

Snohomish County Fire District 4



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

ADOPTED DECEMBER 13, 2021

Letter from the Fire Chief



For the past 130+ years, SCFD4 and our predecessor, the Snohomish Fire Department, have proudly protected life and property for the City of Snohomish and surrounding area. As a new fire chief, I welcome the opportunity to work with department personnel and the community to build on this legacy and provide for the future of Snohomish County Fire District 4. By identifying our resources and directing them toward specific, priority goals, we can become even more effective in supporting the Snohomish community.

This Strategic Plan will guide our efforts and help us measure our success. Our personnel are ready to embrace the challenge of improving and expanding the services we offer. They are eager to spend more time in the community connecting with and supporting you. Hiring and training practices will focus on inclusion, diversity, and ensuring excellence in our ranks. Frequently revisiting the plan will allow the department to assess its progress, make adjustments, and provide accurate and transparent reporting on the use of public resources.

This vision of a highly proficient department collaborating with an engaged community is both realistic and attainable. We invite all members of the community to join us in building on the successes of our past as we plan for tomorrow.

—Chief Don D. Waller

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About the District

OVERVIEW

Snohomish County Fire District 4 (SCFD4) serves the City of Snohomish and its immediate rural surroundings. The District encompasses approximately 60 square miles and has a population of around 32,000 residents, which it serves from three staffed stations as shown in the map. The District's headquarters are located at Station 43.

SCFD4 is governed by a three-member Board of Fire Commissioners and has a staff of full- and part-time fire fighters, as well as administrative and executive staff and volunteer chaplains. The District has a cooperative relationship with neighboring fire agencies which help one another in times of need.

The District trains at its Ray Lee Brown Training Facility, which was constructed in 2011 and is used as a regional training resource by neighboring jurisdictions.

OUR FOUNDING

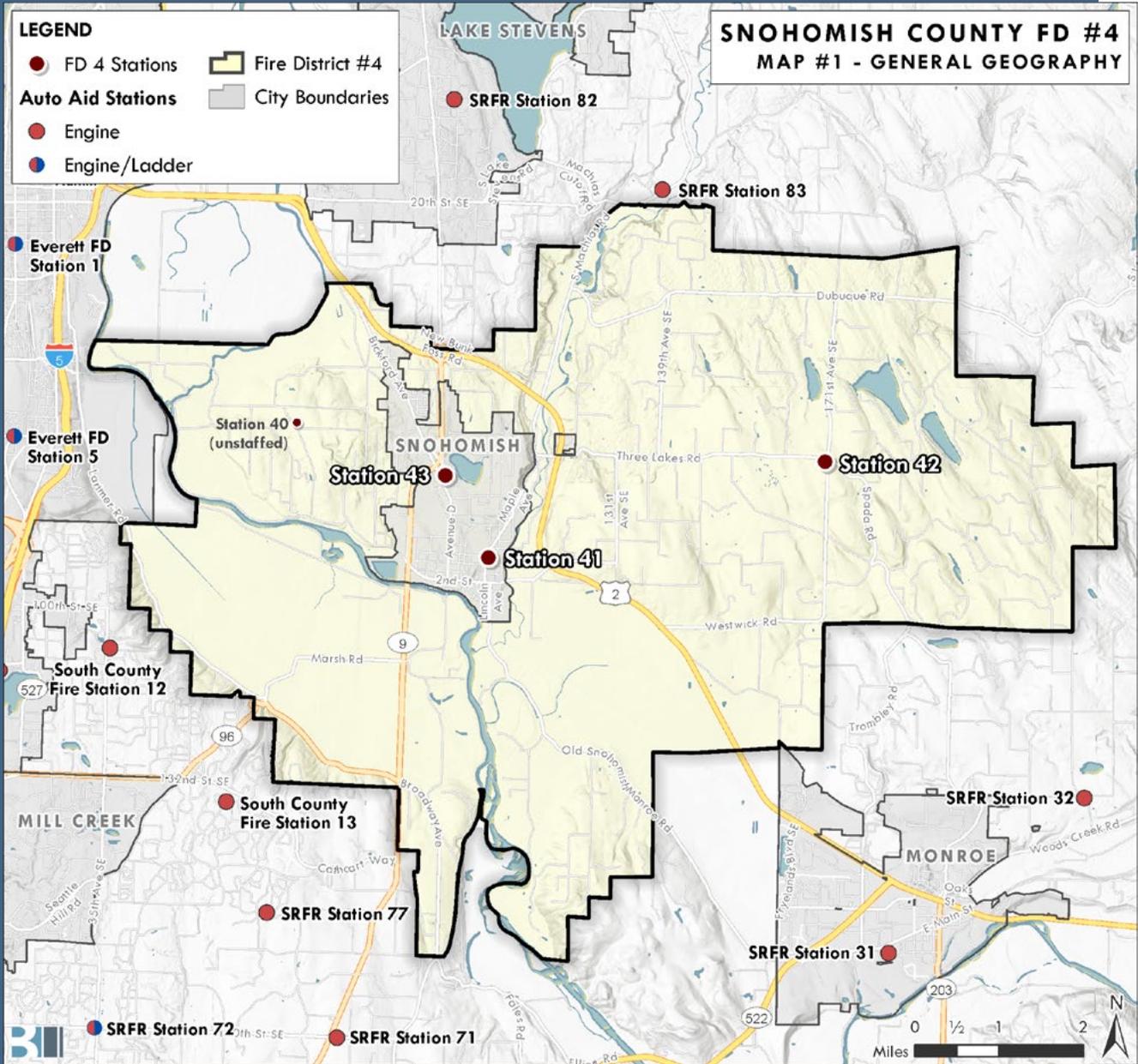
The first move to provide fire protection in the Town of Snohomish was taken in 1883 with the installation of a force pump along the bank of the Snohomish River with 100 feet of hose. By July 1888, the town had a system of water lines, and serious consideration was given to establish an organized fire company. In August of 1888, an official volunteer department was organized with a hose cart and 1,000 feet of hose paid for by citizen donations. The department continued to grow over the next few decades and in 1942, the Snohomish Fire Protection District was established by a vote of the people and three fire commissioners were elected.



