

Ross Township Fire Department
Strategic Plan
2011 - 2015

By: Chief Steve Miller
Ross Township Fire Department
Ross Ohio



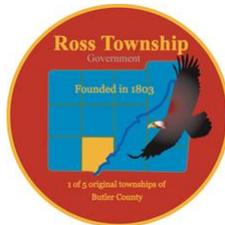
Ross Township Fire Department

Chief Steve Miller
District Chief Dan Young
District Chief Ron Holt
Assistant Chief Charles Caudill

Captain Brian Lockaby
Captain Karl Poffinbarger
Captain Jim Fletcher
Captain Chris Johns

Lieutenant Tom Licata
Lieutenant Ron Stenger
Lieutenant Pete Berling
Lieutenant Shane Packer

Safety Officer Paul Bricking



Ross Township Administration

Trustee Raymond J. Wurzelbacher
Trustee Ellen Yordy
Trustee Thomas E. Willsey
Fiscal Officer Judy Huffman
Administrator Robert W. Bass

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FIRE CHIEF INTRODUCTION

Trying to predict the future is difficult and challenging. Now that we have a strategic plan, one could say that we are done for a while. Not true. We are only just beginning. This strategic plan is a living document, which evolves as the department evolves. Our fire department must continue to change as the needs of the community change. Although we are in poor economic times, the property owner continues to front the majority cost of township services.

Our fire and emergency activity increases each year. With the predicted growth of the township, calls for service will increase even more. We will continue to provide high quality services to our customers while seeking out new funding sources and operate as efficiently as possible. Our members continue to meet the increased demands placed upon them by myself, and the community. They do so without asking for praise. They do so because they are dedicated to the mission of the Ross Township Fire Department.

I have a vision of what the Ross Township Fire Department can be to this community. The Ross Township Fire Department will continue to provide the best trained fire, rescue and emergency medical force with the funding provided to us. We will continue to pursue the goals within this document. Along with that comes a price. We will pursue these improvements through the proper format of annual operating budgets, capital improvement plans, all with appropriate justification. A major part of a Fire Chief's job is to identify significant issues and trends. The next step is to plan and make recommendations to the Township Trustees, explaining the level of risk associated with each issue. The last step in this process is to secure the resources to deal with these issues, knowing that the township administration has the final say as to the levels of service the community can afford.

The purpose of this plan is to identify the needs of the organization and outline a process on how to meet those needs. This strategic plan creates the road map for the department to follow. It has given us the opportunity to reflect upon ourselves, and the services which we provide. We know and understand the issues that we face. We also realize that we are but one piece of the overall pie, which comprises Ross Township. It is now our duty to educate the community and the Board of Trustees on the future needs of the Ross Township Fire Department.

Our intent is to improve the quality of services in which we provide to our community. We hope that this document has provided the reader with an understanding of the Ross Township Fire Department and how we intend to look to our future. We will continue to develop productive and professional relationships with the other township departments. We look forward to continued positive and supporting relationships with future Township Trustees and administrators. I would like to personally thank the community for its continued support of the Ross Township Fire Department.

I, as the Fire Chief, hold the members of the Ross Township Fire Department in the highest regard. Their performance, attitude, and energy are what make this department what it is. They are the true reason why we have such an outstanding organization. What they accomplish on a daily basis does not go unnoticed by this administration or the public. We as an organization must inform the community of the resources necessary to achieve our mission. We must have the courage to publicly defend the needs of the department in a positive manner. This plan is the first step along this path.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chief Steve Miller

MISSION, VISION, and VALUES

Clearly stated and intentionally simplistic, the Ross Township Fire Department Mission accurately describes the organizations general purpose.

“The Ross Township Fire Department is an organization of dedicated professionals whose mission is to; Save Lives, Protect Property, Protect the Environment, Provide the best services possible to the community and to treat people nice.”

Building on this mission, the department has developed *Vision* statements, thus establishing targets of excellence for the future. The following are our identified vision statements:

THE ROSS TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT;

- Will have adequate staffing available at all times to provide fast, safe, and effective operations for both a medium-risk structure fire and simultaneous EMS incident.
- Will respond from modern, adequate facilities that are located to the best advantage, blending both geographic and demand-based concepts.
- Will continually maintain the necessary skills and abilities to safely handle the challenges of emergency incidents now or in the future.
- Will be an active participant in shaping the regulations and standards of our industry and will be proactive in meeting the same.
- Will continue to maintain our effective teamwork, high level of professionalism and focus on personal improvement.
- Will use solid research and statistical data to provide the foundation for funding requests and organizational change.

Recognizing that its collective personality and the values of its members enhance the organization, the Ross Township Fire Department has declared a set of *Values* that include such statements as:

- We value honesty and integrity at every level of our organization.
- We value the dedication, commitment, and caring attitude of the people who make up our organization.
- We value the teamwork, camaraderie, and mutual support that make our organization a family.
- We value a continuous spirit of professionalism, as it encourages respect from our peers and those we serve.

Priority of Services Provided by Ross Township Fire Department

Incident priorities never change as far as the order in which they are considered. They are in order of importance Life Safety, Incident Stabilization and Property Conservation. Life Safety is the first priority to be considered. Anyone at an incident needs to be protected. These include fire service personnel, people directly affected by the incident, and spectators. Every incident will not have victims threaten by a fire, but there is always a hazard to firefighters to be considered.

