2025-2027

STRATEGIC PLAN

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP FIRE DISTRICT #1

Washington Township Board of Fire Commissioners
P.O. BOX 653, TURNERSVILLE, NJ 08012

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Serving Our Community with Excellence

Dear Residents, Visitors, and Community Partners,

On behalf of the Washington Township Fire District #1, we are pleased to introduce our 2025-2027 Strategic Plan, a roadmap designed to reinforce our commitment to delivering the highest quality emergency services to those we serve. As our community continues to grow and evolve, our fire district remains steadfast in its dedication to safety, preparedness, and excellence in service.

Over the next three years, our strategic initiatives will focus on enhancing response capabilities, investing in firefighter training and equipment, and fostering stronger community partnerships. Our priorities include:

- **Enhancing Emergency Response:** We will continue to evaluate and optimize our response strategies to ensure the fastest and most effective emergency services for our residents and visitors.
- **Investing in Our Team:** We recognize that our firefighters are our greatest asset. Through continuous training, professional development, and well-being initiatives, we will equip our personnel with the skills and support needed to perform at the highest level.
- **Modernizing Equipment and Infrastructure:** Keeping pace with technological advancements is essential. We will invest in state-of-the-art firefighting tools, apparatus, and station improvements to maintain operational excellence.
- **Strengthening Community Engagement:** A strong partnership with our community enhances overall safety. We will expand public education programs, increase outreach efforts, and foster greater collaboration with local organizations and stakeholders.
- **Addressing Fiscal Challenges and Enhancing Efficiency:** As we navigate economic constraints, we are committed to responsible financial management. By exploring grant opportunities, optimizing resource allocation, and seeking community support, we aim to ensure long-term sustainability without compromising service quality.

Our unwavering commitment to providing exceptional fire and emergency services remains at the heart of our mission. Through this strategic plan, we aim to ensure that Washington Township Fire District #1 remains a model of excellence in public safety.

We invite you to review our full strategic plan and share your thoughts as we embark on this journey together. Your support and engagement are vital to our success, and we look forward to continuing to serve you with dedication and professionalism.

Thank you for your trust in us.

Sincerely,

Patrick M. Dolgos – Fire Chief Robert Matteo – Chairman WTBFC

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The time and effort in completing this strategic plan required commitment and time by many stakeholders, The Fire District would like to acknowledge those who helped with the process.

Members of the Working Group and Internal Stakeholders:

Gregory Godish	*Patrick Dolgos*	*Richard Sumek*
Matthew Zemski	*Jay Reisenwitz*	*Erik Wolf*
Josh King	*James Donahue*	*Mike Marczely*
William Diener	*Bud Miller*	*Anthony DeAngelo*
Daniel Dobleman	*Nicholas Schmidt*	*Lee Sumek*
Bella Cocchioli	*Robert Borkowski*	

We would also like to recognize several external stakeholders that provided valuable feedback about our fire district. The input from representatives from our municipal government, local Chamber of Commerce, EMS services, and residents was much appreciated.

Special recognition for the guidance they provided:

Chief Carl Bittenbender (Evesham Fire Rescue)

Chief (Ret.) William Dukes (Mt. Laurel Fire Department / Pine Hill Fire Department)

COMMUNITY & DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND

The Washington Township Fire Department is a combination department. Combination systems use both Volunteer and Career firefighters to carry out the Department mission. We are the only emergency services in Washington Township that uses trained and certified volunteers for emergency response operations.

We provide a range of services including, but not limited to, fire suppression, rescue, fire code enforcement and inspections, public fire safety & prevention education, emergency medical support, fire investigations, and community event support.

The Fire District serves the residents and visitors of Washington Township, Gloucester County, New Jersey. Washington Township has a population of apx. 48,500. The municipality is 23 square miles.

