

Saint Cloud, Minnesota



**Fire Protection Evaluation
and
Master Plan**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DOCUMENT

March, 2005



EMERGENCY SERVICES CONSULTING *inc.*

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Executive Review Document

Purpose of This Report

The full report described in this Executive Review Document details the study of fire protection services in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. Specifically, the study involves the Saint Cloud Fire Department. The first section of that report provides a thorough and detailed evaluation of the agency, its management, its assets, its operations, and its service delivery. The second section identifies the anticipated changes in the population, risk factors, and service demand that will be faced by the Saint Cloud Fire Department in the future. The final two sections of the report provide feasible strategies for changes in the overall organizational structure of the fire department, as well as recommendations for specific changes in the deployment of facilities, apparatus, and staff necessary to achieve the target levels of performance identified by the communities. Short and mid-term strategies provide recommendations for organizational or program changes that can be implemented within the next one to three years.

The staff of the Saint Cloud Fire Department and the City have provided a great deal of written and verbal information to us. Many of the staff members have been generous in their effort to provide us with accurate and complete information. We are grateful for their able assistance and cooperation throughout this process.

We recognize that information, by its very nature, is often incomplete as it changes from moment to moment. Every effort is made though, to compile data that are as comprehensive and as accurate as possible. Our information gathering process includes a broad evaluation checklist of each organization, measuring results against acceptable industry standards and good practices. Whenever possible, we make quantifiable comparisons to other fire service organizations. Checklists and documentation are followed up by one-on-one interviews with key staff members from the agency and every program area.

The full Fire Protection Master Plan report document is over 150 pages in length, with 56 charts, maps, or tables and contains detailed analysis and recommendations of both a policy and operational nature. This Executive Review Document is intended to provide those elected and appointed officials who have policy-level responsibility for this fire protection system with the primary findings of the report. In this document, detailed analysis is summarized and operational-level recommendations are not included. Instead, the intent is to allow policymakers to focus on critical issues and decisions affecting the future health and welfare of the fire protection system in the City of Saint Cloud.

A Fire Protection Master Plan is intended to provide strategies that are long-term in nature. It is the job of a Master Plan to identify the most critical issues the agency will face over the long haul, out as much as twenty years in the future.

We have identified the following list of the three most critical issues that must be addressed by the department's long-term growth strategy:

- **The department's organizational structure is divisive and dysfunctional. The lack of integration between career and paid-on-call resources is inefficient and produces inconsistent performance to the customers based on geography or time of day.**
- **The department's facility deployment is currently incapable of achieving the response time performance target identified by the department and this situation will worsen as growth continues in the south and southwestern parts of the current city limits.**
- **The department's staffing level is currently incapable of consistently producing adequate personnel for a four-person company response, unable to achieve a two-in and two-out initial incident action sequence, and unable to handle a medium risk incident simultaneous with any other emergency calls. As call volume increases and growth in the community occurs, this situation will worsen.**

In response to these critical issues, we have developed the following long-term strategy for the department. The strategy describes the future organizational structure of the agency, the necessary additions to its capital assets (facilities and apparatus), and a staffing level that will support the intended service delivery objectives.

Deployment Model

The following long-term resource deployment strategies are intended to allow the St. Cloud Fire Department to continue its existing levels of service as growth in the community continues and, where possible, to improve the level of service toward its target performance objectives.