The following are those services in priority order:

- Advanced Life Support Emergency Medical Services
- Basic Life Support Emergency Medical Services
- Fire Suppression
- Basic Rescue (vehicle extrication, machinery entrapment)
- Public Fire Safety Education
- Code Enforcement
- Advanced Rescue (confined space, high-angle, water, trench, collapse)
- Hazardous Materials Mitigation

Concerns and Expectations

A key element of the Ross Township Fire Department organizational philosophy is a high level of commitment to our customers. The Ross Township Fire Department recognizes the importance of customer satisfaction and is committed to providing superior levels of quality service the exceeds the public's expectation for a timely and effective delivery of emergency services.

The public's **expectations** of the Ross Township Fire Department that were identified are:

- Fast Response
- Proficient Skills and Knowledge
- Modern, Effective Equipment
- Keeping Pace With Change
- Provide Community With A Sense Of Security
- Financial Efficiency

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT)

STRENGTHS

It is important for any organization to identify their strengths in order to assure they are capable of providing the services requested by customers and to ensure that strengths are consistent with the issues facing the organization. Often, identification of organizational strengths leads to the channeling of efforts toward primary community needs that match those strengths. Programs that do not match organizational strengths or the primary function of the business should be seriously reviewed to evaluate the rate of return on precious staff time. Through a consensus process, some of the *strengths* of the Ross Township Fire Department were identified as listed below.

- Unity and teamwork of personnel
- Effective governing policies and procedures
- Progressive training programs targeting new skills while maintaining proficiency in Fire & EMS operations
- Adequate apparatus and equipment for today's services
- High level of professionalism recognized by community
- Specialized equipment i.e.. extrication, rope & water rescue
- Ability to obtain outside funding

WEAKNESSES

Performance, or lack of performance within an organization depends greatly on the identification of weaknesses and how they are confronted. While it is not unusual for these issues to be at the heart of the organization's overall problems, it is unusual for organizations to be able to identify and deal with these issues effectively on their own. For any organization to either begin or to continue to move progressively forward, it must not only be able to identify its strengths, but also those areas where it does not function well or not at all. These areas of needed enhancements are not the same as threats to be identified later in this document, but rather those day-to-day issues and concerns that may slow or inhibit progress. Through a consensus process, some of the *weaknesses* of the Ross Township Fire Department were identified as listed below.

- Inadequate staffing for structural fire response
- Personnel able to obtain EMS Paramedic certifications
- Difficulty in balancing training quantity with training quality
- Difficulty in complying with "2-in, 2-out" standards

- Apparatus replacement/maintenance program
- Communications: Inability to monitor radios when apparatus go in-service
- Tanker 103 is not drivable by some
- No benefits for members
- No outside training facilities/fire training grounds

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities for an organization depend on the identification of strengths and weaknesses and how they can be enhanced. The focus of opportunities is not solely on existing service, but on expanding and developing new possibilities both inside and beyond the traditional service area. Many *opportunities* exist for Ross Township Fire Department.

- New standards / regulations lead to safer, more effective operation
- Federal funding opportunities (Assistance to Firefighters Grants)
- Maintaining contracts to provide emergency services to the Fernald Preserve and the Village of Millville
- Potential water supply improvements can lead to ISO improvements
- Growth in the township leads to growth in tax base
- Strategic planning for organization's future
- New technology leads to safer, more effective work environment
- Potential for continuing partnerships in training programs
- Potential for our firefighters to advancing their careers in the fire service

THREATS

Fundamental to the success of any strategic plan is the understanding that *threats* are not completely and/or directly controlled by the organization. Some of the current and future threats to the Ross Township Fire Department include:

- Staffing - Declining number of volunteer firefighters
- New standards and regulations funnel away funds from core service
- Public opinion can be turned negative unexpectedly
- Federal funding can lead to greater federal regulation
- Instability of funding levy's
- Fire protection in non-hydrant areas
- Anti-growth sentiments cause internal political friction
- Growth in community bringing increased service demand

CRITICAL ISSUES

Through both an internal and external analysis of the various issues facing the organization, a number of concerns were identified that could ultimately affect the overall welfare of the organization itself. These issues, if ignored, have the potential to impact the ability of the Ross Township Fire Department to deliver its product to the level the customer desires. These "critical issues" are identified as follows:

- Staffing: The ability to have sufficient personnel available, 24 hours per day, to safely and effectively handle the increasing service demand.
- Funding: The continuing need to balance the available funding resources with the increasing cost of doing business effectively.
- Capital Resources: Making certain the apparatus keeps pace with the changes in the community and assuring efficient, well-placed facilities are located to meet service demand.
- Training: Assuring the maintenance of existing basic skills while meeting the need for new technologically advanced training.
- Regulations and Standards: Keeping pace with an ever-increasing list of standards and legislation designed to govern the safety and efficiency of the fire service.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The strategic planning process, to this point, has dealt with establishing the mission, vision, and values of the organization. In addition, identification of strengths, weaknesses and needs of both the organization and customer was accomplished. In order to achieve the mission of the Ross Township Fire Department, realistic goals and objectives must be established. Goals and objectives are imperative to provide the individual members with clear direction. As goals and objectives are management tools, they should be updated on an ongoing basis to identify what has been accomplished and to note changes within the organization and the community. The realization of a performance target should be recognized and celebrated to provide a sense of organizational accomplishment.

