (Redistricting 2019 Q1. Transition 2019 Q3. Task complete - 2019 Q4.)
3. Achieve Fire Department ISO rating of 1. (2019-2021)
 - 3.1. Work with Water Department to update software and implement additional flow testing each year.
 - 3.2. Support EDC needs to update dispatch capabilities. This may require outside funding from grants.
 - 3.3. Secure automatic-aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions.
 - 3.4. Complete ISO assessment process.
4. Upgrade pre-planning capacity. (2019-2021)
 - 4.1. Research available pre-planning systems. (2019-2020)
 - 4.2. Obtain funding and develop implementation plan. (2020-2021)
5. Develop and implement alternative funding strategies. (2019-2020)
 - 5.1. Build on existing grant committee and re-focus on needs and goals. (2019)
 - 5.2. Explore development of a LCFD Foundation. (2019-2020)
 - 5.3. Employee development to support grant writing and management capacity. (2019-2020)
6. Strengthen Social Media Plan. (2019-2020)
 - 6.1. Current media are Facebook and Twitter. Solidify processes for Facebook and Twitter, and add Instagram.
 - 6.2. Re-envision and relaunch “Fire Watch” community newsletter, including automated outreach tools.
 - 6.3. Rebuild department website in coordination with City IT switching website providers. (2020)
 - 6.4. Strengthen and develop policy and procedure for information flow to social media manager.
 - 6.5. Organize pictures and graphics storage for efficiency purpose.
 - 6.6. Create and manage reports based on data analytics of social media efforts to strengthen support of this work effort.

7. Update organizational Mission and Values statements. (2019)
 - 7.1. Ratify revised statement of mission and values.
 - 7.2. Integrate new content in branding and public communications.
8. Outreach to Neighborhood Community Groups as allies in risk reduction. (2019-2020)
 - 8.1. Identify named community leaders and meeting schedules. (2019 Q1)
 - 8.2. Develop community relations strategy with targeted topics and messages.
 - 8.3. Meet with selected leaders to identify and prioritize community risk management needs.
 - 8.4. Implement contact plan.
9. Other outreach efforts. (2019-2023)
 - 9.1. Build on annual open house to include other events, e.g. "Safety Saturdays".
 - 9.2. Bi-annual Citizen and/or Media academies. (2019 Q3, 2021 Q3, 2023 Q3)
 - 9.3. Build awareness of capabilities, especially EMS Apparatus branding. Dedicate larger apparatus to local schools nearest to each fire station. "First due" marketing campaign with local businesses.
 - 9.4. Partner with School District (public and private schools) to expand current fire prevention activities to include ASHER, EMS Stop the Bleed, and other Risk Reduction goals for respective age groups.
 - 9.5. Partner with community support entities (county health, senior housing, disability support groups, etc.) to provide consistent message to at-risk demographic groups.



Initiative 2: All-Hazards Response Capability

Overall Objective: Implement incremental improvements to response capabilities. Provide improved interoperability with neighboring jurisdictions and enhance mutual-aid and regional response plans for incidents that exceed capacity of the individual organizations. Strengthen fiscal sustainability of the LCFD technical rescue capabilities.

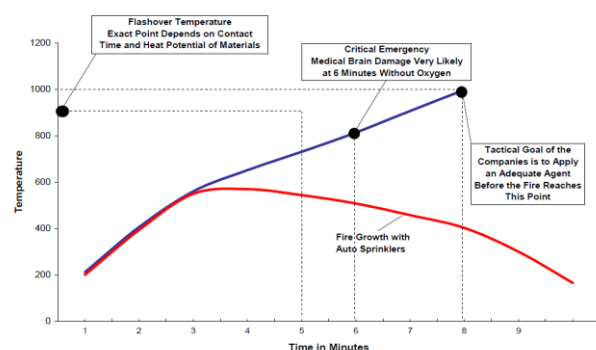
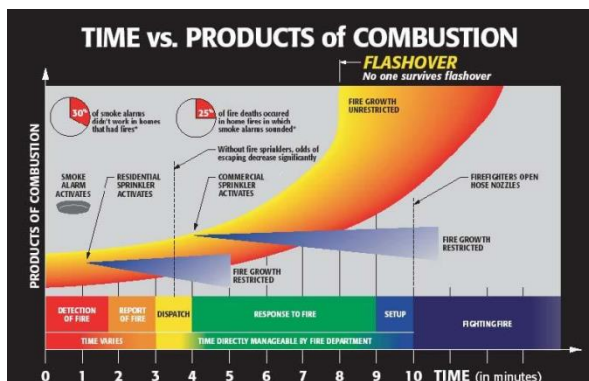
Major tasks:

1. Implement and sustain Airport Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) service at the La Crosse Regional Airport. (2019-2021)
 - 1.1. Identify and train staff for ARFF positions. (2019 Q1-Q2)
 - 1.2. Develop relevant policies and procedures to meet Airport, LCFD, and FAA standards.
 - 1.3. Assess, develop, and build adequate staffing matrix. Determine true staffing needs to meet industry safety standards, and make a data-driven argument for support of the plan.
 - 1.4. Build this ARFF component of our response system into the LCFD Standards of Cover.
2. Evaluate and implement NFPA 3000 Active Shooter and Hostile Event Response (ASHER) standard. (2019-2021)
 - 2.1. Assess standard and determine equipment and training needs. (2019)
 - 2.2. Develop policies, procedures, and training to meet standard. (2019-2020)
 - 2.3. Engage LCPD and other agencies to create capacity for coordinated response. (2019)
 - 2.4. Obtain funding to support equipment, training and exercise needs. (2019-2020)
 - 2.5. Consider large-scale exercise. Seek resources. (2020-2021)
 - 2.6. Increase LCFD Tactical EMS (TEMS) membership from four to six personnel. Develop funding strategy and ongoing equipment maintenance strategy in cooperation with LCPD. (2019-2020)
3. Evaluate and Increase Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Response Capabilities. (2019-2021)
 - 3.1. Complete risk assessment. Develop strategy. (2019-2020)
 - 3.2. Develop appropriate policies and procedures. (2020)
 - 3.3. Secure funding and procure necessary PPE and equipment. (2020)
 - 3.4. Implement appropriate training regimen. (2020-2021)
 - 3.5. Strategy includes strengthening partnerships with neighboring agencies with greater equipment caches and greater needs. Joint training potential. (2020-2021)
4. Special/Technical Operations Sustainability – Same challenge for all teams. Training costs, equipment costs. (Assessment and Budget Strategy 2019; Impact 2020-2021)
 - 4.1. Complete assessment of equipment and training needs for each special operations team listed below.
 - 4.1.1. USAR (Technical Rope Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Trench Rescue, Collapse Rescue, Search)
 - 4.1.2. HAZMAT
 - 4.1.3. Water/Ice/Dive
 - 4.1.4. TEMS
 - 4.2. Create annual funding goals for each team, based on average of annual needs assessment.
 - 4.3. Investigate alternative funding strategies.
 - 4.4. Gain buy-in and support from municipal and regional representatives.
 - 4.5. Complete renewal of WI USAR Task Force 1 and WI State HAZMAT contracts, and perpetuate involvement with both state strategies. (2019)

5. Turnout Time and Off-Duty Emergency Call-Back Assessment.
 - 5.1. Analyze station and company turnout time and determine accuracy of current CAD and RMS data. Address any pertinent outcomes of assessment. (2019)
 - 5.2. Assess off-duty personnel emergency call-back status and procedures. Develop strategy based on outcomes to streamline effective emergency call-back policies and procedures to support expedient call-back support. (2019)
 - 5.3. Assessment of current staff call-back travel times and notification systems. Assessment of potential strategies for future personnel residency requirements and/or residency incentives. (2019-2020)

6. Assess and increase Interoperability with regional partners. (2019-2023: Depends on response from multiple neighboring jurisdictions.)
 - 6.1. Assess potential options for streamlined mutual-aid built to mirror MABAS plans.
 - 6.2. Explore capacity and determine opportunities for automatic-mutual-aid, no-boundaries dispatching, and closest unit dispatch. Auto-aid agreements have greatest value immediately, are most easily attainable, and positively impact ISO rating for all involved.
 - 6.3. Develop more reasonable MABAS plans and strengthen utilization of those plans.
 - 6.4. Coordinate joint training and exercise with County Emergency Management and neighboring jurisdictions.
 - 6.5. Strengthen radio communications plans between agencies.
 - 6.6. Assess and work towards funding additional repeated, county-wide radio channels.
 - 6.7. Strengthen LCFD involvement with statewide MABAS organization.