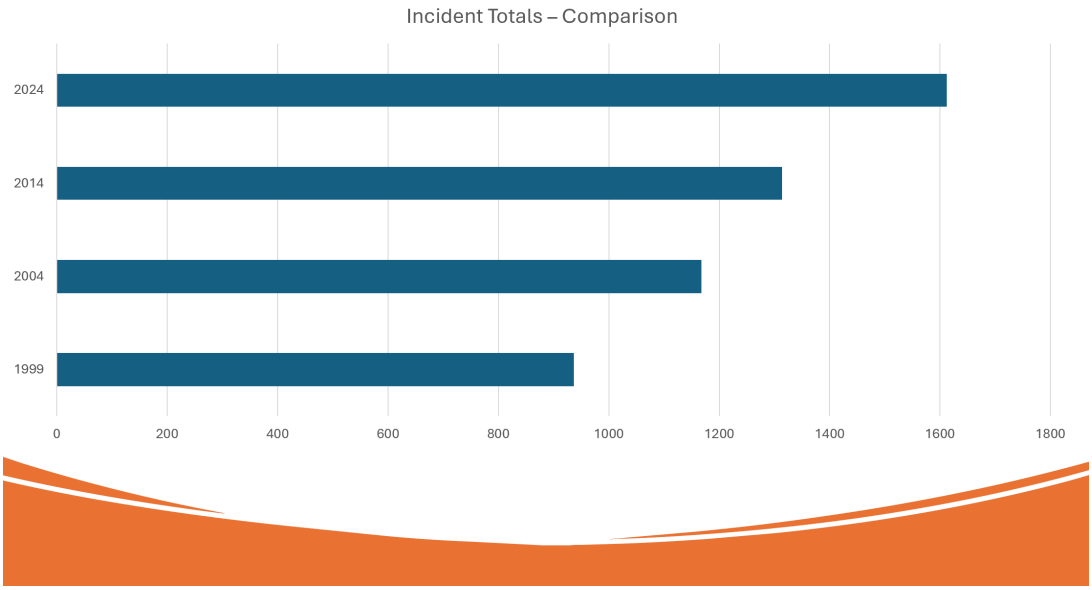
Our fire protection coverage is geographically divided by "battalions". Battalions are essentially first-due response locals. Certain types of calls require resources from multiple stations and in some cases require mutual aid from other towns. This ensures we have proper staffing levels in place to complete our mission safely and effectively. There are a total of 6 fire stations in Washington Township.

Not all our stations are staffed 24/7. Because we are a combination system with staffing challenges, fiscal limitations, and other factors, staffing at some of the stations may vary and may not be occupied all the time.

At minimum, there are always at least two strategically placed staffed crews working 24/7, 365 days a year.

Currently we have 29 full-time and 80 volunteer firefighters. The fire district also employs two full-time civilian mechanics, and two full-time and two part-time administrative employees.

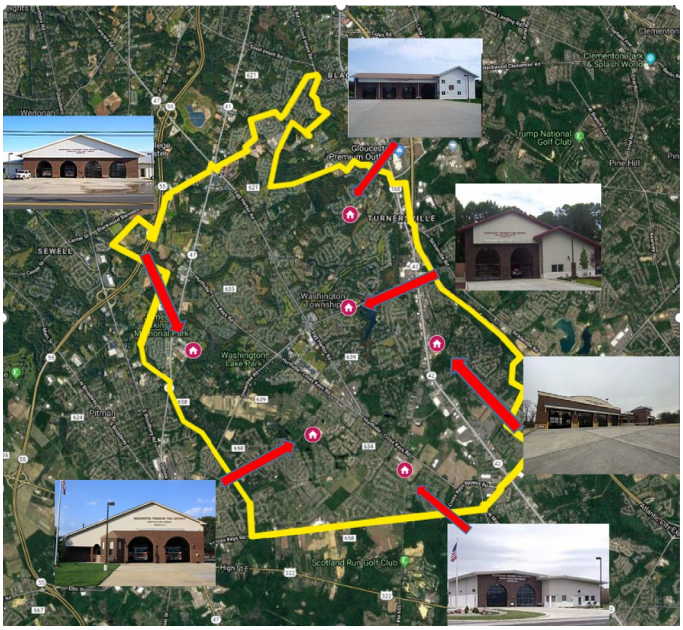
The Fire Department responds to more than 1,500 incidents annually. Like many other communities, we continue to see an increase in responses every year.