The goals and objectives should now become the focus of the efforts of the Ross Township Fire Department. Great care was taken to ensure that the critical needs and areas of needed enhancement previously identified were addressed within the goals and objectives.

By following these goals and objectives carefully, the organization will be redirected and guided into the future. They should also greatly reduce the number of obstacles and distractions for the organization and its members.

Overall these goals and objectives provide very specific timelines for the next several years and more general timelines beyond that. The leadership of the Ross Township Fire Department should meet periodically to review progress towards these goals and objectives and adjust timelines and specific targets as needs and the environment change.

Goal 1.0 Administration Goals

Objective 1.1 Enhance the leadership abilities within the department by providing opportunities to obtain the appropriate skills

Providing our personnel with skilled leaders is a vital element to the success of our department. By tradition, leadership training has been overlooked in departments of our size, and at times our operations have suffered because of a lack of leadership. As the demand for our services for fire and EMS continues, having our members thoroughly trained to lead, impacts not only emergency operations, but all areas of our department. Ross Twp Fire Department is committed to providing our department with top-quality leadership training. To address the objective, the department will;

- ***Implement a leadership section into our orientation packet for new hires.*** Providing a section on Leadership into the orientation packet will give our new hires with the necessary skills to excel and will have a positive impact on our immediate operations as well as in the future.
- ***Encourage and provide funding for member participation in outside training opportunities focused on command and leadership.*** Members can gain valuable education in these core area by attending outside training courses and seminars, such as the Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC), the State Fire School at Bowling Green University and leadership seminars given by the Ohio Fire Chiefs Association. We already currently give the Officers of the department an opportunity to attend the FDIC on an annual basis but they are lacking on specialized classes focused on command and leadership.
- ***Require future Officers to be crossed trained in all areas of the fire service.*** As Ross Twp has developed into an all hazard response fire department, having officers who are crossed trained as firefighters/EMTs and in special operations is crucial to our department. No longer can an officer rely on their fire suppression experience and training and hope to adequately command the incidents that we respond to on a daily basis.

Timeframe and Cost

The majority of the action items under objective 1.1 can be accomplished within the timeframe of this plan and within the operating budget. We currently budget \$6,000 to send officers to the FDIC every year. The plan would be to alternate going from the FDIC one year and sending members to other seminars dealing with leadership and command training. This would put no extra cost to the budget.

Objective 1.2 Increase the number of paid staff members

Ross Twp began to utilize part time staff in 2003. This was done to fill a lack of volunteers during the day time hours. This mirrors a nationwide trend that has seen a steep decrease in the number of volunteer firefighter/ EMTs. This part time staff was initially at 3 personnel at one station. When Millville and Ross Twp Fire Department's merged operations, the numbers increased to 4 personnel and one full time Chief. The department is now staffed seven days a week with four personnel from 6:00 am to 6:00 pm and is staffed around the clock during the weekends. This has lifted a huge burden off our volunteers to fill a squad schedule. In 2010 the department received a SAFER grant from the Department of Homeland Security to hire four new part time firefighter medics. This grant is for three years. This gives us an opportunity to staff one of our stations with part time personnel 24/7. This grant is 100% matching for two years while the township is committed for the third year. While we remain committed to our volunteer workforce, we recognize the need to provide service at all times. To address this we will;

- ***Continue to examine developing and future trends that will affect our staffing.*** As the township grows and our population ages, we will see an increase in the call volume, which may impact staffing. Monitoring these developments will allow us to respond accordingly.
- ***Expand part time program in 2012.*** With the award of the SAFER grant this will place part time personnel in the stations 24/7. With the current plan we only have 2 part time personnel in the station from Sunday night through Thursday night. When the SAFER grant is completed this plan will call for adding two more part time staff on these affected nights and adding one more position on the day shifts giving us a total of five personnel on during the day time hours. Many times on EMS incidents a crew of three is needed especially during incidents that require ALS. The third person would be a paramedic. They would be available to chase either squad in the township if needed. This would cut down on fuel cost by not sending a second squad or engine. But more importantly this would leave two personnel back at their station to staff a second squad or engine for a back up run. This would also create a three man engine for a fire response.

Timeframe and cost

While the first action item is virtually cost free, the second will increase our current part time program expenditures by approximately \$164,000 annually. Another option that has been considered was to replace a part time position with a full time position. It has been suggested that this would increase accountability and reliability, however this option would not allow us to cover much time. The part time program as proposed above would allow us to cover more time at a lesser cost.

