

11.

Master Fire Plan for the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass

Introduction:

Fire Protection System Defined:

To better understand fire prevention control as a workable system, consider the term fire protection defined by N.F.P.A. - National Fire Protection Association (National Fire Protection Agency)

Fire Protection. "The science of reducing loss of life and property by fire, including both fire prevention and fire extinguishment by public or private means. Also the degree to which such protection is applied."

This definition recognizes a collection of activities (for fire prevention and fire control) and of system elements (public and private) as being included in the idea of fire protection. The word system merely suggests an organized (and planned) arrangement of things and services: Webster Dictionary defines a system as:

"An organized or established guideline/procedure, a group of devices, or artificial objects or an organization forming a network especially for distributing something, or servicing a common purpose." (Merriam-Webster)

Fire protection has long been thought of as a service that is provided by a fire service organization in the form of physical resources and fire engines speeding to the scene of a fire, a rescue, an automobile accident, a drowning, a child trapped in a well, or a cat up the tree. As far as it goes, this is an accurate view, but however important the mobile equipment is, there is much more to fire protection than putting out fires and rescuing people. Safety, Planning & Prevention is a critical component to the overall operation of Crowsnest Pass Protective Services.

The term service level requirement is to identify the types of services and programs the community should provide its citizens. In order to do this strategic planning process, associated assessment principles will be utilized to establish or identify the most urgent needs of the community.

Given the demand on available resources, the operational review will provide recommendations for an emergency service delivery system to meet the current and future needs of the community. The plan and review includes an examination of all the critical service levels and will be an objective assessment of the requirements based on the desired level of protection and the nature and extent of the risk that the Crowsnest Pass Fire & Rescue faces.

1.1 Objective of a Master Fire Plan:

Master Fire Planning is a fundamental strategic long range blue print to managing the needs and circumstances of a community fire protection service. Our analysis needs to focus on what the community can afford with a view of the need for fiscal responsibility to the ratepayers.¹

The plan must reflect the mission statement, values and goals of the municipality and its fire service providers, as well as council's commitment. It will be an objective assessment of the community fire risks and fire service capabilities to date. The assessment should also predict the future growth of the Municipality.

It is important to realize that the services for assessment analysis would include, but not limited to, fire suppression, including rescue, medical assistance, hazardous materials response, vehicle extrication, water/ice rescue, high angle rescue, fire prevention inspections, code enforcement and public education programs. (Office of the Fire Marshall)

Each of the four communities will have its own reasons of operational expectations which usually stem from its unique situation over the years. Perhaps the most important reason to provide an analysis and direction within Municipality of Crowsnest Pass is to establish the future character of the organization as one collective.

By developing and implementing a well thought out plan it will provide the basis for understanding present and future fire protection risks of the community and facilitate implementation of a system for effective and efficient use of resources to control fire losses and fire protection costs.

It will also be important to balance the transition of change with effective communication strategies. This will ensure that our staff and community partners are provided the opportunity to be part of the process and witness the successful outcomes achieved.

1.2 Methodology for a Master Plan Development:

The master planning process will assist and address a number of issues in order to formulate a framework to lead Crowsnest Pass emergency Service into the future. The implementation process will:

- Determine fire protection needs and circumstances.
- Assist in the systematic and comprehensive approach to evaluating risks and existing capabilities.
- Identify options for developing and delivering fire services through the efficient use of all resources.
- Provide implementation strategies and schedules.
- Facilitate continual monitoring and evaluation through performance benchmarking.
- Provide a mechanism whereby revisions take place in order to ensure the plan's continued viability.

¹ Office of the Fire Marshall, Ontario: Master Fire Planning Protocol For Fire Protection Services, PFSG 03-02-03
² Office of the fire Marshall, Ontario: Fire Protection Review Protocol PFSG 01-01-01/2000

Master Fire planning will provide the framework to direct future fire protection services in order to meet the requirements of provincial legislation and the identified needs of our community. Balancing short and long-term strategies is essential in order to deliver and maintain appropriate levels of service to the community as it evolves over time.

By addressing the needs and circumstances for today and the future, financial obligations if planned and implemented properly by council will maximize outputs in a more efficient manner.

1.3 History:

In 2001 the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass conducted a Fire Protection Master Plan involving internal and external stakeholders. The preparation of this plan was supported by Alberta Municipal Affairs through the Alberta Fire Commissioner's Office and the Municipal 2000 Sponsorship Program. *(Municipality of Crowsnest Pass Fire Protection Plan 04/23/01)*

Since the development of this plan goals and objectives identified at that time for due diligence has really not materialized. This is specifically in relation to operational standardization and response protocol, administrative and procurement consistency, training and a quality management system.