THE DISTRICT TODAY

Today, SCFD4 helps the residents, homeowners, and businessowners of the City of Snohomish and surrounding region of unincorporated Snohomish County by:

- Delivering fire, emergency medical, and rescue services.
- Providing training in CPR and emergency preparedness (CERT).
- Offering car seat checks, station tours, and burn permits.



About this Plan

This plan sets high-level direction for Snohomish County Fire District 4 for the five-year period from 2021 through 2025.

It is organized by four Topic Areas, noted on the next page. Nested under these Topic Areas are 15 Goals. Each Goal has Potential Strategies for the Board of Fire Commissioners to consider during implementation of the plan, as well as Performance Indicators that describe potential outputs or milestones for SCFD4 to track.

The planning process identified potential Implementation Tactics, not included in this document, that SCFD4 and the Board of Fire Commissioners can review for applicability each year in implementation.

The plan also establishes Core Values for SCFD4: proficiency, collaboration, balance, and resilience. SCFD4's actions, both internally and externally with the communities we serves, are guided by these Values.



Strategy at a Glance

The detailed strategy on pages 10–17 contains 15 Goals distributed among four Topic Areas, as summarized below.

I. Operations

1. Use an effective performance management system to monitor service delivery and focus improvement efforts.
2. Improve emergency incident response performance.
3. Enhance non-emergency functions to provide additional service(s) to the community.
4. Manage the Ray Lee Brown Training Site to support SCFD4 and regional training priorities.
5. Continue to explore the most efficient and effective ways to provide service to the community.

II. Community Relationship

6. Communicate effectively with members of the community.
7. Enhance the District's ability to serve an increasingly diverse population.

III. Personnel and Culture

8. Prioritize the physical, emotional, mental well-being of District personnel.
9. Recruit and retain staff to reflect the makeup of the community.
10. Nurture an inclusive and positive culture.
11. Embody learning as an organization and as individual team members.
12. Ensure all personnel have the information they need to perform their jobs effectively.

IV. Systems and Resources

13. Uphold an exemplary standard for the stewardship of public resources.
14. Allocate resources to optimize advancement of the District's strategic goals.
15. Use technology and other means to increase the efficient use of resources.

Implementation

SCFD4 will implement the Goals and Potential Strategies in this plan through effective leadership, an implementation cycle that ties the plan to annual budgeting and decision-making, and ongoing reporting.

LEADERSHIP

The Fire Chief is responsible for the overall Strategic Plan. Deputy Chiefs will lead the implementation of each Topic Area, including assigning timelines for projects and reporting on progress. The Fire Chief, Deputy Chiefs, and other key individuals will form a Strategic Plan Oversight Committee to coordinate progress among the four Topic Areas.

