June
2025

Umatilla County
FIRE DISTRICT #1

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED

Strategic Plan

2025–2030

AP TRITON
VISION · INNOVATION · SOLUTIONS

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Acknowledgments

AP Triton Consulting wishes to extend its sincere appreciation to each of those individuals and organizations whose contributions and assistance made this project possible.

Our sincere appreciation is extended to each of you…

Umatilla County Fire District #1 Strategic Planning Committee

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Glenn Silaski Board Member	**Reta Larson** Board Clerk

…and to each of the firefighters, officers, support staff, elected and appointed officials that daily serve the citizens and visitors of Umatilla County.

Introduction & Overview

The Umatilla County Fire District #1 (district) engaged AP Triton to facilitate the development of a strategic plan aimed at guiding the district over the next five years. This plan represents the culmination of these efforts, providing a comprehensive roadmap for the district's future.

This document captures the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges (SWOC) and critical issues identified from the planning workshop and community meeting which informed the initiatives, outcome statements, and action items. This process set priorities, focused energy, strengthened operations, and ensured that staff were aligned toward the common goal of enhancing the quality of life in the community.

A strategic plan is most effective when all levels of the organization are actively involved in its development, allowing for a shared understanding of the challenges facing the district. By collaborating to identify a focused set of initiatives and actionable steps, the organization can ensure that the plan is both widely supported and achievable. The district has been successful in developing this plan with broad support for the initiatives from across all areas of the district.

The steps of the process included:

- **Project Initiation**: AP Triton met with senior leadership to confirm project understanding, outline the steps, and review the work plan. The meeting also covered the timeline, information requests, and monthly virtual follow-ups, which continued until the on-site planning workshop.

- **Strategic Planning Team Formation**: A diverse planning team was assembled, comprising representatives from various divisions, shifts, ranks (including civilian employees), and labor representatives. This team actively participated in the planning process and attended both an evening community meeting and a 2½-day workshop.

- **Environmental Scan**: AP Triton conducted a comprehensive environmental scan, providing an overview of the district's operating environment. The district uploaded critical information that helped identify key issues, which was then compiled into a planning packet for the workshop.

- **Internal and External Surveys**: AP Triton created surveys to gather input from both internal and external stakeholders. After a review by the Fire Chief and Strategic Planning Team, the surveys were finalized and distributed:

- The internal survey, distributed by the Fire Chief, gathered feedback from all employees.
- The external survey was posted on the district website and social media, distributed to local businesses, and sent to individuals who had utilized emergency services over the previous six months.

- **Community Meeting**: AP Triton facilitated a community meeting, which provided residents with an opportunity to share their perspective on the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges. The external survey results were reviewed during this meeting, which took place the evening before the planning workshop. A diverse group of community members, including business owners, civic organizations, and non-profit leaders, were invited to participate.

- **Planning Workshop**: The 2½-day planning workshop brought together all the findings from the environmental assessment, surveys, and the community meeting. AP Triton guided the team through a review of the information to develop the first draft of strategic initiatives, outcome statements, and action items.

- **SWOC Analysis**: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges were identified and assessed. The planning team highlighted critical issues and service gaps that would inform the strategic initiatives.

- **Strategic Plan Components:** The cornerstone of the strategic plan for the district comprises five essential components. Mission Statement, Philosophy, Strategic Initiatives, Outcome Statements, and Action Items

  - **Mission Statements** are concise statements that define the fundamental purpose and reason for the existence of an organization.
  - **Vision Statement** provides long-term aspirations or the desired state along with the guiding principles and beliefs that shape an organization's culture, behavior, and decision-making processes.
  - **Value Statements** also known as core values, articulate the guiding principles and beliefs that shape an organization's culture, behavior, and decision-making processes. They represent the fundamental beliefs and ideals that are important to the organization and serve as a framework for how individuals within the organization interact with one another and with external stakeholders.
  - **Strategic initiatives** are broad themes that group areas where there is both need and opportunity to improve service to the community. These initiatives provide a focus of organizational efforts with the pace of improvement determined by the time and resources provided over the term of the five-year strategic plan.

- **Outcome Statements** are a concise and specific declaration that articulates the intended results or achievements of the strategic initiative. It provides clarity on the desired impact that is expected to occur once the initiative is met.

- **Action items** define the steps or actions required to achieve a desired outcome. They provide clarity and accountability, guiding efforts toward tangible results and ensuring alignment with overall strategic aims. An action item is a **S**pecific statement that is **M**easurable, **A**ction-oriented, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-sensitive. If all action items under an initiative are accomplished, the outcome statement will have been achieved.

- **Final Report and Adoption**: After review by staff, the strategic initiatives and action items should be presented to the governing body for adoption.