Objective 1.3 Improve current member retention programs

Keeping volunteers once we recruit them is always a challenge. To bring someone on the department who has no training at all can take over an 18 month period. This is the time it takes to get them through fire and EMS certification classes. Often, once a recruit has obtain these certifications their lives might change during this time frame and their commitment to the department isn't a priority anymore. A positive work environment, socially and physically, go a long way towards maintaining future excellence. Creating a positive atmosphere, providing opportunities to serve, facilitating training and reducing the burden on volunteers will help meet this objective. To do so we will;

- ***Increase the amount of outside training available.*** Exposing our members to nationally recognized experts, trainings on best practices as well as providing networking opportunities with peers allow for professional development and personal growth.
- ***Improve internal compliance with policies, procedures and standards.*** Review and revise our departments standard operating procedures and guidelines on an annual basis to ensure consistency with our operations.
- ***Increase recognition of accomplishments and positive involvement.*** Providing our staff with positive feedback and recognition of their accomplishments and commitment shows our concern for and appreciation of their time and effort.
- ***Improve compliance with fitness and wellness requirements.*** Ross Twp received grant funding in 2004 to outfit our stations with state of the art fitness equipment. The very nature of our work force contributes in part to the difficulties in enforcing a mandatory fitness requirement. Through increased monitoring, peer involvement, incentives and recognition, we can continue this most important component of our operations.
- ***Investigate and implement a better system of volunteer compensation.*** Currently Ross Twp volunteers receive points for each run made and training they attend. Each member receives two points for each run and training and the points are valued at \$6.00 a point. Essentially they receive \$12.00 a run. If the incident is over an hour those points are adjusted to reflect the time they spent on the incident. Many departments have transitioned to a paid on call system to better compensate the volunteers for their time. An analysis will be conducted to the area departments to see if Ross is comparable to our neighboring department.

Timeframe and Cost

These action items, with a few exceptions, can be implemented within the first two years of the plan. The majority of these items are low cost and in most cases can be absorbed within our operating budget. Funding outside training will cost an estimated \$2,000 a year. Depending upon what type of system is implemented to better compensation, this option could cost up to \$25,000 per year.

Objective 1.4 Increase recruitment of community members and others for the position of firefighter and emergency medical technician.

Volunteer staffing is the most cost effective option available to provide emergency services. Ross Twp has a long tradition of volunteer staffing, which is recognized and supported by this plan. However, like most of the departments in Butler County with volunteers, we realize the challenges inherent in maintaining a quality volunteer force in the face of the ever increasing time on training demands. We will always have a need for a volunteer force while maintaining a part time staff. To address this, we will;

- ***Develop a consistent advertising program to support volunteer recruitment.*** Through regular events and media ads, this program will stress the need for volunteers.
- ***Develop a working relationship with the local vocational schools and community colleges.*** We have several schools in the area that are now certifying high school students in their junior and senior years in high school for firefighters and emergency technicians. We have a local community college that certifies these student with the same certification. When these students graduate they have no place to start their careers. Working with the schools, we can give the students a place to intern and gain experience from volunteering a night a week at our stations.

Timeframe and Cost

The action items identified above can be implemented within the timeframe of the plan. The primary cost associated with these items comes from increased advertising for new volunteers. Estimated cost of advertising is approximately \$1,500 per year.

Objective 1.5 Seek an increase to our operating levy to adequately fund operations and needed capital improvements

Maintaining financial sustainability is a critical component to this plan. A fiscally responsible department with secure funding to cover its needs is a benefit to the community we serve. For years Ross Twp operated with its operating budget and was not plagued by cost overruns and deficits that seems too commonplace in local government. This has not been the case for the last few years. The department has had to dip into the general fund to support the operation of the fire department. There are many challenges facing us in the future including staffing, apparatus replacement, facility issues and more. Increasing our operating levy will be necessary to fund the items detailed within this plan, both operational and capital. We will have our current fire levy expire in 2011. Five years prior we replaced our renewal levy with a replacement 3 mill levy. We proposed that we place our current 3 mill levy on the ballot in 2011 and in 2013 place an additional levy to secure funding for staffing and other capital improvements in the future. This will bring additional mills that we will ask the community to support our department. We realize that the Ross Township property owner already carries a large tax burden and we will only ask for exactly what we need.

Objective 1.6 Develop financial strategies to replace equipment as it becomes obsolete or too expensive to repair.

By adopting current best practices from the private sector, we will be able to adequately fix value on equipment and plan for its retirement through reliable depreciation schedules. To accomplish this, we will;

- ***Establish equipment depreciation schedules.*** This will allow us to better budget and plan for replacement.
- ***Train fire department administrators in current accounting principles.*** The can be accomplished through self-study, seminars and training courses.

Timeframe and Cost

Both of these actions items above can be accomplished within the first two years of the plan, Training fire department administration staff is a low cost item that can be accomplished within the operating budget. Establishing a depreciation system will take some work to integrate within the townships accounting practices.

Goal 2.0 Operations Goals

Objective 2.1 Develop and maintain an apparatus prevention maintenance program in compliance with national standards.

Emergency apparatus are expensive to purchase and maintain. These are vehicles that can sit for long periods of time, and then are expected to perform without fault under extreme conditions. Their maintenance is also a significant liability for the township. As we purchase new, more advanced vehicles, the maintenance becomes more difficult to perform. Currently smaller apparatus maintenance is performed by our fire department staff. Maintenance on a larger apparatus is performed by our on duty personnel and at times the road department personnel. Both have served well, however, due to national standards, it is necessary to have certified emergency vehicle technicians (EVTs) maintain the fleet. In an effort to address maintenance and liability issues we propose the following;

- ***Contract with an EVT certified company to perform annual pump testing.*** This annual testing assures that the mobile fire pumps are performing to specifications and is completed by a third party for quality assurance.
- ***Contract with an EVT certified company to perform annual safety inspections.*** These annual inspections of the entire fleet help to identify maintenance and safety issues before they become a problem and are required under National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards.
- ***Certify our current members that are Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certified to the Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT).*** We have a few members that are ASE certified and have shown interest in obtaining the EVT certification. With the department paying for these certifications, these members can perform maintenance to their abilities and making repairs or maintenance with the tools that we have in the firehouse we will be in compliance with national standards. For repairs that go beyond their capabilities or a lack of specialized tools we will outsource to repair shops that currently repair the bigger jobs.