Facilities

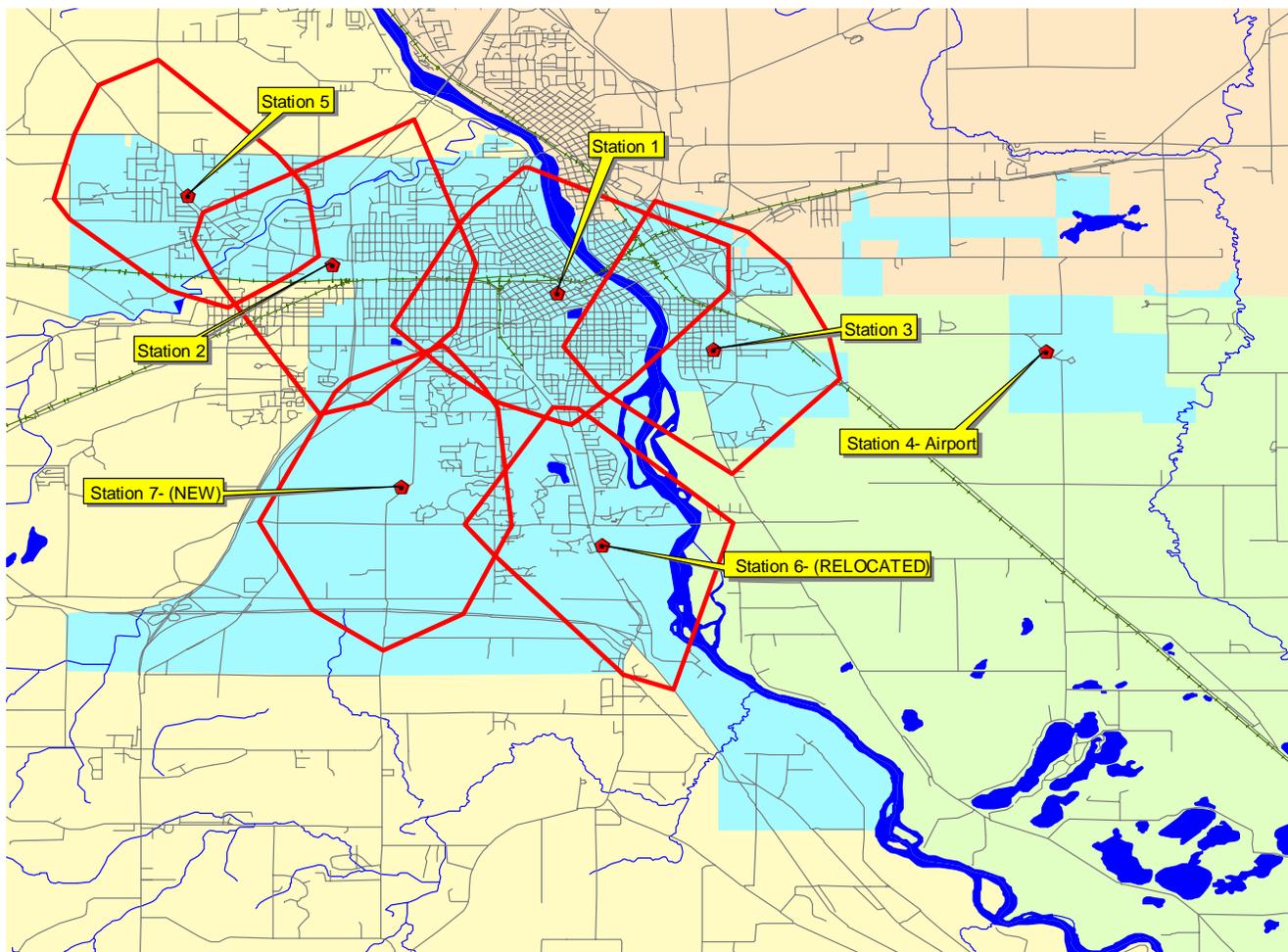
The long-term strategy for deployment of facilities calls for a distribution of seven fire stations, including the airport facility.

Under this strategy, use of the current Fire Station #6 (Volunteer South Station) would be discontinued and a replacement Station #6 would be constructed further to the south on County Road 75, just south of its intersection with 33rd Street. This station would greatly improve the department's ability to serve growth in south sections of the City along the County Road 75 corridor leading to I-94. At the same time, significant existing redundancy or overlap between the capabilities of the existing Station # 6 and Station #1 would be eliminated. Based on our evaluation of the current facilities (located in "Objective Seven- Capital Assets"), Station #6 is rated in poor condition and was identified as being unsuitable for major renovation or addition.

In addition to the relocation of Station #6, the strategy calls for the eventual addition of a new station, which we have designated Station #7, in the vicinity of County Road 136 approximately one-half mile north of 33rd Street. This facility would greatly improve the department's ability to serve growth in the southwestern sections of the City.

The following figure shows this long-term deployment strategy and the general five-minute response capability from each of the proposed locations.

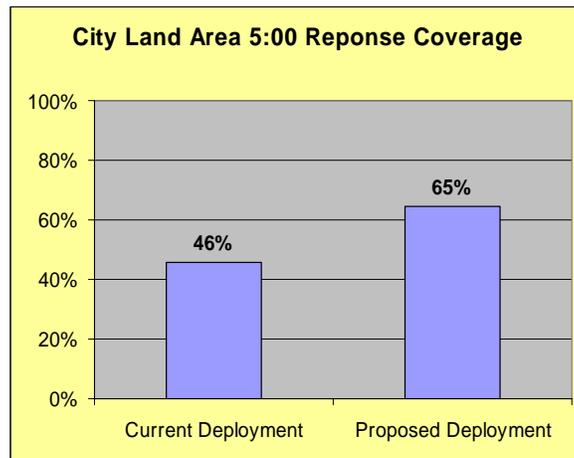
Figure 1: Long-term Facility Deployment Strategy



Note: Strategy shown with proposed future 33rd Street bridge over Mississippi Rive in place

This deployment strategy demonstrates a significant improvement in projected target-level service performance when compared to the current deployment system. The percentage of city land area falling within a five-minute response time of a fire station is shown in the following chart, with a benchmark comparable showing the current deployment.