- **Implementation and Updates**: The district should routinely review the strategic plan.

  - Quarterly updates provided to the Board of Directors including a review of the initiatives, action items, timelines, and the consideration of new items.

  - Each year a progress report showing completed and upcoming action items should be published in the budget document.

  - In the final year of the plan, the district should conduct a comprehensive progress review and begin developing the next strategic plan to ensure continued alignment with organizational goals.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Mission, Vision, & Values

Umatilla County Fire District #1 Mission Statement

- Umatilla County Fire District #1 is devoted to protecting the communities we serve by providing the highest quality of compassionate and professional services.

Umatilla County Fire District #1 Vision Statement

- Building the premier public safety emergency services provider in Eastern Oregon through Continual Improvement, Professionalism, and Financial Stability.

Umatilla County Fire District #1 Values, Motto, and Principles

Values

- Respect and Integrity

- Effective Communication

- Responsibility and Accountability

- Teamwork

- Encourage and value all contributions

- Commitment and Pride

Motto

- "Be kind, be professional, and always do your best."

Principles

- **Pride** – I respect our history, traditions, achievements and constantly push for excellence.

- **Honor** – I am committed to always strive to do the right thing with character, integrity and honesty.

- **Dedication** – I have a passionate belief in our mission as a fire district.

Strategic Plan Overview

The Strategic Planning Team conducted an in-depth review of the SWOC analysis to identify issues and gaps. They organized the areas requiring attention into key themes, which were used to develop strategic initiatives. These initiatives are designed to guide the district toward its ultimate goal of providing high quality service to the community.

Fiscal sustainability and responsibility are the foundation of every initiative and goal, ensuring that all decisions and strategies are designed with long-term financial viability in mind. By prioritizing the efficient use of resources and carefully evaluating the economic impact of each action, the district commits to maintaining financial health while delivering on its mission. Every initiative and action item is aligned with this commitment and a timeline linked to a fiscal year, promoting a stable and sustainable future.

The district has identified five initiatives with a total of 29 initial action items for the strategic plan. The district has also committed to the following actions during the life of this plan:

- Quarterly updates provided to the Board of Directors including a review of the initiatives, action items, timelines, and the consideration of new items. The budget process will determine the funding for action items each fiscal year.

- Publishing annual progress reports showing completed and upcoming action items.

- In the final year of the plan, the district will conduct a comprehensive progress review and begin developing the next strategic plan.

Initiatives and Outcome Statements

INITIATIVE 1: Service Delivery

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will effectively meet Board-adopted response standards and community expectations.

INITIATIVE 2: Transparent Financial Health

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will maintain transparent, sustainable funding to meet current needs and support community growth.

INITIATIVE 3: Culture/Organizational Leadership

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will foster a positive culture, effective leadership, and professional growth opportunities.

INITIATIVE 4: Support Services

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will provide effective support for district-wide service delivery.

INITIATIVE 5: Community

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will engage in meaningful community interactions with the shared goal of public safety.

Initiative 1—Service Delivery

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will effectively meet Board-adopted response standards and community expectations.

Action Items:

A. Determine and adopt response performance and staffing standards.

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Operations
- Timeline: FY 25–26

B. Review and enhance dispatch services, focusing on Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) recommendations, automatic vehicle location (AVL), call processing time, and call prioritization.

- Responsible: Fire Chief
- Timeline: FY 26–27

C. Evaluate the current Community Paramedicine program and identify potential enhancements.

- Responsible: Chief of EMS and Training
- Timeline: FY 25–26

D. Assess the value and impact of the State HazMat program on the district.

- Responsible: HazMat Coordinator
- Timeline: FY 26–27

E. Identify priorities for future station locations and staffing needs.

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Operations
- Timeline: FY 27–28

F. Establish company-level leadership and minimum apparatus staffing standards at each station.

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Operations
- Timeline: FY 26–27

Initiative 2—Transparent Financial Health

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will maintain transparent, sustainable funding to meet current needs and support community growth.

Action Items:

A. Evaluate opportunities for cooperative services with neighboring agencies.

- Responsible: Fire Chief
- Timeline: FY 26–27

B. Identify roadblocks and develop partnerships and options to increase access to the full taxable value of the district.

- Responsible: Fire Chief
- Timeline: FY 27–28

C. Establish funding to retain SAFER Grant-funded positions.

- Responsible: Fire Chief
- Timeline: FY 26–27

D. Develop a funding mechanism for Capital Replacement Plan (e.g., equipment, apparatus, stations).

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Strategic Services
- Timeline: FY 28–29

E. Explore funding options for staff peak demand units and Inter-facility Transfers (IFTs).

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Operations
- Timeline: FY 26–27

F. Explore and develop a plan to implement GFOA budget presentation process.

- Responsible: Finance Manager
- Timeline: FY 25–26

Initiative 3—Culture/Organizational Leadership

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will foster a positive culture, effective leadership, and professional growth opportunities.

