

# Gypsum Fire Protection District 2014–2016 Strategic Plan

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*Mission: To prevent harm by educating and protecting our community.*

*Vision: To be an integral part of our community by fulfilling its needs.*

*Values: Neighbors helping neighbors since 1911.*

The Gypsum Fire Protection District is a combination department of paid and volunteer members.

Proudly serving since 1911, Gypsum Fire Protection District covers 455 square miles. Gypsum Fire Protection District serves its citizens wholeheartedly, responding to medical calls, motor vehicle crashes, motor vehicle fires, structure fires, fire alarms, carbon monoxide alarms, wildland fires, waterline breaks, flooding, swift-water rescues, high-angle rescues, hazardous materials incidents, plane incidents and crashes, backcountry rescues, and general citizen requests for assistance.

In addition to the above services, Gypsum Fire Protection District supports many other community services, including Gypsum Daze, canteen services at Eagle Valley High School football games (supporting the Booster Club), assisting the Salvation Army in delivering food baskets at Thanksgiving and Christmas, escorts for high school sports teams, various food drives, and school outreach.

In the next three years, the District will face many challenges as well as opportunities. In order to effectively address these challenges, the talented men and women who serve the Gypsum Fire Protection District will focus on four strategic goals: Budget and Financial Responsibilities, Strengthen Partnerships, Improve Communications, and Membership Care. Each goal encompasses several objectives, which were developed by the efforts of the membership and the Board, and is supported by all members of the organization.

A description of the planning process follows the goals and objectives.

This plan will be reviewed twice per year by the District's leadership and by the Board to ensure accountability, to adjust for changing circumstances if necessary, and to maintain the commitment to the plan.

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## 1. Budget/Financial Responsibilities

In order for the District to remain ready to respond to any need, there must be responsible oversight of its financial situation.

- Support volunteers/staff
- Support/replace aging fleet
  - Develop and define 3 year capital replacement plan for equipment
- Support facilities
- Identify financial goals
  - Savings
  - Spending

## 2. Strengthen Partnerships

The District relies on its partnerships in order to grow and improve.

- a. Greater Eagle Fire Protection District
  - Find ways to conduct joint operations (work together, maintain separate administration)
    - Share specialized functions, i.e. swift-water rescue, ice rescue, inspections,
  - Training opportunities
  - Maintain IGA with neighboring agencies for specialized skill sets
- b. Town of Gypsum
  - Attendance by Chief and/or Board members at Gypsum Town Council meetings
  - Board member or president will meet with Town Manager and/or Mayor at least once per quarter.
  - Invite Town Council/staff to Department functions (Christmas party, BBQs, etc.)
- c. Other partners as identified.
  - Seek partnership opportunities with other agencies/entities, in order to advantageously position the District.

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## 3. Improve communications

The District must maintain good relationships with its citizens, its membership, and its partners.

### a. District citizens

- Quarterly advertisements in the newspapers
- Social media opportunities
- School outreach
  - Chief visits
  - Volunteers visit at lunch times
  - Fire Prevention Week visits
  - Meet and greet at beginning of school years
- Community outreach at Gypsum Daze
  - Chief meet and greet with community (at Gypsum Daze, elsewhere)
- Public outreach/education
  - Attend and participate in Gypsum Chamber of Commerce events
  - Firefighter outreach opportunities
    - Door to door personal contacts (as time permits)
    - Local business visits (daycares, etc.)

### b. Interdepartmental

### c. Between GFPD Board and Department

- SDA attendance by the Board (in June), reoccurring yearly or every two years
- Invite members to the Board meetings, make it clear they are welcome
- E-mail meeting minutes to the membership
- Quarterly work session reviewing the strategic plan, involving the entire membership

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## 4. Membership Care

The District relies on its membership to survive, to operate, and to grow.

- a. Volunteer Recruitment
  - Door to door recruitment
- b. Training
  - Address budget issues that impact training
    - Separate line item specifically used for training
    - Define budgetary items for training
      - Certifications
      - Continuing education
      - New volunteer training
      - Re-certification
  - Develop a plan to capture and disseminate in-house skills
- c. Succession planning
  - Develop a plan to ensure mission-critical functions continue despite personnel changes

# Gypsum Fire Protection District 2014-2016 Strategic Plan

In early 2014, the Gypsum Fire Protection District Board undertook the task of developing a strategic plan. The previous fall, the District had, for the second time, put a mill levy increase question to the voters. The measure failed.

Since incorporating as a District in 1983, the District Board has historically reduced the mill levy when possible while maintaining services, effectively keeping money in taxpayers' pockets when fiscally feasible.

Gypsum Fire Protection District receives approximately 90% of its funding from property taxes, which have declined a total of 32%, for a loss of \$453,040 since 2010. Throughout this drastic reduction in funding, the District has maintained its level of service while cutting 29% of its full-time labor costs and deferring the purchase of critical equipment as well as putting off needed maintenance.

Beginning in January 2014, the County Assessor estimated an additional 23% drop in assessed value, which equates to an additional \$131,183 loss in 2014, for a total combined loss of \$584,223 between 2010-2014.

Facing this challenge, the Board recognized the need to determine a plan for the next three years, in order to maintain the District as responsibly as possible.

The Board chose to follow the John M. Bryson Ten Step Strategic Planning process. First published in 1995 as *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*: the steps are:

- Initiate and agree on a strategic planning process
- Identify organizational mandates
- Clarify organizational mission and values
- Assess the external and internal environments
- Identify the strategic issues facing the organization
- Formulate strategies to manage the issues
- Review and adopt the strategies or strategic plan
- Establish an effective organizational vision
- Develop an effective implementation process
- Reassess strategies and strategic planning process

As the Board was the entity conducting the process, the organizational mandates were open. The Board wanted to develop an effective strategic plan to lead the District through the next few years, in an uncertain fiscal and staffing future.

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The Board held a work session and developed a new mission and vision. The mission of the Gypsum Fire Protection District is to prevent harm by educating and protecting the community. The Vision of the Gypsum Fire Protection District is to be an integral part of the community by fulfilling its needs. The Board requested the Department leadership develop the values of the department, which are:

To assess the internal environment, two separate SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) processes were conducted; one by the officers and engineers of the department, and another by the Board. Neither entity was advised of the results of the other's SWOT until after the fact. These were compared, and those items which were similar were determined to be of the highest priorities.

To assess the external environment, members of the Board met individually with key stakeholders in the Town of Gypsum and other citizens within the District.

The Board used the information gathered from the two SWOT processes and the external feedback to identify the strategic issues facing the organization. These are the four goals identified in the strategic plan: Budget/Financial Responsibilities, Strengthen Partnerships, Improve Communications, and Membership Care.

The Board worked cooperatively with the Chief to develop strategies to manage these four goals. These strategies are presented along with the goals. They are not meant to be all-inclusive; rather, to be used as a starting point for achieving the goals. As part of its implementation strategy, the Board encourages all Department members to develop further strategies to managing and achieving the four main goals.

To implement the plan, the Board determined that reviewing the Strategic Plan will be a standing agenda item at each regularly scheduled Board meeting. The Board will also schedule quarterly work sessions with the staff and membership to review the work done on the Plan and determine next steps toward achieving the goals. The Strategic Plan will be a standing agenda item at the monthly Officers and Engineers meeting.

The Board will annually review the overall implementation of the Plan, to ensure the goals remain relevant and to approve needed additions or changes.