The Total number of full-time career firefighters has increased over the years to meet the challenges we face with the increase in call volume, increase number of inspections, decrease in available volunteer firefighters.

Fire Station Locations:

#441 Hurffville Grenloch Road
#131 Johnson Road
#213 E. Holly Avenue
#233 Greentree Road
#327 Friesmill Road
#321 Thies Road



BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS

All fire districts in the State of New Jersey are governed by state statute. Fire district statutes are generally located in N.J.S.A. 40A:14-70 et seq. These statutes give fire districts taxing authority, regulate when and how fire district elections are to be conducted, and regulate their fiscal responsibilities, among other things.

The Board of Fire Commissioners serves as the Fire District's governing body. The length of a fire commissioner's term of office is three years, and these terms are staggered so that no more than two terms expire in any given year.

The Board of Fire Commissioner's voted to change our annual elections to the General Election in November. Previously, the annual public election for fire commissioners, as well as approval of the proposed annual budget, was conducted on the third Saturday in February. We are hoping to gain more support from our taxpayers by moving our elections to November.

The Fire District develops its own budget, has taxing power, and owns buildings and equipment. The Fire District owns all the fire stations in Washington Township.

The adopted 2024 budget for the Fire District was $8,606,614.00 to be raised by taxation with a tax rate of $0.182 per $100.00 assessed valuation.

Bureau of Fire Prevention

The Washington Township Bureau of Fire Prevention was established in 1985 in response to the State of New Jersey mandating that certain buildings and occupancy types should be inspected for fire and life safety violations.

Since its inception, the Bureau of Fire Prevention has grown due to the increased inspection responsibilities attributed to continued growth in Washington Township.

In 2024 the Bureau of Fire Prevention conducted just over 2,800 inspections. These inspection duties are tasked to the career staff.

The Bureau of Fire Prevention has undertaken an aggressive fire prevention program aimed at stopping fires before they start. This includes a visit to every school at least once during the year and many of the schools are visited multiple times during the year.

The Bureau of Fire Prevention also provides fire prevention education to many organizations within Washington Township. In 2024 we conducted over 100 public fire prevention / education programs and or events with the combined effort of the career staff and the volunteer staff. We also handed out / installed over 100 smoke detectors to residents that needed them.

Some of our programs that we delivered in 2024 include:

CPR / AED Training
Fire Safety and Smart choices for High School Seniors
Fire Safety for Elementary / Midde / High Schools
Fall Prevention and Burn Awareness for Senior Citizens
Child Car Seat Safety
Fire Extinguisher Training
Stop the Bleed
First Aid
Modern Fire Dynamics Awareness for the public

Our Fire Investigation Unit is comprised of several career members who have received specialized in Fire Scene Investigations in origin and cause. They work closely with local, state and federal agencies. In addition to determining origin and cause, our investigators handle burn injury investigations as required by the state of New Jersey.

In 2024, our investigators handled a total of 45 investigations.

MOTOR MAINTENANCE DIVISION

The Fire District employs to full-time mechanics to assess, maintain and repair fire district owned equipment and apparatus. Operating out a fire district owned maintenance facility, our mechanics can trouble shoot and address most of the repair needs without outsourcing, which allows for apparatus to be placed out of service on a minimal time frame.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Washington Township Fire District is to provide a professional level of community fire protection and rescue services to the citizens and property within Washington Township in order to prevent or minimize the loss of life, pain and suffering, and property damage as a result of fire or other emergency.

The Fire District's mission will be accomplished by the effective use of its volunteer, career, and physical resources, in cooperation with other public agencies, utilizing state-of-the-art equipment, innovative techniques, and available technology to provide a high level of cost-efficient quality service.

Core Values "W.T.F.D. PRIDE"

- **W**
  - ***Willingness*** - Our firefighters shall have the willingness to help others by being prepared and ready at all times.
- **T**
  - ***Teamwork*** – We work together in order to achieve our goals understanding that the WTFD knows that Teamwork is a critical part of our success.
- **F**
  - ***Friendliness***- Our firefighters have characteristics of being pleasant, kind and friendly to those we serve.
- **D**
  - ***Duty*** - We have the moral obligation to fulfill our mission to the best of our abilities.