7. Improved City-wide Emergency Management. (2019-2023 – depends on cooperation with city departments)
 - 7.1. Community-wide emergency management assessment. (2019-2020)
 - 7.2. Develop and revise emergency management strategy and complete City Emergency Operations Plan based on assessment. Develop policy to support ongoing maintenance of Emergency Operations Plan. (2019-2020)
 - 7.3. Define roles and responsibilities of city departments. Develop interdepartmental communications, equipment inventories for each department, and implement departmental staff training plan. (2019-2021)
 - 7.4. Provide city-wide training plan for NIMS, ASHER, flood and other high-risk potential. (2020-2021)
 - 7.5. Complete the ongoing City Hall Security Assessment process and develop strategy with LCPD and City Management to secure and protect City Hall. (2019-2021)
 - 7.6. Update City Hall evacuation plan to meet all-hazards strategy specific to type of incident. (2019)
 - 7.7. Assess and create strategy for Flood and Severe Weather Response Plans that involves and engages all City Department Heads. (2019-2020)
 - 7.8. Plan and fund tabletop and practical exercise events to test city capabilities. Partner with County Emergency Management goals and support. (2020-2023)



Initiative 3: EMS/ALS Response

Overall Objective: Expand ALS Paramedic first response capacity citywide in order to provide the highest level of pre-hospital emergency medical care in partnership with Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance Service.

Major tasks:

1. Expanding the ALS capability to the entire community with paramedics stationed at all fire stations. (2023)
 - 1.1. Prepare and certify an increased number of paramedics. Currently eight paramedics in 2018. Final target goal of 27-30 paramedics. (2023 or beyond. Targets of opportunity, i.e., hiring, training grants, etc.)
 - 1.2. Acquire cardiac monitors and ALS equipment to equip all fire stations with consistent equipment. (2019-2021)
 - 1.3. Improve collaboration, interoperability, and training, with Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance (2019-2020)
 - 1.4. Update Emergency Medical Dispatching (EMD) training and procedures, to include updating county ordinance related to EMD information re-communicated between Tri-State Dispatch and EDC. Identify safety gains through proper use of available EMD codes to identify emergent response versus non-emergent responses.
 - 1.5. Participate in long-range strategic planning with Gundersen Tri-State Ambulance. Develop a mutually sustainable economic model that supports the partnership long-range. (2019)
2. Create an “EMS Coordinator” position as a primary point of contact for the department, the public and for other agencies. This position will also be responsible for coordinating and overseeing consistent training and quality assurance of EMS operations capabilities. (2019)
3. Link with community outreach initiative to inform relevant branding processes and to build public awareness of LCFD EMS Services. (2019-2020)
4. Assess demand and potential impact of community paramedicine partnerships. While an overall low-priority, the LCFD will watch for partnership opportunities to engage with Gundersen Health System and Mayo Clinic Health System on this state and national service trend. (2019-2023)



Initiative 4: Leadership and Organizational Development

Overall Objective:

Build leadership capacity to support operations and strategic development of the LCFD, consistent with our core values of Respect, Integrity, Service, and Excellence. Develop future leaders at all levels, and foster a high-performance culture of professionalism. Establish and uphold performance standards for all roles in the department.