Timeframe and Cost

To help alleviate liability concerns, these action items should be implemented within the first two years of the plan. We currently utilize certified contractors for bigger jobs. The initial cost of this program may be higher than our current maintenance arrangements, as we progress through the Annual Safety Inspections and the identified repairs needed, we will save money and reduce the risk. ASI's will cost approximately \$3,000 per year and pump testing will cost approximately \$800. Certifying our current members to obtain their EVT certification will cost approximately \$1,000 initially.

Objective 2.2 Evaluate apparatus needs based on current and future fire department operation.

Our current fleet was purchased over the last thirty-one years and reflects many different operation priorities. During this time, we have evolved from two separate entities serving Ross Township and the Village of Millville into one department. We are now in the position to streamline our operation to reflect our current and future operations. Part of this process will include;

- ***Eliminate Brush 101 or 102.*** This would include examining both trucks mechanically and functionally and assessing the need for two brush units.
- ***Eliminate Tanker 101 and Tanker 103.*** This includes eliminating both units and replacing them with one new tanker capable of pumping and supplying an alternate water supply. Tanker 101 is over twenty-four years old and is in need of replacement. Tanker 103 is a 1993 model and was donated to the department from the Fernald site. Although Tanker 103 is mechanically sound it is just too big to drive and really would require a CDL to drive in the private sector. With a manual transmission there are only a few members on the department that can shift the transmission. The vehicle normally sits because of a lack of certified drivers.
- ***Eliminate or place as reserve Engine 104.*** When the service life expires on this engine in 2014, a recommendation would be to eliminate this apparatus or place it as a reserve engine. Although it serves us well there would be no need to keep a fourth engine in service. This apparatus was donated to the township from the Fernald site and will have no financial or operation impact to the department.

Timeframe and Cost

All three of the items mentioned above can be accomplished anytime during the phase of this plan and at little or no cost. Selling any one of the above mentioned apparatus would generate some revenue for the department. Replacement cost of Tanker 101 or Tanker 103 will be mentioned in the next objective.

Objective 2.3 Replacement of existing apparatus and purchase of new

Maintaining a modern state of the art fleet of emergency apparatus is of critical importance to our efforts to constantly improve our services and response to emergencies. As vehicles become obsolete, it is essential to replace them with a set timeframe. The department has set a lifecycle of 12 years for ambulance units, 20 years for fire engines, and 22 years for tankers and brush units. In order to maintain an efficient fleet we will recommend replacement of the following apparatus in the next five years. A spreadsheet for the entire fleet will be posted in objective 2.5.

- ***Replace Tanker 101 -Immediate Need.*** Tanker 101 is over 3 years past its service life. Tanker 101 is obsolete and has proven to be not very useful in fire ground operations when tankers are needed. The front mounted pump will not pass an annual pump test and the water tank does not carry enough water to meet our needs. We have tried over the past few years to obtain grant funding to replace this unit and have not been successful. As stated in the above objective a recommendation would be to replace this unit along with Tanker 103 with a new unit capable of pumping and supplying alternate water during fire ground operations.
- ***Replace Brush 101 or 102 - Immediate Need.*** Brush 101 is two years past it's service life and Brush 102 is over eight years past it's service life. A four wheel drive unit is essential for our needs in fighting fires that require us to go off road. There is however no need to have two four wheel drive units in service. Although not used that often having a unit that is updated and dependable to vital is to our operations.
- ***Replace Engine 101 in 2012 preferably with a Quint or Tower.*** Engine 101 is currently 18 years old. This is a first out engine at Station 101 and will reach it service life in 2012. Engine 101 is a commercially built chassis and does not meet current NFPA Standards. Replacing this unit with a "quint", which is a fire engine with an aerial ladder would help to improve fire ground safety and efficiency as well as maintaining our communities ISO fire insurance rating. This recommendation would also be based on future development in the township.
- ***Replace Squad 102 in 2013*** - The life squads are the most active part of our fleet, accumulating more wear in one year than most vehicles obtain in their life. In the year 2013 Squad 102 will need to be replaced according to our replacement schedule.
- ***Replace Squad 103 in 2014*** - The life squads are the most active part of our fleet, accumulating more wear in one year than most vehicles obtain in their life. In the year 2013 Squad 103 will need to be replaced according to our replacement schedule.

Timeframe and Cost

The proposed timeframe for apparatus replacement can be found in section 2.5 in the plan. Apparatus replacement is the largest single component of the this plan in terms of complexity

and cost. It is estimated it will cost \$1,370,000 to accomplish the actions listed above over the five year strategic planning period. While expensive, this is perhaps one of the most critical aspects of our plan.