- **P**
  - ***Professionalism*** - We have a commitment to quality of service and pride in our work.
- **R**
  - ***Respect*** - We will treat others with dignity, while expecting others to do the same.
- **I**
  - ***Integrity*** - We are true to our word. We nourish a culture and environment rooted in a belief that we are guardians of the public's trust. We uphold the highest standards of moral and ethical conduct, act as responsible citizens, and respect the equality and the rights of others. We expect our actions to be consistent with our words, and our words to be consistent with our intentions.
- **D**
  - ***Dedication*** - We have a passionate belief in our mission as a fire department, our training and our innovations.
- **E**
  - ***Everyone Goes Home*** - We will always look out for each other and ourselves no matter what. We hold safety to the highest standard and support the 16 Life Safety Initiatives.

STRATEGIC PLAN

A fire department strategic plan serves as a guiding document that outlines the department's mission, vision, and goals for a defined period, in this case for three years. It provides a roadmap for decision-making, resource allocation, and operational improvements.

A well-developed strategic plan ensures that the fire department remains proactive, efficient, and prepared to meet the evolving needs of the community.

The Leadership of the Fire District is fully accountable for ensuring that their departments are delivering on the commitments made in their strategic plans. For many successful organizations, input from the community drives their operations and charts the course for their future.

Participation:

The Development of the District's Strategic Plan took place from the Fall of 2023 through Fall of 2024 using department members, external stakeholders and community members. Subsequently, an evaluation of the District's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats were evaluated and identified.

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER FINDINGS:

STRENGTHS

- Community Outreach
- Modern Fleet / Stations / Equipment
- In-House Staffing
- Internal Apparatus Motor Maintenance Program
- Internal Talent (Experience / Knowledge)
- Dedicated District Training Officer
- Career / Volunteers Firefighter Benefit Programs
- Integrated Department

WEAKNESSES

- Financial Planning
- Maintenance Forecasting
- Multiple IT Systems
- Understaffed Administrative Side
- Succession Planning
- NFPA 1710 (Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments) & 1720 (Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments)
- High Risk / Low Frequency Response

OPPORTUNITIES

- In-House Staffing
- Evaluation of existing facilities & apparatus
- Grants & Alternative Funding
- Shared Services (Internal & External)
- Building Culture
- Marketing / Social Media

THREATS

- Retirement of Senior Personnel (Volunteer & Career)
- Economy
- State / Federal Mandates & Legislation
- Competition / Outside Opportunities
- Politics
- Reliance on Software Vendors

External (Community) Input:

The Washington Township Fire District sent a survey out to community stakeholders that included local government, business community, civic organizations, and several residents of the township.

The following description was included in the survey:

The Washington Township Fire District Strategic Plan is a tool designed to be a working document prepared and included with specific tools for both short- and long-term strategic planning. In order to be effective in any planning process, it is imperative that the plan be embraced by the organization, communicated as to its uses in a proper manner that engages the organization in a way that allows for workflows to be outlined, carried through and evaluated regularly to measure progress.

One of the components used to establish the strategic plan is to conduct a survey distributed to various community partners, agencies, organizations, businesses, groups, leaders and citizens. This survey is used to obtain a perspective of what the priorities are for the fire department, the concerns, response time expectations, and future improvements. The survey categories centered on the top three priorities of the fire department, concerns related to the fire department's future improvements, and total response time expectations.

The Washington Township Fire District values the opinion and expectations of all stakeholders. The information that will be provided from this survey will allow the Fire Department Administration to design a strategic plan that will meet or exceed the delivery service that is expected. We ask you please answer the following questions to be open and honest. For each of the questions listed, indicate how you personally judge the effectiveness of the fire service in that area. Finally, indicate how well the fire service meets your expectations in that area using a numerical rating system of 1-5 with ***5 being excellent*** *and* ***1 being poor.***