Major tasks:

1. Leadership development for officers and aspiring officers. (2019 prep, 2020 program launch, 2021-2023 program assessment and adjustments)
 - 1.1. Create an in-house Officer Development training plan. Utilize internal staff and outside educators as part of a coordinated program of leadership development.
 - 1.2. Utilize state and national conferences to develop our own leadership training capacity and identify future external presenters to add to the LCFD officer development program.
 - 1.3. Explicit goals to include developing leaders who, in turn, develop other leaders. Train-the-trainer opportunities should be prioritized over other options
2. Finalize Training and competency plans (“task books”) for all roles and ranks. (2020-2022)
 - 2.1. Currently have task books for probationary Firefighters and Engineers. Establish task books for Lieutenant, Captain, and Chief Officer positions.
 - 2.2. Establish policies and processes to support or require completion (when appropriate or mandated) of a task book before being qualified to act in role and/or promote into role. Task books should provide ongoing professional development direction and goals post-promotion. Job/position descriptions updated to match task book goals. (2020-2022)
3. Develop plan for organizational leadership continuity. (2019-2023)
 - 3.1. Develop career paths for promotions.
 - 3.2. Project position vacancies and engage department leaders in focused mentorship to prepare interested candidates for promotion.
4. Improve inter-divisional integration. Strengthen alignment of Inspectors and Operations personnel on consistent building inspection program. Support target hazard and commercial pre-planning goals. (2019-2021)
5. Strengthen and Reinforce Incident Management Policies, Practices, and Training Standards. (2019-2021)
 - 5.1. Renew commitment to all personnel completing Blue Card All-Hazards Incident Management program. Plan and fund as a priority. Ongoing refresher training strategy and ongoing assessment of post-incident reviews. (2019-2020)
 - 5.2. Create strategy for additional Command Staff training and exercise. (2019-2020)
 - 5.3. Reinforce clear policy and procedure on incident management strategy and assignments of Division/Group Supervisors and dedicated Safety Officer function to support overall incident strategy and safety. (2019)

Initiative 5: Employee Fitness and Wellness

Overall Objective: Support all employees' efforts to work safely, to maintain fitness for duty standards, and provide opportunity for overall employee wellness throughout their careers. Remain an employer of choice while upholding high standards for performance through superior workplace wellness measures.

Major tasks:

1. Occupational Cancer Exposure Risk Reduction program.
 - 1.1. Develop policy and procedural guidance regarding decontamination equipment and industry best practices. (2019-2020)
 - 1.2. Provide a second set of turnout gear to all firefighting personnel. Consider funding options. Goal is to reduce employee exposure and contaminants in stations and on apparatus. To immediately wash contaminated gear while on duty, a second set is essential for success of program. Develop annual budget strategy and dedicate funding for PPE replacement program in line with national and manufacturer standards. (2019-2021)
 - 1.3. Ensure that all front line apparatus have consistent gross decontamination equipment. (2019-2020)
 - 1.4. Assess and implement "clean cab" concept evaluation and implementation. Determine best options for the LCFD. Add this consideration to future apparatus specifications. Implement on new apparatus and assess retro-design of existing apparatus. (2019-2023).
2. Fitness and Wellness Initiative.
 - 2.1. Develop and implement "Fitness for Duty" standards for job specific functional fitness and ongoing fitness assessment from hire to retirement. Provide or coordinate fitness data on annual employee physical exams. (2019-2021)
 - 2.2. Continue development of partnership with Mayo Health System to develop, implement, and study long-term Fitness and Wellness Program efforts. (2019-2020)
 - 2.3. Certify minimum of three Peer Fitness Trainers to manage workout programs and peer coaching. (2020-2021)
 - 2.4. Explore and implement expectations for daily workout time and fitness goals for 56-hour and 40-hour personnel. Engage labor and management to make fitness for duty an organizational priority. (2019-2020)



3. Develop and Implement Incident Rehabilitation (Rehab) Program. Current efforts are underway.
 - 3.1. Engage with Tri-State Ambulance and our Medical Director to develop policy and procedures, and to support incident Rehab operations. (2019-2020)
 - 3.2. Develop consistent Rehab equipment and supply cache. Determine storage, transport, and inventory management needs and processes. (2020-2021)
4. Mental Health Awareness and Support. (2019-2023)
 - 4.1. Research, develop, and document policy, procedures, and resources for critical interventions. Work with IAFF, IAFC, and other national partners to develop and implement the most effective programs.
5. Complete implementation of Random Drug Testing Program in line with L127 CBA. (2019)
6. Complete Department Plan for Line-of-Duty Fatalities, Active-Duty Fatalities, and Retiree Fatalities.
 - 6.1. Complete LAST/LODD Plans in coordination with State LAST Program and guidance from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Includes annual data collection on critical personal information and last wishes. Align plans and coordinate contact information with IAFC, IAFF, PFFW, WSFCA, and other support agencies. Secure storage and policy development to support annual review and training. (2019)
 - 6.2. Support development and implementation of the Wisconsin Fire Chiefs Education Association's "Chief-to-Chief Peer Support Program". (2019-2020)



Initiative 6: Infrastructure and Technology

Overall Objective: Rebuild of facilities to support our operations and our culture. Address IT shortcomings and put necessary systems in place.