Figure 2: Long-term Deployment Strategy Performance Comparison



The proposed strategy shows nearly a twenty percent increase in the amount of the city’s land area falling within the target response time capability.

Timing of new or replacement facilities is always a concern. The deployment strategy represents facility locations that we anticipate will be needed during the twenty-year life of this master plan. It is not our intent to suggest that all facilities are needed today. We anticipate the relocation of existing Station #6 would occur first and in conjunction with the need to create full-time staffing capability at the southern station. This project should have a 2 to 4 year target completion time period.

In addition to this facility relocation, the ability to staff Station #5 in the future would require changes at that facility. Our evaluation of the facility indicated it was in good condition and suitable for continuing use as a full-service fire station. Unfortunately, the building does not have adequate living facilities for on-duty staffing. Currently, however, there is a large portion of this building occupied by another agency.

It is our recommendation that negotiations take place to facilitate this agency’s relocation to another site if at all possible. Doing so will permit the resulting square footage to be renovated for use as living quarters for on-duty staffing. We have anticipated approximately 3,000 square feet of renovation as a capital project that would be part of this long-term strategy. This project should have a 1 to 3 year target completion time period.

Station #7 should be considered when statistical evaluation reveals a sufficient growth in service demand in its anticipated service area to demonstrate that the station would realize a sufficient impact on department performance. This evaluation can be performed through the use of geographic information software (GIS).

We must point out that the deployment strategy described in this section does not provide 100% coverage at the five-minute response time capability. There will remain pockets of the City that will have longer response times. These are primarily located in the farthest southern and southeastern sections of the city. While we do not expect service demand in these areas to peak sufficiently to require additional facilities during this master plan period, city officials, including the Planning Department, will need to work closely to identify changes in growth and development trends that would require a reconsideration of this conclusion.

The same can be said of the developing areas north of the airport that have been annexed by the City. These areas are clearly outside of the capability of the current or proposed deployment plan to serve within the performance targets. The airport fire station is not suitably located, nor is it large enough to house and operate as a structural response station. Thus, the City should consider whether to encourage future development that will necessitate a dedicated fire station for that area and how sufficient revenue might be generated to fund such an investment.

In summary, the long-term facility strategy calls for:

- **The relocation of Station #6, constructed for use by on-duty staffing, within a two to four year time frame.**
- **The renovation of 3,000 square feet at station #5 to accommodate on-duty staffing, accommodated by relocation of existing tenant, within a one to three year time frame.**
- **The addition of a new Station #7 in the southwestern section of the City, within a variable eight to fourteen year time frame.**

Apparatus

Limited changes will be necessary in the deployment of apparatus under this master plan. The facility deployment calls for a station relocation, which will not require additional equipment. The proposed new station will, on the other hand, require at least an additional engine.

We also anticipate a decreasing need for the tankers as pressurized water systems are added. However, these units will likely continue to serve a useful purpose for both St. Cloud and its mutual aid partners for some time to come. We do, however, recommend that their deployment locations be reconsidered on a regular basis to place them at stations with greatest advantage to the majority of calls in non-hydranted areas.

Indications from the ISO rating are that the City of Saint Cloud will need more than the one ladder company it had during its last rating in order to achieve greatest credit in the Community Fire Protection Rating schedule for in-service ladder companies. The City is currently maintaining one dedicated ladder company with on-duty staffing. An additional 65 foot telesquirt is operating as an engine company, but would receive credit for its ladder capability.

In the future, the City may wish to consider replacing one additional engine with a small combination engine-ladder unit. These vehicles, often referred to as “Quints”, are typically most refined as engine companies, but possess the necessary aerial ladder capability to receive credit under the ISO rating and can, when necessary, perform dual function. The three units with aerial capability (one ladder company and two “quints”) should be distributed to the three response districts with the greatest number of occupancies qualifying for ladder service (under ISO), most likely stations #1, #2, and #3. This effort, while likely having only modest impact on actual operational outcomes, could improve the City’s ISO credit for ladder company service and assist in moving it towards an improved overall ISO rating.

This long-term apparatus strategy is intended to identify new apparatus needs or significant changes to current apparatus deployment. It should be remembered that the continuing planned replacement of existing apparatus based on a reasonable life expectancy schedule is recommended elsewhere in this report as an on-going strategy.