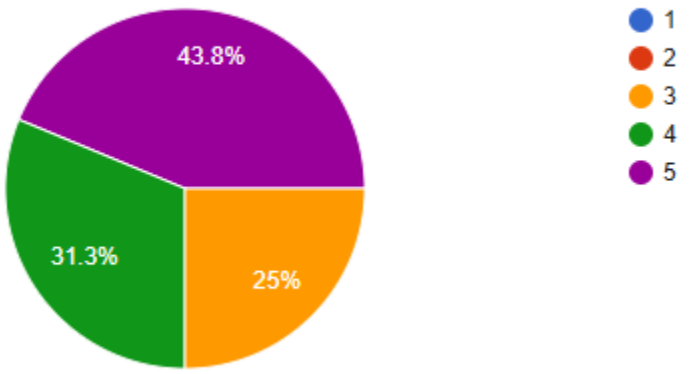
COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDEER (EXTERNAL) FINDINGS:

What are the top priorities that you expect from the Washington Township Fire District?

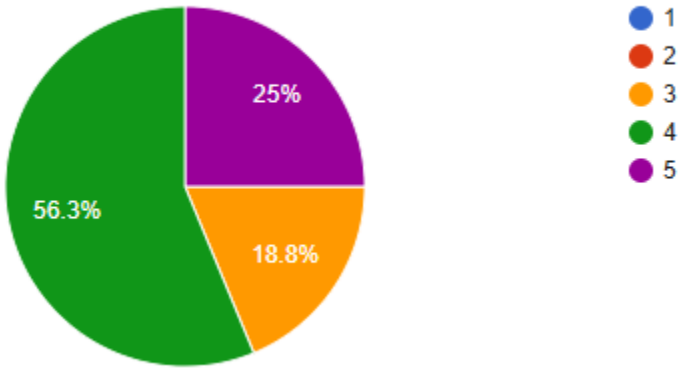
- Public Awareness / Education
- Smart Fiscal Planning
- More Firefighters
- Fast Service
- Low Budget
- Well Trained Firefighters
- Adequate response to fire and medical emergencies
- Management of incidents, ensuring safety of the residents of Washington Township
- Education on Fire Safety & Prevention
- Community Support
- Quick Response
- Firefighters who know the job
- Professionalism
- Working with Community and Schools to provide future training
- Safety / Rescue
- Responses to crisis
- Responsive
- Emergency Response Efficiency: Ensuring timely and effective responses to all fire, medical, and emergency situations within the community.
- Fire Prevention and Safety Education: Conducting regular fire safety training, inspections, and educational outreach programs to prevent fires and minimize risks to residents and businesses.

- Equipment and Infrastructure Maintenance: Maintaining up-to-date firefighting equipment and facilities to ensure the district is prepared to handle emergencies safely and effectively.
- Response Times
- Efficient
- Courteous
- Reliability
- Efficiency
- Morality
- Put fires out.
- Fast reaction
- Compassion
- To be staffed and ready
- Excellent safety plans

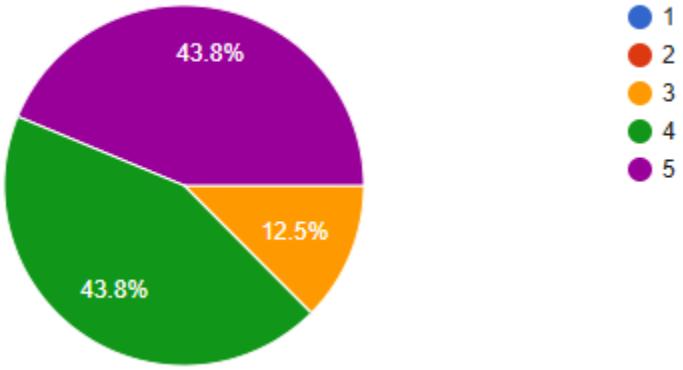
How would you rate the effectiveness in marketing, public relations, and customer service?