Objective 2.4 Provide for safety and operational upgrades to the fleet

It is essential to have the ability to respond to new operational and safety developments as they occur. Fire suppression and EMS are evolving fields that change as new information and technology become available. This makes it imperative to upgrade equipment when needed.

- ***Install headset intercom systems on all apparatus.*** Headset intercom systems allow all members of a responding crew to receive radio information updates and speak with each other prior to arriving on the scene. This provides for greater safety and efficiency.
- ***Install back up cameras on apparatus.*** Over the years you read about reports of firefighters getting killed from being back over. Back up cameras, which will come on when a vehicle is placed in reverse, show the vehicle operator a view of the rear of the vehicle, hopefully avoiding incidents like this.

Timeframe and Cost

These upgrades can be made during the first five years of the plan. Currently several of our vehicles already have headsets and back up cameras. As we progress and purchase new vehicles the department can add these to the specifications. Total cost of these safety upgrades are estimated at \$18,000 and can be absorbed in the pricing of new apparatus.

Objective 2.5 Develop a long range apparatus plan

The development of a long range apparatus plan, tied to this plan, makes sense fiscally and operationally, This plan will take into consideration not only operationally issues but deployment issues tied to growth forecast for the township. As the plan can be developed by department personnel, there is no cost involved. Listed below is the long range apparatus plan;

Apparatus	Year	Replacement Schedule	Replacement Year
Brush 102	1980	22 Years	9 years past due
Tanker 101	1986	22 Years	3 years past due
Brush 101	1987	22 Years	2 years past due
Engine 101	1992	20 Years	2012
Squad 102	2001	12 Years	2013
Squad 103	2002	12 Years	2014
Engine 104	1994	20 Years	2014
Tanker 102	1993	22 Years	2015
Tanker 103	1993	22 Years	2015
Car 100	2005	10 Years	2015
Engine 102	1998	20 Years	2018
Rescue 101	1998	20 Years	2018
Squad 101	2010	12 Years	2022

Objective 2.6 Purchase a new Medtronic Physio Control LifePak 15 Monitor

Five years ago the Ross Township Fire Department merged with neighboring Millville Fire Department. This merger was met with many benefits, but setbacks as well. One issue the department faces on a daily basis since merging is having two different manufacturers of monitor/defibrillators. We currently operate with both Medtronic Physio Control monitors as well as two different models of Zoll monitors on our paramedic units. This results in zero interoperability between units, as well as increased costs in supplies, training, and maintenance. We have also hit a limit to the capabilities of our current Physio Control Lifepak 12 monitors. Much needed upgrades to the units as cardiac care guidelines evolve each year may not be met with our current models. To meet this we will;

- **Purchase a new Medtronic Physio Control LifePak Monitor.** The department has applied through a local community foundation grant to seek funding for this piece of vital equipment for the last two years. Due to the economic downturn, these foundations have not awarded many grants. Currently we have applied for a grant through the Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG) for the year 2010. With the purchase of the Lifepak 15 monitor/defibrillator, we will be able to progress and adapt to changes that ultimately come with advanced cardiac life support.

Timeframe and Cost

We will continue to find funding for this project. If we are not successful in obtaining funding for this purchase we will be forced to purchase the monitor through our operating budget in 2012. Cost for one of these units is approximately \$28,000.

Objective 2.7 Purchase new Minitor V Pagers

The Federal Communication Commission ordered the re banding of some radio frequencies to make room for cellular devices. This re-banding or narrowing the frequencies of public emergencies radios systems will affect the operation of our older Minitor pagers that alert our volunteer members.

- ***Purchase 25 new Minitor V Alert Pagers.*** In 2008 the department received 30 new Minitor V pagers through an Assistance to Firefighter Grant. These 30 new pagers replaced older obsolete pagers that were no longer repairable. To bring the department in compliance with the new re-banding issues we will be forced to purchase new pagers. The current Minitor III & IV pagers will no longer be operable once the rebanding is completed in 2013.

Timeframe & Cost

This purchase of the items listed above will need to be completed within two years of the plan. Funding for this purchase may be obtained through outside funding sources. If not successful the approximate cost for this purchase will be \$12,500.

3.0 Fire Prevention Goals

3.1 Fully implement comprehensive fire prevention inspection program

Full implementation of a comprehensive fire program demonstrates our commitment of creating a safe community through education, engineering and fire code enforcement. A successful program focuses on fire prevention and protection for our citizens and the business community. To enhance our program we will;

- ***Increase the number of certified fire safety inspectors.*** Our program at times is hampered by the lack of certified inspectors. During the year when we conduct our annual inspections most of the time these inspections are conducted by our on duty crews. Although not required to be an inspector to conduct a survey of the business our credibility would improve if that person is certified.
- ***Implement computerized inspection tracking.*** This system is already available to us through Firehouse software. This will streamline our reporting and will give us the opportunity to analyze our inspection and violations throughout the year.
- ***Develop a Standard Operating Procedure for conducting inspections.*** Developing this SOP will assure that all businesses are inspected in a timely manner and on a regular basis. This SOP will include provision for re-inspections.

Timeframe and Cost

The cost of the above items could vary from how many members would like to attend the fire safety inspectors class. The cost for each member being certified would cost approximately \$800 per student. There would be no cost to computerize our reporting , just the cost of setting the software up for use.