In summary, the long-term apparatus strategy calls for:

- **The addition of one engine to the apparatus fleet when Station #7 is constructed.**
- **The future replacement of one existing engine with an additional “quint” for a total of three aerial devices, if ISO credit improvement for ladder company service is desired.**
- **Continuing replacement of the current apparatus fleet according to an established schedule based on reasonable life expectancy.**

Staffing

The mid-term strategy for staffing calls for an increase in on-duty shift strength to 19 personnel. The objectives of the mid-term strategy is to provide the ability for the agency to maintain minimum apparatus staffing strength of three on all companies and to maintain an ability to generate fifteen responders for moderate risk incidents using on-duty personnel, as recommended in the full report.

In order to achieve a reasonable 12% ratio of administrative and support personnel recommended in the full report, it will also be necessary to maintain eight full-time equivalents in this category.

The following table describes the mid-term staffing strategy recommended as part of this master plan. This mid-term strategy should be pursued in a one to three year time frame.

Figure 3: Mid-Term Staffing Strategy

Fire Stations	Unit	Type	Maximum On-duty Staffing	Minimum On-duty Staffing
Station 1	Engine 1	Engine	4	4
	Tower 1	Ladder truck	4	4
	Command 55	Command	1	1
	Dispatcher	Staff	1	1
	Engine 18	Reserve engine	0	0
Station 2	Engine 21	Engine	4	3
	Brush Rig 4	Wildland unit	Cross-staffed	Cross-staffed
Station 3	Engine 19	Engine	4	3
	Engine 16	Reserve engine	0	0
	Brush Rig 9	Wildland unit	Cross-staffed	Cross-staffed
Station 4 (ARFF)	ARFF 1	ARFF engine	0	0
	ARFF 2	ARFF engine	1	1
TOTAL ON-DUTY STAFFING			19	17
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL			8	A&S Ratio 12%

We have also developed a long-term staffing strategy to be initiated with the addition of stations five, six, and seven to fully-staffed status. The long-term strategy for staffing emergency incidents calls for an increase in on-duty shift strength to 30 personnel during the time period encompassed by this master plan. Minimum shift strength would be permitted to fall lower than 30, but only to the extent that the supplemental use of paid-on-call staffing can ensure adequate incident staffing performance on a consistent basis.

In order to achieve a reasonable 12% ratio of administrative and support personnel, it will also be necessary to maintain twelve full-time equivalents in this category.

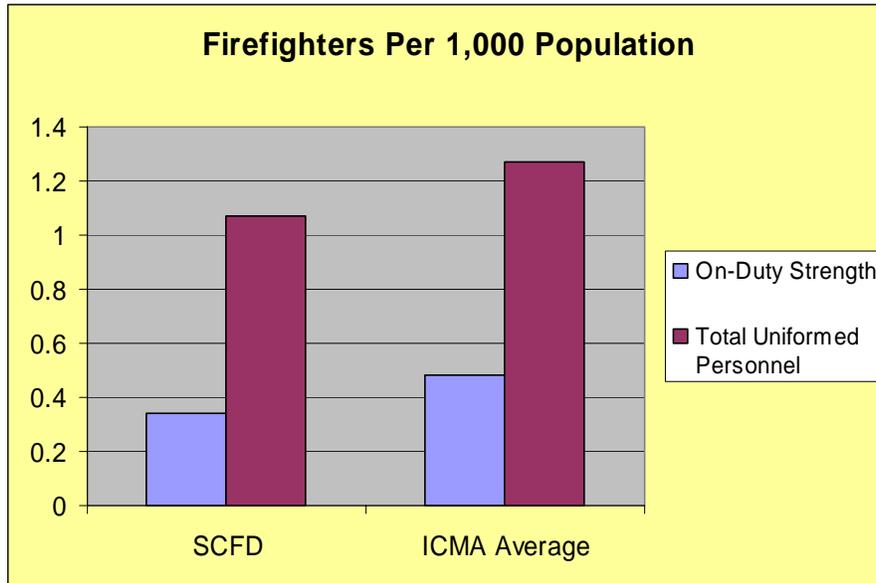
The long-term strategy should be pursued in direct coordination with the addition of staffed fire stations. In other words, as each identified station comes on-line with capability for housing on-duty personnel, the additional staff should be added. The following table describes the long-term staffing strategy recommended as part of this master plan.