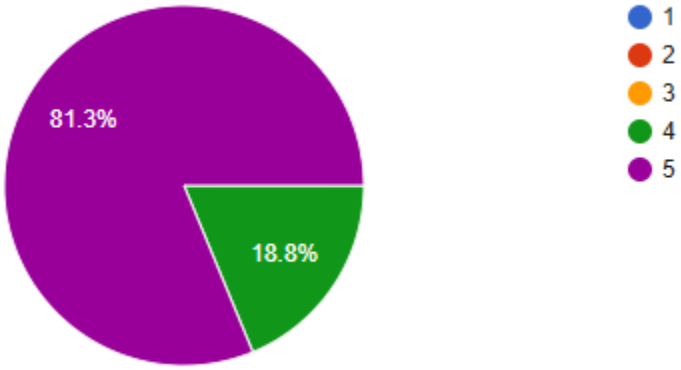
How would you rate the effectiveness in the area of budget and funding?



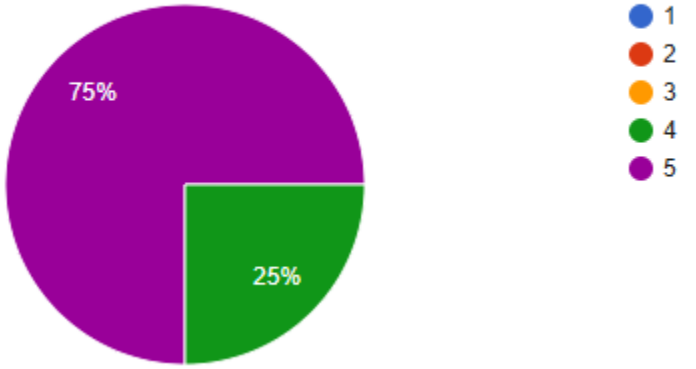
How would you rate the effectiveness in the area of Paid/Volunteer relations?



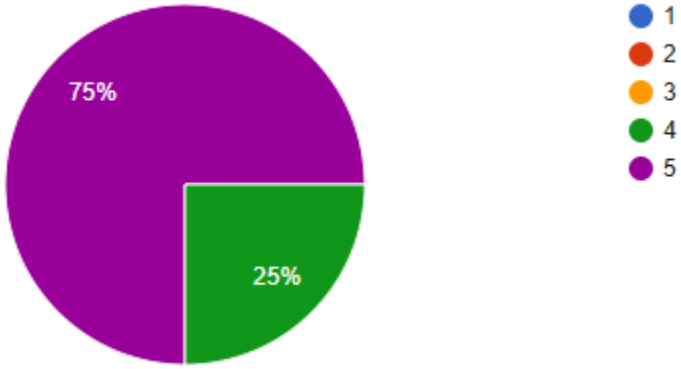
How would you rate the effectiveness in the area of response to emergencies?



How would you rate the effectiveness in the area emergency response resources?



How would you rate the effectiveness in the area of fire service safety (education, prevention, enforcement)?



What future improvements would you like to see for the Washington Township Fire District?

- More information on budget and saving taxpayers money.
- More time in the schools
- More community interactions with businesses
- Programs to understand what to expect during a fire inspection.
- A better understanding of the current and updated protocols of the BLS providers. WTFD assists in medical emergencies fairly regularly. Both volunteer and career staff members, knowledge of protocols, equipment location and use would benefit in times that departments are working in tandem to assist the residents in medical emergencies.
- Continue with more community programs like the PD.
- More posts on the website and social media
- Community events to raise money for firefighters.
- Upgraded Technology and Equipment: Introducing state-of-the-art firefighting tools, communication systems, and emergency response vehicles to enhance efficiency and safety for both firefighters and the community.
- Expanded Firefighter Training Programs: Implementing specialized training for handling diverse emergency situations, including advanced medical response, hazardous material incidents, and wildfire management.
- Community Engagement and Preparedness Initiatives: Increasing outreach programs to better engage the community in fire safety education, offering workshops, and enhancing preparedness for natural disasters and emergencies. This could include developing volunteer programs and partnerships with local schools and businesses.
- The fire district is running along just fine response times are good and quality of service is excellent.
- More trucks
- None. I think you guys are absolutely the best!

What items do you feel the Washington Township Fire District does well in?