Major tasks:

1. New or Refurbished Fire Station Projects.
 - 1.1. Follow direction from the Mayor's "Fire Station Task Force" to refurbish or replace all four existing stations, and to build a new fifth station on the south side of the city where data shows continued city growth and the estimated 15-50 year impacts of the Town of Shelby/La Crosse Boundary agreement. (2019-2023)
 - 1.2. Use allocated Capital funds for site assessment, property acquisition, and architectural design. Secure additional municipal funding for capital investment. Explore and engage public-private partnerships. Explore partnership opportunities with internal City Departments and external governmental partners. (2019-2023)
 - 1.3. Convene "Station Design Committee" including cross-section of organization to work with architectural consultants to design stations based on existing needs assessment and in coordination with target opportunities. (2019-2023)
 - 1.4. Engage on Station Design Conference opportunities and dedicate training and travel funding to get critical project personnel to educational and networking opportunities. (2019-2020)
2. Strengthen Fleet and Facility Management Program.
 - 2.1. Support the Mayor's initiative to develop long-range plan with the city for forecasted replacement of heavy apparatus and support vehicles. (2019-2020)
 - 2.2. Increase effectiveness and management of fleet and facilities maintenance program. Research and implement asset management technologies in coordination with city efforts on this initiative. (2019-2021)
 - 2.3. Research and implement strategy for the addition of a dedicated 40-hour Emergency Vehicle Technician. Consider partnerships with LCPD, the regional airport, and neighboring jurisdictions to expand on existing maintenance programs and provide budget support. (2019-2023)
3. Complete Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) transition. (2019)
 - 3.1. Complete purchasing plans and inventory management.
 - 3.2. Complete training plans incorporated with annual SCBA qualification assessment.
 - 3.3. Develop policy and procedure to address use and maintenance needs.
4. Develop and implement LCFD Information Technology (IT) Strategy in coordination with City IT Department and County Dispatch (EDC).
 - 4.1. Complete EnerGov inspection records transition in already progress. (2019)
 - 4.2. Complete Network File Storage and SharePoint Transition projects already in progress. Provide training and policy guidance to support ongoing use, maintenance, and records retention of electronic records storage in line with City policy. (2019)
 - 4.3. Develop and secure dedicated funding strategy for critical technology platforms (TargetSolutions, Lexipol KMS, lamResponding Application) and new IT opportunities as they arise. Work with the city IT Department to prioritize systems due for replacement or new implementation. (2019-2023)
 - 4.4. Assess and develop strategy with City IT and Departments for long-range radio maintenance and replacement plans. (2019-2022)