Figure 4: Long-Term On-Duty Staffing Strategy

Fire Stations	Unit	Type	Maximum On-duty Staffing	Minimum On-duty Staffing
Station 1	Engine 1	Engine	4	3
	Tower 1	Ladder truck	4	3
	Command 55	Command	1	1
	Engine 18	Reserve engine	0	0
Station 2	Engine 21	Engine	4	3
	Brush Rig 4	Wildland unit	Cross-staffed	Cross-staffed
Station 3	Engine 19	Engine	4	3
	Engine 16	Reserve engine	0	0
	Brush Rig 9	Wildland unit	Cross-staffed	Cross-staffed
Station 4 (ARFF)	ARFF 1	ARFF engine	0	0
	ARFF 2	ARFF engine	1	1
Station 5	Engine 11	Engine	4	3
Station 6	Engine 10	Engine	4	3
	Tanker 12	Water tanker	Cross-staffed	Cross-staffed
	Brush Rig 5	Wildland unit	0	0
Station 7	New Engine	Engine	4	3
	Tanker 14	Water tanker	Cross-staffed	Cross-staffed
TOTAL ON-DUTY STAFFING			30	23
ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL			12	A&S Ratio 12%

Using a conservative leave ratio of 20%, we anticipate that this strategy can be accomplished with ninety operations personnel. Following this strategy in this manner would result in the following statistical benchmarks when the projected population of St. Cloud for 2025 is used.

Figure 5: Long-term Staffing Strategy Benchmark Comparisons



As can be seen from the chart, the SCFD long-term staffing strategy would continue to place SCFD lower than the national averages published by the International City Manager Association. However, we again point out that some of the departments in that study perform transport EMS services, requiring higher levels of on-duty staffing.

The use of paid-on-call personnel to offset some of the increase in the number of career staff needed in the future, while an admirable concept from the financial viewpoint, is not likely to succeed. The facility deployment strategy was based on a one-minute maximum turnout time for on-duty staff. An additional three to four minutes of turnout time for on-call staff would require the City to adopt a response time performance objective of eight to nine minutes, significantly reducing the chances of successful rescue and early fire control.

To be effective, such a concept would be wholly dependent on the ability of the paid-on-call staff to provide **consistent** and **immediate** response to emergencies. This will require that the department maintain statistics to determine the average percentage of all calls to which its paid-on-call members arrive in time to be part of the initial arriving companies. This number then becomes the foundation for determining the number of paid-on-call members necessary to achieve an equivalent to an on-duty staffed position.

For example, let's assume that the average percentage of all department incidents to which a paid-on-call member responds (as an initial arriving company member) is 18%. Using this figure would result in a calculation of 6 paid-on-call responders for each FTE of on-duty staff.

Using this formula would, for example, permit the City to consider that it would need to recruit and maintain 18 new paid-on-call members in order to reduce the number of new career positions in the future by three. In addition, the department would need to make certain these new paid-on-call members maintained an initial response average of at least 18% of all calls.

Given that national statistics have seen the numbers of volunteer firefighters across the country drop by 10% since the 1980's, the prospect of recruiting and maintaining a sufficient number of on-call firefighters to have significant impact on reducing the long-term career staffing needs of the department are dismal. The problem is cultural, as well as national in scope, and departments from Maine to California are suffering- the amount of free time people have is decreasing while the amount of time required for a firefighter's training and certification is increasing. This is not to suggest that there is no value in those on-call personnel who are successfully recruited and retained. Many small to mid-sized cities continue to use on-call personnel as an integral part of their safety force, providing supplemental manpower to on-duty staff during emergency incidents and filling occasional vacancies caused by leave. We recommend that Saint Cloud take this approach to the use of paid-on-call responders.

It is also conceivable that part-time staffing could be considered. This would involve the scheduling of part-time employees as a part of this on-duty staff. However, the on-duty staffing hours would still need to be covered one for one. Each on-duty manhour would need to be covered by either full-time career staff or a part-time paid firefighter, resulting in employee costs either way. The effective hourly wage for a career firefighter¹ in Saint Cloud is \$14.64 while the hourly wage for its paid-on-call responders is \$14.56. Any savings might be considered modest when considering the additional issues involved in recruitment, scheduling, consistency and training.

With the additional operations staffing, there will be a need for increases in administrative and support personnel. We anticipate the department maintaining a ratio of between 10 and 15 percent administrative to operations staffing. Thus, we anticipate twelve administrative and support staff positions will be needed as part of this long-term staffing strategy.

¹ Firefighters as Grade C

In summary, the long-term staffing strategy calls for:

- An increase over the planning period to a total of ninety operations employees or FTE's
- An increase over the planning period to a total of twelve administrative and support employees or FTE's

Organizational Structure

The St. Cloud Fire Department should develop into a model combination-staffed fire department, fully integrating career personnel with paid-on-call members in a single, unified organizational structure.

This strategy, while representing a significant change for St. Cloud, is not unusual in the fire service. Some of the most successful combination organizations across the country have fully integrated their career and part-time duty staff, as well as their on-call personnel, into a seamless operation. In many of these departments, one can spend a significant period of time in one of their fire stations without being able to identify which firefighters are career, which are part-time, and which are volunteer or paid-on-call.