- Community Relations
- Responding to emergency calls, social media and other communications with the community, keeping updated on the latest firefighting techniques (training/drills)
- Responses- They are really good.
- Community Service
- Maintains adequate number of fire personnel.
- Emergency response and Fire Prevention
- Public safety, interaction and education. WTFD also excels in providing information on equipment upgrades and use, as well as keeping the residents informed of the intentions of new plans to further assist the residents. The advising of promotions for both volunteer and career staff, with a brief summary of accomplishment, years of service and training also is good to keep residence informed.
- Safety & Helping the Community
- Community Relations
- Everything
- Community Engagement
- Professionalism
- Response readiness and coordination
- In my opinion, I think everything is operating as it should.
- Courtesy

Please tell us what you consider to be an acceptable and appropriate response time (in minutes) considering the components of call handling, turnout and travel time.

- I can't comment on this as there are too many factors whether it was from the station or if the trucks are on the street.
- Too many factors to consider.
- 5 min
- 8 min
- From dispatch 5-10 minutes is a reasonable time, factoring all prior described components.
- 5-7 min
- 4-5 minutes in areas where firehouses are close.
- 15 minutes
- It depends on the situation.
- I think an ideal response should be 6-8.
- 8-10
- Less than 10 minutes
- 7-12 minutes

List any concerns you have regarding the Washington Township Fire District.

- Decreasing volunteerism may affect the fire department.
- Not paying their crews enough
- Fast Driving trucks
- Outside Fire companies in town a lot
- All Good
- I don't have any concerns at the present moment.

Strategic Goals and Objectives

It is important to note that Strategic goals and Objectives are based on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, affecting the vision, mission and values. They outline strengths and weaknesses in service levels, finance, and management structure. These strategic goals and objectives provide the Washington Township Fire District a "roadmap" to take advantage of current opportunities and challenges into future opportunities for change.

Strategic goals are organization-wide benchmarks that identify the issues as provided by the Fire District's internal Stakeholders.

Objectives are more specific components of the strategic goal and outline the more detailed actions or tasks that support the strategic goals. They are the basis of strategic management and are performance measurements that focus the Washington Township Fire District on its strategic goals. Objectives and their performance outcomes should not be confused with effort or activity that relates to the action plans.

The strategic goals and objectives are further integrated into the Long-Term Fiscal Plan, as well as into the current Fire District Budget.

Strategic Goal #1	**Improve the Fire Department's financial stability through enhanced budgeting, diversified funding sources, and cost-effective resource management.**

OBJECTIVE 1A	Create a multi-year financial forecast to anticipate future funding needs and expenditures.
OBJECTIVE 1B	Optimize Budget Management through the Implementation of data-driven budgeting to align spending with operational priorities.
OBJECTIVE 1C	Establish bulk purchasing agreements for essential equipment and supplies.
OBJECTIVE 1D	Invest in energy-efficient technologies and sustainable practices to reduce operational costs.
OBJECTIVE 1E	Prepare and plan for the replacement of Breathing Apparatus in the event the FEMA AFG grant is denied.
OBJECTIVE 1F	Conduct research and planning regarding the current radio system and equipment to ensure the technology will remain the same during the duration of the strategic plan timeline.

Strategic Goal #2	**Enhance the sustainability and operational readiness of fire department facilities through proactive maintenance, strategic investments, and long-term infrastructure planning.**

OBJECTIVE 2A	Conduct a full assessment of all department facilities to identify current and future operational & maintenance needs.
OBJECTIVE 2B	Improve the existing preventative maintenance schedule to reduce unexpected repairs and extend facility lifespan to include establishing a tracking system for maintenance records, inspections, and repair history.
OBJECTIVE 2C	Develop a capital improvement plan with prioritized projects and cost projections.
OBJECTIVE 2D	Conduct regular facility inspections to ensure readiness during emergencies and develop contingency plans for facility-related disruptions, such as backup power systems and alternative station arrangements.
OBJECTIVE 2E	Train personnel on facility maintenance protocols to identify and report potential issues proactively.

Strategic Goal #3	**Streamline and modernize the Fire Department's IT systems to improve efficiency, interoperability, and cybersecurity while enhancing service delivery.**

OBJECTIVE 3A	Conduct a comprehensive review of existing IT systems to identify redundancies and inefficiencies.
OBJECTIVE 3B	Develop a phased plan to integrate and standardize IT platforms for seamless communication and data sharing.
OBJECTIVE 3C	Establish partnerships with municipal and regional IT teams for shared resources and expertise.
OBJECTIVE 3D	Ensure compatibility between emergency response, records management, and administrative systems.
OBJECTIVE 3E	Conduct regular system performance evaluations and updates to maintain operational efficiency.
OBJECTIVE 3F	Incorporate emerging technologies such as AI-driven analytics and mobile-friendly applications for field operations.