- 4.5. Participate in EDC CAD conversion process to address LCFD needs. Assessment should include GPS location technology, CAD Mapping advances, and capacity for increased station alerting capacity. (2019-2021)
 - 4.6. Evaluate and plan for updated station alerting system. Develop plan and funding strategy in coordination with EDC CAD and new Fire Stations projects. (2019-2023)
 - 4.7. Evaluate existing Records Management System (RMS) and complete RFP process to increase the effectiveness of our RMS. Work in partnership with City IT, LCPD, TSA, and EDC to create streamlined records management system and processes. (2020-2021)
 - 4.8. Complete transition to new First Watch data management system to support ongoing data-driven decision making and support accurate data reporting. Align with RMS strategy and assessment, and connection to existing and future data streams. (2019-2020)
 - 4.9. Research and consider implementation of new national FirstNet Mobile Phone Communications capability. If assessment leads to department-wide utilization, develop training, policies and procedures to support implementation and support long-range strategy. (2019-2020)
 - 4.10. Assess existing education simulation programs for Fire and EMS training needs. Create plan and funding strategy to increase IT influence on mobile Incident Management and EMS training. (2019-2021)
5. Explore use of camera technology for support of investigations and public education efforts.
 - 5.1. Explore and implement body-worn camera option for Fire Investigators and select Command Staff. Align policies, procedures and equipment with LCPD body-worn-camera program. (2019-2021)
 - 5.2. Assess firefighter helmet camera systems and issues related to social media plan, data retention and public records impact. Develop policy and plans based on outcomes of assessment. (2019-2020)
 6. Complete Needs Assessment and Design Strategy for Mobile Incident Command support apparatus.
 - 6.1. Needs assessment to determine inter-department needs to include Incident command, rehab, mobile scba air system, and specialty team equipment transportation strategies. Assessment should include partnership opportunity with LCPD and other city departments and regional partners. (2019-2020)
 - 6.2. After assessment and design phase, determine funding strategy to include council support and to develop partnership and alternative funding strategy. (2020-2022)
 - 6.3. If this project becomes a feasible and community supported reality, develop policies and procedures to effectively utilize asset in support of incident management and emergency management goals identified during assessment phase. (2020-2023)
 7. Assessment and Development of Traffic Signal Preemption Systems
 - 7.1. Partner with LCPD to assess signal preemption technology. (2019)
 - 7.2. Work with City Management and regional partners to develop funding strategy to incorporate assessment needs into implementation strategy. (2020-2023)



Conclusion

This strategic plan is intended to guide the organization for the next five years and beyond. It was created with thoughtful input from internal and external stakeholders, guided by a group of committed fire department leaders of all ranks, and representing all areas of the LCFD.

Plans and circumstances change. The initiatives that form the core of this plan were written with a mixed set of action steps: large and small, short-term and long-term, internally and externally focused. Of course, all of these efforts are undertaken in order to assure that the department remains equipped and focused on service to the community. The steps necessary to maintain that sustainable readiness have been chosen and prioritized with care. They were also framed to be flexible: as leaders, we expect to adjust course and reprioritize based on our experiences, on changing conditions, and on the needs of the city. Many initiative timelines can be modified based on resource availability. Others may become more or less urgent based on changing circumstances, and we are prepared to adjust accordingly.

The La Crosse Fire Department wishes to thank stakeholders and others interested enough to study this plan, and the organization welcomes input. Please direct questions or comments to Fire Chief Ken Gilliam.



Appendix: Strategic Planning Process Overview

The strategic plan was undertaken by the La Crosse Fire Department, and led by a Strategic Planning Working Committed described below. Captain Lance Tryggestad chaired this effort, with executive sponsorship from Fire Chief Ken Gilliam.

Strategic Planning Working Committee Members:

- Aaron Bolstad, Captain
- Adam Foley, Lieutenant
- Clayton Anderson, Firefighter
- Craig Snyder, Assistant Chief
- David Duchrow, Lieutenant
- David Snow, Battalion Chief
- Frank Devine, Division Chief
- Greg Temp, Captain
- Isaac Zurawski, Engineer
- Jeff Murphy, Assistant Chief
- Jeff Schott, Battalion Chief
- Jesse Walters, Lieutenant
- Jim Hillcoat, Captain
- Josh DeFlorian, Engineer
- Ken Gilliam, Fire Chief
- Lance Tryggestad, Captain
- Tom Wallerich, Battalion Chief

Key inputs to the strategic plan included:

- Critical assessment of progress and learning from the most recent strategic plan.
- Multiple focus groups comprised of external stakeholders.
- Individual interviews with department leaders.
- An online questionnaire answered by nearly all department members.
- Two extended working sessions with the above-described working committee.
- Ad hoc revision.
- Review of CPSE accreditation process expectations.

Other Contributors:

Chad Weinstein of Ethical Leaders in Action facilitated internal working sessions, gathered input from department members through interviews and an online questionnaire, and worked with department leaders to draft this plan document.

Fred Kusch of JFK Associates gathered critical input from external stakeholders primarily through focus groups conducted in and around La Crosse.

The Center for Public Safety Excellence and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International provided training and professional standards that guided this process.