ANNUAL IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE

The annual implementation cycle will be closely aligned with SCFD4's annual budget cycle, and will include six steps:

In advance of annual budgeting:

1. Reflect on the past year: The Strategic Plan Oversight Committee will review the prior year's progress implementing the Strategic Plan.
2. Consider upcoming needs: The Committee will identify potential Strategies and Tactics for the coming year to be shared with the Board of Fire Commissioners.

During the budgeting process:

3. Report to the Board: Deputy Chiefs will present progress updates about their assigned Topic Areas to the Board and share recommended Strategies and Tactics for the coming year.
4. Prioritize and Budget: The Board will be guided by the Strategic Plan and staff recommendations as they develop agency priorities and the budget.

After budgeting is complete:

5. Report to Staff: At the end of each calendar year, the Fire Chief will present a comprehensive State of the Department report to all staff.
6. Report to the Public: Each spring, the District will publish an annual report of the prior year's progress implementing the Strategic Plan.

ONGOING REPORTING

Throughout the year, the Chief and Deputy Chiefs will provide regular updates to staff and to the Board of Fire Commissioners. These updates may include a simple structure to indicate progress on each Strategy, such as color-coding that corresponds to various levels of progress.



Timeline and Resources

Each of the 15 Goals is supported by Potential Strategies that will be considered according to the following resource requirements.

Potential Time Frame	Resource Requirements
Short-term (2021-2022)	Can be accomplished with current resources.
Mid-Term (2023-2027)	Will require allocation of additional resources.
Long-term (2028 and beyond)	Aspirational: may require significant additional resources.

Core Values

Proficiency.

Balance.

Collaboration.

Resilience.

These four Core Values are at the foundation of our work with the community and within our agency.

PROFICIENCY

With the community, we...

- Use our skills to provide timely response and effective action.
- Exemplify industry best practices.

With our colleagues internally, we...

- Consistently strengthen our skills through training.
- Motivate one another to refine our skills and achieve professional goals.
- Place personnel in positions where they will be most successful.

BALANCE

With the community, we...

- Deliver high levels of service as cost-effectively as possible for our customers.
- Provide compassionate, equitable service for all geographies and everyone we serve.
- Deliver exceptional service across disciplines and for a variety of response types.

With our colleagues internally, we...

- Ensure productivity within a healthy and constructive work environment.
- Allocate time for training, calls, and meeting internal District needs.
- Relate to one another both as professionals and as people.
- Distribute work equitably.



With the community, we...

- Support local projects and goals.
- Seek community input on how to continually improve our services and public education efforts.
- Cultivate regional relationships and partner with other organizations, groups, and agencies.

With our colleagues internally, we...

- Accomplish goals and solve problems as a high-functioning collective.
- Implement inclusive and transparent decision-making processes.
- Solicit input and constructive critique from personnel.
- Communicate openly among all personnel.
- Align District and Union efforts for the good of our community and our team.

COLLABORATION

With the community, we...

- Adapt to changes in community needs.
- Reliably deliver high levels of service regardless of stresses on our team and organization.
- Embrace challenging situations as an opportunity to identify ways to improve.

With our colleagues internally, we...

- Take care of one another and proactively protect the wellbeing of individuals and our team overall.
- Mentor and train personnel so that they can grow as professionals and step into leadership roles.
- Embrace change and improvement for the future while recognizing the contributions of past personnel.

RESILIENCE

Topic Area I. Operations

The five Goals below focus on enabling SCFD4 to continue to provide effective fire and emergency services to our community.

1. Use an effective performance management system to monitor service delivery and focus improvement efforts.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Establish a reporting framework and performance measures for rural and urban areas of the district.
- Review and update incident reporting procedures to capture accurate data.
- Begin monitoring and reporting on established measures.

POTENTIAL MID- TO LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Continue to monitor, report on, and respond to performance measures. Periodically evaluate performance goals.

2. Improve emergency incident response performance.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Collaborate with dispatch partners to reduce call processing times.

POTENTIAL MID- TO LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Evaluate the current and future needs of the community.
- Evaluate options for number of stations, station locations, station design, staffing of stations and apparatus, etc.
- Adjust staffing capacity, deployment of apparatus and equipment, and facility locations as necessary to meet performance goals and improve service to the community.
- Consider technical rescue capacity to meet priority needs.