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Executive Summary Municipality of Crowsnest Pass

The Municipality of Crowsnest Pass is a specialized municipality located in the Crowsnest Pass of the Rocky Mountains in southwest Alberta. The municipality formed as a result of amalgamation of five communities in 1979. The Village of Bellevue, the Town of Blairmore, Town of Colman, the Village of Frank and Improvement District No. # 5, which included the Hamlet of Hillcrest. Blairmore and Coleman remain the two largest communities while Frank is the smallest. We also need to mention that Crowsnest, Passburg and Sentinel (Sentry) are other former communities (abandoned, or much reduced) within the municipal boundaries.

The area of coverage which is served by stations 22, 23, 24, 25 26, located within the municipal boundaries amounts to 373.07 km² (144.04 sq mi) http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowsnest_Pass,_Alberta. In the 2011 Census, the municipality of Crowsnest Pass had a population of 5,565 living in 2,586 of its 3,234 total dwellings, a - 3.2 % change from its 2006 population of 5,749 with a population density of 14.9168 km² (38.634/sq mi).

In 2006, Crowsnest Pass had a population of 5,749 living in 3,004 dwellings, an 8.2% decrease from 2001 with a population density of 15.4/km² (40/sq mi). In 2001 the population of the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass was 6,262. Although there has been some decline from 2001 due to industry closure, the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass has much to offer visitors. In addition to its spectacular natural setting, the municipality is rich in human history, and tourism promises to become a significant industry.

The Crowsnest Pass is a major arterial transportation route that links the prairies to the mountains, the BC interior, and the west Coast. Highway 3 presents many hazards, given that it is two lanes undivided, has many curves with limited visibility, and is prone to winter storms that quickly can change the environmental landscape. It must also be mentioned that large amounts of dangerous goods are shipped through the Pass on a daily basis by rail and the highway corridor. The potential for a natural and Human-caused incident in the Crowsnest Pass is a reality and needs to be addressed effectively by emergency plans.

Emergency services in the Municipality of Crowsnest Pass are presently provided by four fire departments and a rescue squad, operating more or less independently. The effectiveness of these services can be enhanced by more improved coordination by the development of operational guidelines outlining the utilization of resources in relation to response protocol, operational capacity and standardization, training initiatives and maintenance, administrative structure and communication strategies.

The overall service remains reactive as compared to industry best practices of being proactive. We must remember that fire prevention, public education and code enforcement are considered the three pillars of the recognized engineering triangle. In order to address these

issues in a systematic and responsible manner it is necessary to look at the Municipality in its entirety and not on a department by department basis.

This master plan will follow a systematic approach in the semination of fact and provide quantitative material to substantiate the true reality of fact. Anything less than providing council with alternatives to different levels of service based on efficiencies, acceptable risk and industry best practices, would be unjust to the rate payers of this community.



Strategic business planning is about **envisioning where you want to be in the future, determining where you are now, and deciding in broad terms how you're going to get there.**

Given the demand on available resources, the operational review will provide recommendations for an emergency service delivery system to meet the current and future needs of the community. The master plan and review includes and examination of all the critical service levels and will be an objective assessment of the requirements based on the desired level of protection and the nature and extent of the risk that the Crowsnest Fire/Rescue faces.

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Levels of service must be approached in a systematic manner involving the branch within the partnership and final determination of the appropriate affordable services to be provided.

Fire Protection Costs and Worth:

The cost of emergency services is receiving close attention these days as are costs of all other community services. The demands being placed and faced by our organization is tasking to say at the very least. Identifying costs, reducing costs, increasing operational efficiency for the same cost and justifying improved service levels cannot be done alone in isolation. Critical, creative, and reflective thinking and behaviour sciences must be inherited into the spectrum as well.

Whenever a movement is begun to improve the existing services, perceptions of those directly involved may be raised in alarm without actually understanding the true need to think outside of the box. Often entrenched citizens as well as department figures feel that the perceived ideology on proposed changes is not in realm with their personal comfort zone.

Careful assessment offers the best approach toward balancing system cost with fire protection needs reflected by the expectations of the general populace. Input by external stakeholders provides an outside perspective and by fostering a network of interactive collaboration it provides the opportunity to understand and appreciate service level costs, benefits and risks. This matter of cost and worth is no small problem, but it is the basis for justifying the change and direction municipal emergency providers must explore through assessment criteria.

Many community and provincial/territorial agencies calculate their fire losses, but few consider such opposite factors as: What savings result from the existence of the services provided. How much different buildings did not burn and how many lives were not lost due to community awareness initiatives? What industries exist in the area because of a favourable fire protection system and an acceptable insurance rate?

An adequate system is sure worth more than an inadequate system, but there are no universal criteria for evaluating the word adequacy. Therefore, each community must determine the worth and gaps identified in its own system provided.

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