3.2 Develop new Fire Prevention Programs

The Ross Twp Fire Department has been very proactive in promoting fire safety throughout the years. Each year we reach over 700 children through our fire prevention classes. In 2008 we received funding from the AFG Fire Prevention & Safety grant to purchase a 35 foot fire safety house. Every October we take the trailer "on the road". But teaching fire safety should not be the only thing that we are teaching our community.

- ***Conduct a community needs assessment.*** This needs assessment for our community is to develop new programs that would include a wide range of citizens that we serve on a daily basis.

- ***Develop and Implement the "Remembering When" program.*** The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) "Remembering When" program is a fire and fall prevention program designed for older adults to help them live safely at home as long as possible.
- ***Develop and Implement the NFPA Risk Watch Injury Prevention program.*** Risk Watch injury prevention program gives children and their families the skills and knowledge they need to create safer home and communities. The program is a school based curriculum that links community safety experts and parents.
- ***Marketing Home Safety Inspections.*** Several times throughout the year we are asked to conduct a home inspection for either a group home or a resident that is going through adoption procedures. When requested our members can conduct a home inspection whenever they are requested. This plan will market our department through community newsletters and other print media available to conduct courtesy home inspections for our community residents.
- ***Knox Box Loan Program.*** We currently require all new businesses to install a Knox Box at the front entrance to the business to allow us rapid access into the building and to eliminate any damage by forcible entry. There is also a need for our senior citizens who live alone that may benefit from having a Knox Box installed temporary. This would give us easy access into the residence without doing damage and getting to the resident in a timely manner.

Timeframe and Cost

Funding for this component of the plan is estimated at \$5,000. The plan would be to purchase ten of the temporary residential Knox boxes, which could be loaned out to a community member if they met the criteria to loan a box out. The Knox boxes cost approximately \$300 each. The NFPA programs mentioned above will cost approximate \$2,000 to implement and could be developed within the first two years of the plan. All items mentioned in this objective could be funded through the AFG Fire Prevention and Safety grant program.

4.0 Training Goals

Objective 4.1 Strengthen management development

Developing a well trained core of Officers is critical to maintain safe and effective operations. As the role of a fire department member constantly expands, new training and supervisory challenges constantly await. The department will develop an Officers Training Development Program for current Officers and other members that wish to become an officer in the future. To address this we will;

- ***Research current standards for Fire Officer i.e. NFPA 1021.*** Researching this standard will give the department a bookmark as to where we currently stand and what areas of the standard would apply to our operations.
- ***Research current programs.*** Research other fire departments current Fire Officer programs for content and adaptability to our determined standards
- ***Design and edit a program to match our needs.*** Once a program is found, design and edit the officers program to specifically serve the needs of the Ross Twp Fire Department.
- ***Implement officer development program.*** Traditionally, members have been promoted to officer positions without any formal training. To address this, we will begin offering the Fire Officer I course to those interested and require all current officers of the Ross Twp Fire Department to attend.
- ***Acquire Incident Command Simulation Program.*** To enhance the capability of our officers, an Incident Command Simulation software program will be purchased to assist in the training of ICS. With this software we can take photos of any current building in Ross Twp and apply them in a simulated fire.

Timeframe and Cost

It is estimated that it will take a year to research and develop a Fire Officer I program to fit the needs of our department. The cost associated to develop the program will be at a minimum. This can be accomplished by officers that are on duty. Once the program is developed, the program can be delivered by senior officers of the department. The Incident Command Simulation program as noted above will greatly improve the abilities of our officers and is estimated to cost \$1,500.

4.2 *Implement Performance Base Testing*

Over the past several years we have made great strides to improving our training program. However, we still have a large area for improvement. To improve the quality of our training program and the training that our members receive, we will implement performance base testing. Performance standards allow our members to gauge their knowledge and skills and determine areas for improvement.

- ***Develop a list of competencies.*** Develop a list of competencies for each job function as they apply to the Ross Twp Fire Department.
- ***Notify all department members.*** Notify all department members what the competencies are and what will be expected of them.
- ***Conduct Testing.*** Conduct testing of all members to determine a baseline for the department.
- ***Identify members who need assistance.*** By testing all members in their competencies, this will set the gauge who need assistance and conduct targeted training to improve their competence.
- ***Develop a contingency plan.*** At the conclusion of the first phase of the performance base training, a plan will have to be develop to deal with personnel who cannot pass the competencies for their respective job functions.
- ***Improve the Fire Apparatus Operator program.*** Our current fire apparatus operators (FAOs) currently undergo a significant training in order to become certified to operate. However, there is much room for improvement and a need to for standardization. Through the development of a standardized curriculum we will address this need.