Strategic Goal #4	Achieve and maintain compliance with NFPA 1710 and 1720 standards to enhance operational effectiveness, response times, and firefighter safety.

OBJECTIVE 4A	Conduct a gap analysis to determine the department's current level of compliance with NFPA 1710 (career fire departments) and NFPA 1720 (volunteer fire departments).
OBJECTIVE 4B	Evaluate and optimize staffing levels to meet the required response time and crew size standards.
OBJECTIVE 4C	Evaluate current recruitment and retention strategies and make improvements to ensure adequate personnel for effective response.
OBJECTIVE 4D	Optimize station locations, apparatus placement, and deployment strategies to reduce response times.
OBJECTIVE 4E	Advocate for budgetary support while exploring grant opportunities to maintain compliance with NFPA staffing requirement.

Strategic Goal #5	Enhance the Fire Department's preparedness and effectiveness in responding to high-risk, low-frequency incidents through specialized training, strategic planning, and resource optimization.

OBJECTIVE 5A	Develop a specialized training program focused on high-risk, low-frequency incidents (e.g., hazardous materials, technical rescues, mass casualty events, structural collapses).
OBJECTIVE 5B	Identify potential high-risk locations and scenarios within the community and continue to develop and regularly update pre-incident plans, including site-specific response strategies. .
OBJECTIVE 5C	Ensure specialized equipment for high-risk incidents is readily available, well-maintained, and up to standard.
OBJECTIVE 5D	Advocate for funding to acquire advanced tools and technology that improve operational efficiency.
OBJECTIVE 5E	Implement public education campaigns on potential high-risk incidents to improve community preparedness.

Strategic Goal #6	Strengthening the Fire Department's administrative capacity and leadership succession planning to ensure long-term operational efficiency and continuity.

OBJECTIVE 6A	Identify key leadership positions and establish a structured career development pathway while implementing mentorship and leadership training programs to prepare personnel for future administrative and command roles.
OBJECTIVE 6B	Conduct a workload analysis to determine administrative staffing needs and advocate for necessary positions.
OBJECTIVE 6C	Develop cross-training programs to ensure administrative continuity during staffing shortages.
OBJECTIVE 6D	Conduct a review of administrative workflows and implement the best practices to improve efficiency.
OBJECTIVE 6E	Establish a contingency plan for administrative staff shortages, including temporary staffing solutions and task redistribution.

Strategic Goal #7	Preserve institutional knowledge and maintain operational effectiveness by implementing a structured succession plan and knowledge transfer initiatives to mitigate the impact of retirements.

OBJECTIVE 7A	Develop a mentorship program pairing senior members with newer personnel to pass down critical experience and operational knowledge.
OBJECTIVE 7B	Conduct structured exit interviews and documentation processes to capture insights from retiring members.
OBJECTIVE 7C	Identify key positions at risk due to upcoming retirements and establish a leadership development pipeline.
OBJECTIVE 7D	Continue to conduct formal and informal events where retiring personnel can share experiences and lessons with active members.
OBJECTIVE 7E	Foster a culture of continuous learning by integrating historical case studies and veteran insights into ongoing training.

Strategic Goal #8	Enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of volunteer firefighting by navigating and adapting to legal and regulatory challenges, while ensuring compliance with applicable standards and laws.

OBJECTIVE 8A	Engage with local and state legislators to advocate for policies that provide greater flexibility for volunteer firefighters, such as adjustments to training requirements, staffing standards, and liability protections.
OBJECTIVE 8B	Monitor changes in fire service regulations and stay proactive in addressing legislative impacts on volunteer staffing and operations.
OBJECTIVE 8C	Educate the public and policymakers on the vital role of volunteer firefighters in the community and the unique challenges they face in compliance with laws and standards.