The strategy would call for a major overhaul in how services are delivered. Stations would no longer be identified as career or volunteer stations. Instead, each station would operate with blended staff, using a combination of career and paid-on-call personnel. All jurisdictional issues of career vs. paid-on-call response would, as recommended earlier in this report, be eliminated in favor of the closest appropriate unit being dispatched to any emergency call. Career personnel would provide the consistent response force for most emergencies and on-call personnel would provide trained supplemental manpower for major incidents or simultaneous calls.

The response of on-duty career personnel would not be restricted by either geography or time of day. Likewise, on-call responders would be capable of responding to incidents from stations in any part of the City of Saint Cloud to provide supplemental manpower to on-duty response strength. In addition, we recommend that on-call responders also be given some opportunity to be scheduled as part-time on-duty firefighters at a specific assigned station for specific assigned shifts. This provides them with a consistent opportunity to attend training alongside the career staff and experience initial response call volume to gain experience. Through this method, opportunity is also created to enhance camaraderie and build some level of unity among personnel.

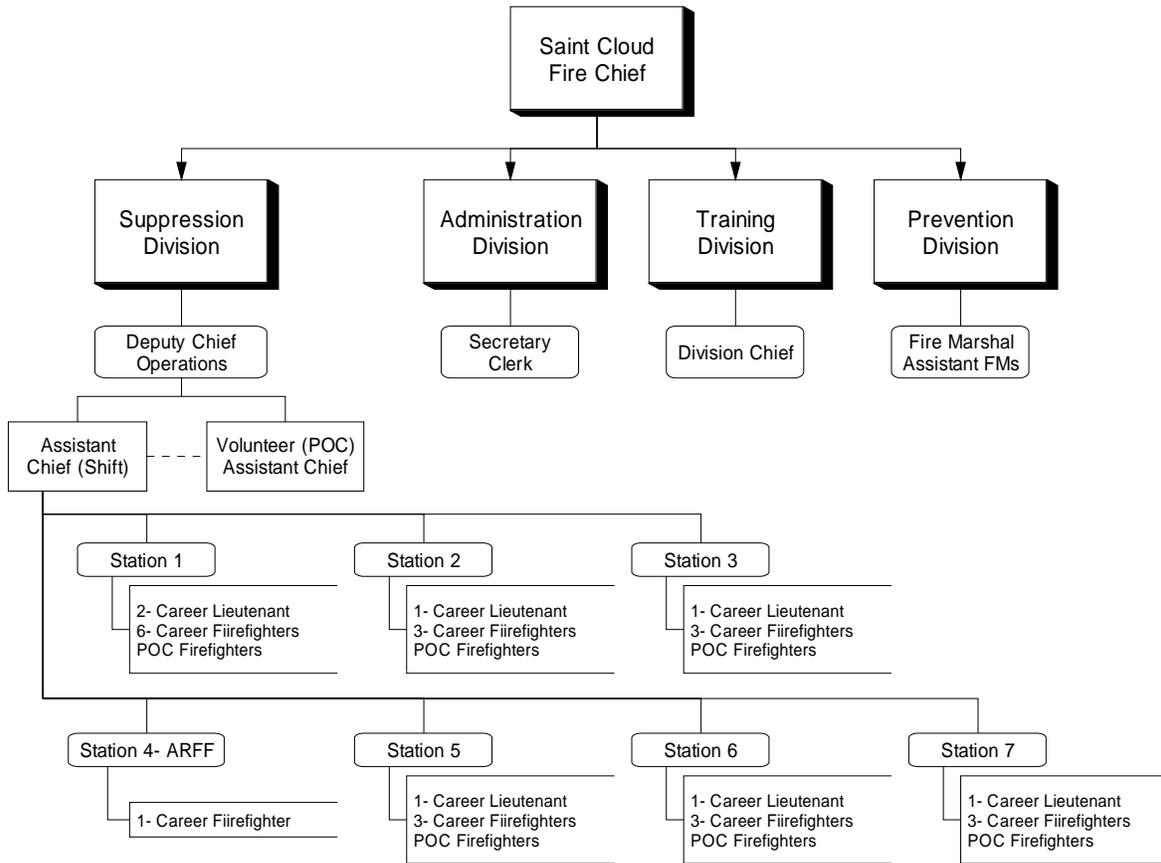
This strategy has the potential of achieving the greatest effectiveness for an on-call force, if such a force is to be retained by the City of Saint Cloud. It provides the ability for on-call responders to supplement on-duty staff throughout the entire city and provides a significant benefit in the recruitment of on-call personnel. No longer would the geographical criteria for on-call personnel be limited to proximity of two specific stations, but rather recruitment could occur city-wide. On-call responders would be assigned to the station in closest proximity to their residence and/or place of employment.