3. Enhance non-emergency functions to provide additional service(s) to the community.

POTENTIAL SHORT-, MID-, AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Increase staffing capacity to provide public education services and programs.
- Expand coordinated disaster preparedness efforts with partners, businesses, and community members.



4. Manage the Ray Lee Brown Training Site to support SCFD4 and regional training priorities.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Continue to work with and expand partnerships with neighboring agencies for the use of the facility.

POTENTIAL MID-TERM STRATEGIES

- Add functionality to the live burn training and additional training props.
- Consider collaborative use of capital facilities for and with regional partners.
- Establish a temporary solution, such as a restroom and shower trailer, to enable overnight academy use.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Improve firefighter safety with the addition of rehab and decontamination facilities.
- Pursue opportunities to acquire property for a drainage field or another on-site solution to support restroom use and the addition of decontamination facilities.

5. Continue to explore the most efficient and effective ways to provide service to the community.

POTENTIAL SHORT-, MID-, AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Evaluate the deployment of specialized apparatus and response capabilities from a regional perspective, collaborating with neighboring agencies to allocate resources efficiently.
- Evaluate regional service delivery opportunities as they arise, which could include programs such as:
 - Regional Fire Marshal and inspection program.
 - Shared coordinator for public education.
 - Shared Public Information Officer.
- Approach potential merger opportunities objectively by evaluating their potential to provide cost savings or service improvements for community members.



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

MAJOR MILESTONES OR OUTPUTS

- Established emergency response performance standards, with regular review.

OUTPUTS AND REPORTS

- Periodic public reports on performance compared to standards and plans to improve performance as needed.
- Periodic reports on Ray Lee Brown Training Site usage.

OUTCOMES

- Emergency response performance compared to standards as set by policy.
- Community satisfaction with public education offerings, as measured by a periodic community survey.
- Customer satisfaction with emergency medical response, as measured by a post-service survey.
- Usage of the Ray Lee Brown Training Site that benefits partners, as measured by an annual check in.

Topic Area II. Community Relationship

These two Goals support SCFD4 in communicating with and serving the diverse needs of the community.

6. Communicate effectively with members of the community.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Increase the volume and variety of communications via email, social media, emerging communications, and written materials.
- Integrate information about the District in public education materials.
- Publish accessible summary financial information to the District website.
- Post to social media platforms with quantifiable metrics.
- Ensure proper monitoring of social media to maximize positive effect.

POTENTIAL MID-TERM STRATEGIES

- Evaluate new and emerging opportunities and tools for social media connections.
- Implement a Disaster Preparedness Program that ties into social media outreach.
- Develop archivable and shareable training videos for the public.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Provide a mechanism for quick and easy information sharing to the community (e.g., electronic reader board in front of station, paging programs).



7. Enhance the District’s ability to serve an increasingly diverse population.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Strengthen and diversify the District’s network of contacts with community-based organizations and individuals (e.g., through attendance at local gatherings, check-ins with senior center, food banks, and clergy meetings).
- Solicit input from diverse community groups on desired services and unique needs.
- Provide additional training for staff on being approachable, visible, and culturally sensitive.

POTENTIAL MID-TERM STRATEGIES

- Develop resources targeting communication with specific community groups (e.g., printed cards with quick language sheet, phone translation/app services, pamphlet for businesses or seniors on services the District can provide).

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Plan annual community engagement opportunities (e.g., pancake breakfasts, Trunk-or-Treat, Kila-Ha-Ya Days, Farmer’s Market, fish with a firefighter, Christmas parade).



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

MAJOR MILESTONES OR OUTPUTS

- Regularly updated website content.
- A periodic survey of community satisfaction and priorities.

OUTPUTS AND REPORTS

- Periodic internal evaluation of and report on District communication efforts.

OUTCOMES

- Community engagement with SCFD4 social media, as measured by comments, views, and followers.
- Community satisfaction with communications and information systems, as measured by a periodic community survey.

Topic Area III. Personnel and Culture

The five Goals below support SCFD4 in recruiting and retaining skilled, healthy personnel who reflect the makeup of SCFD4's community.

8. Prioritize the physical, emotional, mental well-being of District personnel.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Increase support for staff following challenging calls.
- Establish Standard Operating Procedures and Standard Operating Guidelines for after-action reviews on scene (informal) as well as a formal Post Incident Analysis.