Timeframe and Cost

Implementation of performance based training will begin the first year of the plan. The performance base drill sheets have been developed for some time and are used on periodically basis. The training schedule for 2011 will be developed using the performance base skill sheets throughout the year. The fire apparatus operator program will be revised during the first year of the plan to make any improvements needed. Cost for this objective will be at a minimum and will be absorbed through the annual budget for training

5.0 Safety Goals

5.1 *Enhance the health, safety and wellness of members*

The health, safety and wellness of our members are the guiding forces behind this plan. A healthy and safe workforce is beneficial in many ways. Over the past few years, we have taken significant steps improving our health and safety. These steps included purchasing new fitness equipment that is now at both of our stations. Safety is also addressed by training and equipment that is responsive to our members needs. Being in good physical condition is a vital part to our job. 60% of Line of Duty Deaths in the fire service every year are cardiac related. In January of 2010, Ross Township lost Police Chief Carl Worley to a cardiac related line of duty death. Every member of this department should take this as an incentive to getting in good physical condition in the memory of Chief Worley. To continue to enhance our health and safety we will;

- ***Develop a fitness program.*** Currently, we do not have a structured program for physical fitness. We have several members both part time and volunteer, that take advantage of the physical fitness equipment. A fitness program will be developed during the first year of the plan to encourage all members to participate in the program.
- ***Conduct annual agility testing.*** Currently the department only conducts agility testing on new hires. This agility testing will be given to each member of the department. Those failing the agility test will be given an opportunity to use the fitness equipment to get their selves back in good physical shape.
- ***Physical fitness trainer.*** A physical fitness trainer can be brought in to conduct a training on our equipment and give the department a training on "showing us the ropes" and what programs we can develop to match the needs of the members of the department.
- ***Require Stress Testing.*** Implement a program that requires all members over the age of 50 years old to get stress testing every two years. This type of testing could discover a problem before it occurs on the fire ground.

Timeframe and Cost

The cost of the above items are very minimum compared to someone losing their life in the line of duty. The cost for the first two items will be at no cost. These two items can be conducted by the members while they are on duty. For the volunteer members this can be conducted during a monthly training session. The bi-annual stress test can be performed at a cost of approximately \$300 per testing session. It is estimated to cost approximately \$3,000 per testing cycle. All of the items listed above is expected to be taken place during the first year of the plan.

5.2 Complete an evaluation and revise our adoption of NFPA 1500

In 2004 the department adopted the National Fire Protection Associations Standard 1500 "Occupation Safety & Health Program for the Fire Service" into the departments Standard Operating Guidelines.. In the appendix section of the standard is a worksheet that list the requirements set in the standard. This worksheet addresses each section of the standard. It lists whether we are; in compliance, partial compliance, compliance with administration action, expected compliance date, and expected target date for completion.

- **Develop Worksheet.** As a template, use the worksheet in NFPA 1500 in developing a suitable worksheet for Ross Twp.
- **Complete the worksheet.** Completing the worksheet to see where the department is at in complying with NFPA 1500, and what improvements are needed to come into compliance.
- **Compile written report.** Once the worksheet is completed compile a written report along with a cost estimate to bring us in to compliance.

Timeframe and Cost

Once the worksheet is completed a cost estimate will be calculated. There will be minimum cost in developing the worksheet. Conducting an audit of the department will be minimum cost as well. This action item will be completed within the second year of the plan.

5.3 Revise the department risk management plan

It is the policy of the Ross Township Fire Department to provide and to operate with the highest possible levels of safety and health for all its members. The prevention and reduction of accidents, injuries, and occupational illnesses are goals of the fire department and shall be primary considerations at all times. This concern for safety and health applies to all members of the fire department and to any other person who might be involved in fire department activities. This departments risk management plan is intended to comply with the requirements of NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program.

- **Evaluation conducted by an outside source.** Experience has shown that there is often a significant difference between a written occupational safety and health program and the actual program that has been implemented. Periodic evaluations are one method that can be used to measure how the program is being conducted. This evaluation should be conducted by a qualified individual from outside of the fire department, as outside evaluators provide a different perspective, which can be constructive.

Timeframe and Cost

Completion of this objective should be made during the first year of the plan. The evaluation of the risk management plan can be conducted by the townships Health & Safety Committee and will be of little cost to the township.

5.4 Provide adequate staffing to structure fires

It is the responsibility of the fire chief to provide sufficient staffing at working structure fires. This is not to be an argument for the number of personnel on an apparatus or on duty within the department. The department should have the ability to provide at least 15 firefighters at a structure fire within a reasonable time. Mutual aid plays an important role in providing these additional resources. Almost all jurisdictions rely on mutual aid to some extent from surrounding areas to provide firefighting resources on a routine or major emergency basis. Some departments use automatic mutual aid on an initial response. On average, the last 7 years, the department has averaged 12 firefighters on structure fires. Often, mutual aid departments are called to the scene once our first arriving apparatus reach the scene. To help resolve this issue, the plan will develop and implement an automatic response with our neighboring departments on a reported structure fires. To implement this automatic response we will;

- **Contact neighboring fire departments.** Contact will be made with our neighboring department to verify if they would be willing to respond automatically during confirmed working fires. This discussion will also involve what will they send as far as apparatus and available manpower.
- **Establish zones in the township.** The township will be divided into 4 different zones and in each zone will determined what fire departments are available to respond accordingly.
- **Enter information into CAD system.** Once the zones have been established and we have determined what automatic mutual aid departments are to respond, the information will be entered into the Butler County Communications Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD).

Timeframe and Cost

The objectives listed above will be dependent on the Butler County Communication Center. The CAD system has the capability to place this information in. It will depend on whether the county will be willing to take the time to enter the information in. There will be no cost for this objective for the township. It is hoped that this action item will be implemented by the second year of the plan.