The benefit for career personnel is the potential for increasing on-duty strength through the assignment of on-call responders to part-time duty shifts. Even if this were to occur only a portion of the time, the percentage of time a unit responds with four firefighters on board rather than three would increase significantly.

The following figure demonstrates at least an example of the organizational structure, as it might exist, under this strategy².

² All individual administrative and support positions are not shown. Twelve such positions are called for in the long-term staffing strategy.

Figure 6: Long-Term Strategy Organizational Structure



Of course, this organizational strategy is not without its downside. It needs to be acknowledged that, while there are many examples of success, there are also many departments using unified combination staffing methodology that are among the most troubled organizations in the fire service. Combination departments are easily the most challenging organizations to manage. This is because of the inherent differences between career firefighting staff and on-call firefighting staff.

Career firefighters immediately point to the disparity in training and experience as a major factor. On-call responders might readily point out the financial benefit they can present over career personnel. Many additional personality factors typically come into play as well. The result is often a culture of distrust, resentment, and even destructive behaviors.

Where such staffing systems have been most successful, managers typically point to the development of a “culture of acceptance”. In short, many ineffective combination departments are filled with on-call responders who want to view the organization as a “volunteer fire department” and see it operate in that fashion. Conversely, many of the career personnel in these same agencies want to view the organization as a “career fire department” and seek to downplay the existence or value of all but full-time staff. The successful combination departments seem to have developed an accepted identity as just what they are- a combination staffed agency. In these departments, both career and on-call personnel clearly understand- and have accepted- what they individually bring to the agency, and what the other side brings to the table as well.

We believe such a culture of acceptance will be extremely difficult, but not impossible, to achieve in the Saint Cloud Fire Department. As was pointed out earlier in the report, the department has had ten years of experience with a poorly planned merger that has built walls between the career and on-call responders that are clearly seen during interviews with personnel at all levels of the organization.

The best opportunity for success in this regard would be through an internal strategic planning process. If the organizational structure of a fully unified and integrated combination staffing system is accepted by the City as its long-term strategy, the internal strategic planning process can bring the personnel within the department into the process of determining how to achieve its success, including transitional methods to achieve the necessary level of acceptance.

Fiscal Projection

This long-term strategy calls for the addition of a new fire station, the relocation of an existing station, the renovation of an existing station, the addition of one engine to the apparatus fleet, and an increase in on-duty staffing. In an effort to demonstrate the financial impact of the strategy, we project both the anticipated capital costs and the impact to annual operating expenditures if this long-term strategy were fully and completely implemented.

We emphasize one very important point. This financial analysis provides a “snapshot” of the fiscal effects of the deployment, resource, and staffing changes as if the action occurs during the current budgetary year. Our analysis does not attempt to predict the actual tax rate after implementation.

The fiscal projections are made under the following declared assumptions:

- Cost per square foot for new construction at \$110
- Cost per square foot for renovation at \$65
- New fire stations approximated at 10,000 square feet.
- Land acquisition costs estimated at \$150,000 per property
- New engine costs estimated at \$320,000
- Benefit costs for staff at .30 of base salary

The following table reflects the estimated financial impact *if all recommended changes in facilities, apparatus, and staffing were currently in effect.*

Figure 7: Long-Term Strategy Cost Projections³

Long-Term Strategy- Total Capital Costs	
Replacement Station #6	\$ 1,250,000
Station #5 Renovation	\$ 195,000
New Station #7	\$ 1,250,000
Apparatus Additions	\$ 320,000
TOTAL CAPITAL COSTS	\$ 3,015,000
Long Term Strategy- Annual Operating Cost Additions	
Station #5 Staffing	\$ 688,986
Station #6 Staffing	\$ 688,986
Station #7 Staffing	\$ 688,986
Administrative and Support Staffing	\$ 212,550
Annual Station Operating Costs	\$ 60,000
TOTAL ADDED ANNUAL OPERATING COSTS	\$ 2,339,508

³ Capital cost projections shown do not include costs associated with recommendations found in the City of Saint Cloud Facilities Study, conducted by SJA in 2004.

Short and Mid-Term Strategies

The full report contains a large collection of short and mid-term improvement strategies for the St. Cloud Fire Department. Among these were many recommendations that were operational in nature, directed to the decision makers within the agency itself. However, several recommendations touch on issues of policy that would be of particular interest to elected policymakers and others involve the potential for observable impact to operating budgets. For this reason, we have elected to include a collection of these short and mid-term strategies that address issues likely to be of particular interest to elected and appointed officials of the city of St. Cloud. The recommendations are arranged by category for easier reference.

For a full review of all recommendations, see Section IV of the full report.

Administrative and Management Strategies

After completing the ten-objective evaluation of the Saint Cloud Fire Department, the following short and mid-term strategies are offered as recommendations for improving the administration and management functions of the agency. Individual narrative text describing the issues associated with these recommendations may be found in the appropriate sections of this report.