POTENTIAL MID- AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Increase access to professional mental health resources.
- Look for partnerships with local mental health agencies for internal and external uses.
- Increase access to fitness and nutrition resources.

POTENTIAL SHORT-, MID-, AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Improve physical fitness facilities in stations as opportunities arise.
- Increase the safety and comfort of staff as opportunities arise as a way to retain and attract personnel.
- Increase personnel decon facilities after large incidents (e.g., sauna, larger shower facilities).

9. Enhance the District's ability to serve an increasingly diverse population.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Understand community demographic trends.
- Evaluate and make changes to hiring processes to reduce barriers to apply.

POTENTIAL MID- AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Based on community demographic trends, reach out to communities that are underrepresented in the District for recruitment and potential employment.



10. Nurture an inclusive and positive culture.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Establish transparent expectations for positive behavior.
- Model and recognize behavior in line with District Guiding Principles.
- Be able to identify and define organizational culture.

POTENTIAL MID- AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Improve District ability to seek and use input of employees.

11. Embody learning as an organization and as individual team members.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Establish processes for staff to raise concerns and suggestions for improvement.
- Establish career pathways for staff.
- Increase mentoring and officer development.

POTENTIAL MID- AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Regularly connect personnel to training opportunities.
- Secure funding for personnel training and education.

12. Ensure all personnel have the information they need to perform their jobs effectively.

POTENTIAL SHORT-, MID-, AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Strengthen lateral communication among units.
- Provide the “how” (not just the “what”) with top-down and lateral communications.



PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

MAJOR MILESTONES

- Integration of Core Values into performance management systems.
- Professional development opportunities or standards for all positions.
- A periodic survey of staff satisfaction and priorities.

OUTPUTS AND REPORTS

- Periodic reports on community demographics.

OUTCOMES

- Periodic staff survey with satisfaction measures of the District’s ability to realize Core Values, support for physical and mental wellbeing, and professional development opportunities.
- Community satisfaction with communications and information systems, as measured by a periodic community survey.

Topic Area IV. Systems and Resources

These three Goals will continue to improve SCFD4's internal functions, including stewardship of resources and technology.

13. Uphold an exemplary standard for the stewardship of public resources.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Increase the transparency of reporting on District resources.
- Increase communications with the community.
- Establish and maintain a long-range financial plan.

POTENTIAL MID-TERM STRATEGIES

- Engage community members on a recurring basis about funding and use of resources.
- Continue to make funding decisions and seek voter support when appropriate.
- Evaluate other options or additions for reporting to and updating the Board and community.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Explore alternate funding sources where possible.

14. Allocate resources to optimize advancement of the District's strategic goals.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Monitor goals.

POTENTIAL MID-TERM STRATEGIES

- Use data to determine the appropriate type and amount of resources needed.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Review resource allocation against other strategic goals to most efficiently move the District forward.





15. Use technology and other means to increase the efficient use of resources.

POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM STRATEGIES

- Seek out and recognize staff suggestions for increasing resource efficiency.

POTENTIAL MID-TERM STRATEGIES

- Evaluate new and emerging technologies.
- Improve technology to integrate public interaction with the District.
- Integrate technology changes in District culture to ensure positive acceptance.

POTENTIAL LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Invest in infrastructure for future technologies where applicable.
- Look at technology to decrease workload (operational) or to provide increased services to the public.

POTENTIAL SHORT-, MID-, AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES

- Improve technology in stations as opportunities arise.
- Continue to make funding decisions and seek voter support when appropriate.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

OUTPUTS AND REPORTS

- Periodic public report on District resources.

OUTCOMES

- Community perception of District stewardship of resources, as measured by a periodic community survey.

Appendix: Inputs to the Plan

This Strategic Plan is informed by a number of inputs, including a Community Risk Assessment; a Standards of Cover study; and community, stakeholder, and staff engagement. Key findings from each of these inputs are summarized below and serve as the basis for the plan's Topic Areas, Goals, and Potential Strategies.

COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENT AND STANDARDS OF COVER STUDY

The Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover analysis resulted in 28 Findings and the following recommendations, which directly informed Goals 1 and 2 on the previous pages:

DEPLOYMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1 The District should collaborate with SNO911 to identify the factors causing slow call processing performance and to identify prospective solutions to bring call processing performance into closer alignment with recognized best practice standards to improve overall response performance.

RECOMMENDATION 2 The District should work to identify the factors causing slower-than-desired turnout performance, particularly during non-sleep hours, and seek to bring turnout performance into closer alignment with the recommended best practice goal to improve overall response performance and customer service.

RECOMMENDATION 3 The District should adopt updated, complete performance measures to aid deployment planning and to monitor performance. Measures should be established for urban and rural areas. The measures of time should be designed to deliver outcomes that will save patients where possible upon arrival and keep small and expanding fires from becoming more serious.

RECOMMENDATION 4 As funding allows, the District should consider additional daily staffing to improve first-due, Effective Response Force (ERF), and simultaneous incident capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 5 If the District elects to replace any of its fire station facilities, it should consider maintaining a three-station deployment model in approximately the same general areas as the existing stations to maximize first-due unit and ERF travel time coverage within desired goals.

RECOMMENDATION 6 If the District elects to replace Station 41, it should consider relocating it slightly east of the City of Snohomish to facilitate enhanced first-due travel time coverage.

RECOMMENDATION 8 The District should amend its incident reporting procedures to ensure the Station field in the National Fire Incident Reporting System incident report is the District station response area where the incident occurred.

FACILITY ASSESSMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 7 As capital funding allows, consider modifying, replacing, or relocating fire station facilities to meet modern health and safety standards and future District space and functional needs in the following suggested priority order: Station 41, Station 43, Station 42.

COMMUNITY, STAKEHOLDER, AND STAFF ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SCFD4 conducted a community survey to gather feedback from residents about their satisfaction with and awareness of SCFD4 services, and their priorities for the future. The survey was open for nearly one month from April 8 through May 5, 2021 and gathered 161 responses.

Nearly half of respondents have received assistance with medical emergencies from SCFD4. Approximately one-third of respondents have received CPR classes.

Key takeaways include:

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents are very satisfied with SCFD4 overall. Respondents are most satisfied with SCFD4's quality of service and personnel and have the least certainty and satisfaction with SCFD4's stewardship of financial resources.
- Nearly all survey respondents are aware SCFD4 responds to and extinguishes fires and responds to medical emergencies. Respondents are less likely to know that SCFD4 plans for disasters like earthquakes, terrorism, or floods and provides special operations response like wildland firefighting and special rescue.
- Beyond extinguishing fires and responding to medical emergencies, respondents' top priorities for SCFD4 are special operations response, planning for community growth, and planning for disasters. Respondents' lowest priorities are responding to hazardous materials incidents and teaching CPR.
- Respondents most want to receive SCFD4 communications via Facebook, email, mail, and public meetings. One in ten respondents is not interested in receiving SCFD4 communications.



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Twelve regional stakeholders provided input via email or a phone interview. Stakeholders expressed appreciation for SCFD4's:

- Professionalism and the quality of service provided to the residents and businesses it serves.
- Leadership and approach to regional collaboration.

Stakeholders also expressed a desire for:

- A strengthened approach to calls for service that do not present an immediate danger to life, health, or property (low-acuity calls).
- Greater emphasis on community engagement and education.
- More opportunities to help partners, businesses, and community members prepare for disasters.
- SCFD4 to continue to play a regional role related to training, taking advantage of the Ray Lee Brown Training Site.
- Regionalization if it makes sense for those who are currently served by the District.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT

An online staff survey gathered 57 responses. Key takeaways include the following:

- Staff are concerned about maintaining levels of service and responding to changing demands for service, presumably from population growth. Internally, staff are concerned with equitable treatment for staff and helping staff maintain mental and emotional wellness.
- Staff rank EMS and fire suppression higher than public education/communications, fire prevention, and specialized rescue.
- District facilities are noted as needing improvement.
- SCFD4 could better support staff by clarifying career development pathways.
- Communication could most be improved by focusing on lateral communication across the organization.
- Staff generally appreciate SCFD4 as a good place to work. Staff and leadership have high levels of respect for one another.
- SCFD4 could improve its willingness to hear constructive criticism from staff and incorporate change as a result of this feedback.
- Staff experience that there are “insiders” and “outsiders” within SCFD4 culture.
- Staff responses did not differ significantly between staff who do and do not identify as LGBTQ+, a woman, and/or Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color.

Acknowledgments

This plan was developed with the support of SCFD4's Board of Commissioners, partners, staff, and community stakeholders. A Strategic Planning Team comprised of nine personnel and a Commissioner guided the creation of this plan.

BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

Jim H. Schmoker, Jr. *Chair*
Richard E. Flath
Evan Merritt

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