- The organizational structure between the career and paid-on-call elements of the department, as designed by the 1995 merger agreement, is counterproductive and promotes a culture of divisiveness. The organizational structure, to be effective, must be overhauled to reflect a truly unified organization and must be supported by efforts to develop an accepted culture of trust, loyalty, and camaraderie.
- The fire department should complete a customer-centered strategic planning process within the organization involving stakeholders from various levels of the department.
- The department should develop a truly progressive website with improved access to public information and services.
- The department should consider establishing a citizen's advisory group to meet at least twice annually, providing the customer perspective on service delivery, planning and budgeting.
- The department should update its records management software to enhance the ability to conduct in-depth performance analysis. In addition, the agency should seek to enhance its ability to work with and utilize Geographic Information Software in deployment, performance, workload, and prevention analysis.

- Analyze the Deputy Chief of Training and Administration to determine whether the position should be reallocated to Assistant Chief or assigned in the chain of command between the Fire Chief and the Assistant Chiefs.
- The job description for the position of Captain at Station #1 describes supervisory activities that are not reflected on the organizational chart. The position does not appear to perform at the advanced supervisory capacity indicated in the job description and should be considered for downgrading to Lieutenant.

Capital Asset Strategies

After completing the ten-objective evaluation of the Saint Cloud Fire Department, the following short and mid-term strategies are offered as recommendations on issues related to the capital assets of the agency. Individual narrative text describing the issues associated with these recommendations may be found in the appropriate sections of this report.

- Follow the recommendation of the Community Facilities Assessment Study for improvements to existing facilities.
- The City should consider developing and funding an apparatus replacement program that anticipates replacement schedules (as in the example replacement schedule provided) and builds necessary funding in order to spread cost over multiple years.
- Develop and fund a small equipment and turnout gear replacement program that anticipates replacement schedules and builds necessary funding in order to spread cost over multiple years.

Emergency Service Delivery Strategies

After completing the ten-objective evaluation of the Saint Cloud Fire Department, the following short and mid-term strategies are offered as recommendations on issues related to the delivery of emergency services by agency. Individual narrative text describing the issues associated with these recommendations may be found in the appropriate sections of this report.

- Negotiate an acceptable agreement for dispatching services from the Stearns County Sheriff's Department Communications Center. Decommission the SCFD Dispatch Center and reassign firefighters to response duty.
- Improve the department's capability to collect and evaluate incident data to ensure its ability to evaluate performance and effectiveness in the future.

- Adopt performance objectives for emergency services that clearly define response performance expectations in measurable terms.
- Discontinue the separation of the city into volunteer and career response areas. Develop a dispatch plan that sends the closest appropriate response unit regardless of its career versus paid-on-call status.
- Discontinue sending three response units to fire alarm activations. Send only a single engine unless it is verified that an actual emergency is in progress.
- Consider adopting local law that creates a penalty for excessive numbers of false fire alarms at a given location.
- The Saint Cloud Fire Department's distribution of resources and historical response time performance indicates the agency could provide beneficial services to the City's emergency medical system. An integration of fire and police first response at the basic life support level, along with advanced life support paramedic transport services, will meet or exceed the NFPA 1710 performance benchmarks for EMS services. This project should be moved forward.

Training Program Strategies

After completing the ten-objective evaluation of the Saint Cloud Fire Department, the following short and mid-term strategies are offered as recommendations on issues related to the training programs of the agency. Individual narrative text describing the issues associated with these recommendations may be found in the appropriate sections of this report.

- Achieve State certified instructors for the Department; especially the Deputy Chief of Training and Administration.
- Address the training disparity between the Career and Volunteer Divisions. A centralized, consistent approach to accomplishing training for both Divisions needs to be implemented.
- Expand attendance opportunities at the NFA throughout the officer ranks and those developing their officer skills.

Fire Prevention Strategies

After completing the ten-objective evaluation of the Saint Cloud Fire Department, the following short and mid-term strategies are offered as recommendations on issues related to the fire prevention programs of the agency. Individual narrative text describing the issues associated with these recommendations may be found in the appropriate sections of this report.

- Consider implementing a formal, citywide development authorization review process.
- Establish the frequency these properties should be inspected by level of risk.
- Identify the resources needed to conduct inspections, re-inspections, plan review, tests, fire investigations, life and fire safety education and other related responsibilities.
- Develop a comprehensive records management system so that the results of inspections can be recorded, inspections tracked and next inspection dates identified to the inspector.
- Explore charging fees for required fire inspections.
- Modify the SCFD's life and fire safety education culture from an "as can" attitude to a priority mission for the Department.