Action Items:

A. Conduct a 360° review of the Volunteer Paid-On-Call (POC) program to identify service delivery improvements.

- Responsible: Fire Chief
- Timeline: FY 25-26

B. Assess and address the perceived level of mistrust identified in the internal survey.

- Responsible: Fire Chief and Union President
- Timeline: FY 25–26

C. Enhance officer development for current and future officers and address succession planning.

- Responsible: Division Chief of EMS and Training
- Timeline: FY 25–26

D. Review and improve the annual employee evaluation process.

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Strategic Services and Union VP
- Timeline: FY 26–27

E. Evaluate and improve internal communication strategies district wide.

- Responsible: Communications Coordinator
- Timeline: FY 25–26

Initiative 4—Support Services

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will provide effective support for district-wide service delivery.

Action Items:

A. Develop two UCFD1 employees to paramedics in the next four years.

- Responsible: Division Chief of EMS and Training
- Timeline: FY 27–28

B. Evaluate and enhance current strategies for recruiting and retaining Volunteer POCs.

- Responsible: Division Chief of EMS and Training and President of Umatilla County Fire District #1 Firefighters Association
- Timeline: FY 25–26

C. Review Lexipol policy management processes and revise as necessary.

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Strategic Services
- Timeline: FY 26–27

D. Assess fleet maintenance capacity and develop a sustainable plan.

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Strategic Services
- Timeline: FY 27–28

E. Identify gaps in Human Resource Management and develop a mitigation plan.

- Responsible: Deputy Chief of Strategic Services
- Timeline: FY 25–26

F. Evaluate records management system (RMS) and define data use, access, and reporting needs.

- Responsible: Battalion Chief Roberts
- Timeline: FY 27–28

G. Design and implement an Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) program.

- Responsible: Director of Flight
- Timeline: FY 25–26

Initiative 5—Community

Outcome Statement: UCFD1 will engage in meaningful community interactions with the shared goal of public safety.

Action Items:

A. Explore and identify external partners to support community messaging.

- Responsible: Communications Coordinator
- Timeline: FY 25–26

B. Establish and foster three new partnerships with non-fire agencies or associations that share common goals.

- Responsible: Fire Chief
- Timeline: FY 27–28

C. Develop and maintain an annual content calendar with at least three social media posts per week.

- Responsible: Communications Coordinator
- Timeline: FY 26–27

D. Improve presence at and participation in community events.

- Responsible: Fire Marshal
- Timeline: FY 26–27

E. Develop and implement a community outreach and public education program.

- Responsible: Fire Marshal
- Timeline: FY 26–27

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Organizational Overview

The following section entails a general overview of the various components and services provided by Umatilla County Fire District #1.

History of Umatilla County Fire District #1

UCFD1 is a relatively young organization that was established as a Special District in 2016. That year, voters approved the consolidation of two smaller fire agencies: the Stanfield Fire District (SFD) and Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services (HF&ES), along with the addition of two specific areas east of the City of Hermiston.

Governance & Lines of Authority

Special Districts in Oregon are a form of local government created by their constituents to perform specific functions. Typically, these are for water delivery, wastewater services, or fire protection.

The Umatilla County Fire District #1 is governed by an elected five-member Board of Directors. The Board formulates policies and rules to carry out UCFD1 programs and services and approves budgets and expenditures. The Fire Chief reports directly to the Board.

Service Area

The boundaries of Umatilla County Fire District #1 encompass approximately 230 square miles.[1] Additionally, the district has a designated Ambulance Service Area (ASA) covering 620 square miles.[2] The population of the fire district is estimated at about 37,000 residents, with approximately 48,000 residents in the ASA, including unincorporated areas of Umatilla County.[3] According to the fire district, its population distribution is approximately 7% urban, 50% suburban, 35% rural, and 8% remote areas.[4]

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[1] Data table completed by UCFD1 staff.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Information from Data Table 1, completed by UCFD1.

The following figure is an illustration showing the UCFD1 fire district boundaries and stations.

Umatilla County Fire District #1 Study Area

The next figure is an illustration that shows each of the Ambulance Service Areas in Umatilla County, including Hermiston/Umatilla ASA 2. This map does not include the ambulance service area that UCFD#1 provides in eastern Morrow County.

Umatilla County Ambulance Service Areas

Insurance Services Office PPC Grade

The Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO) is an independent organization that collects and analyzes data from fire districts and fire departments in communities thr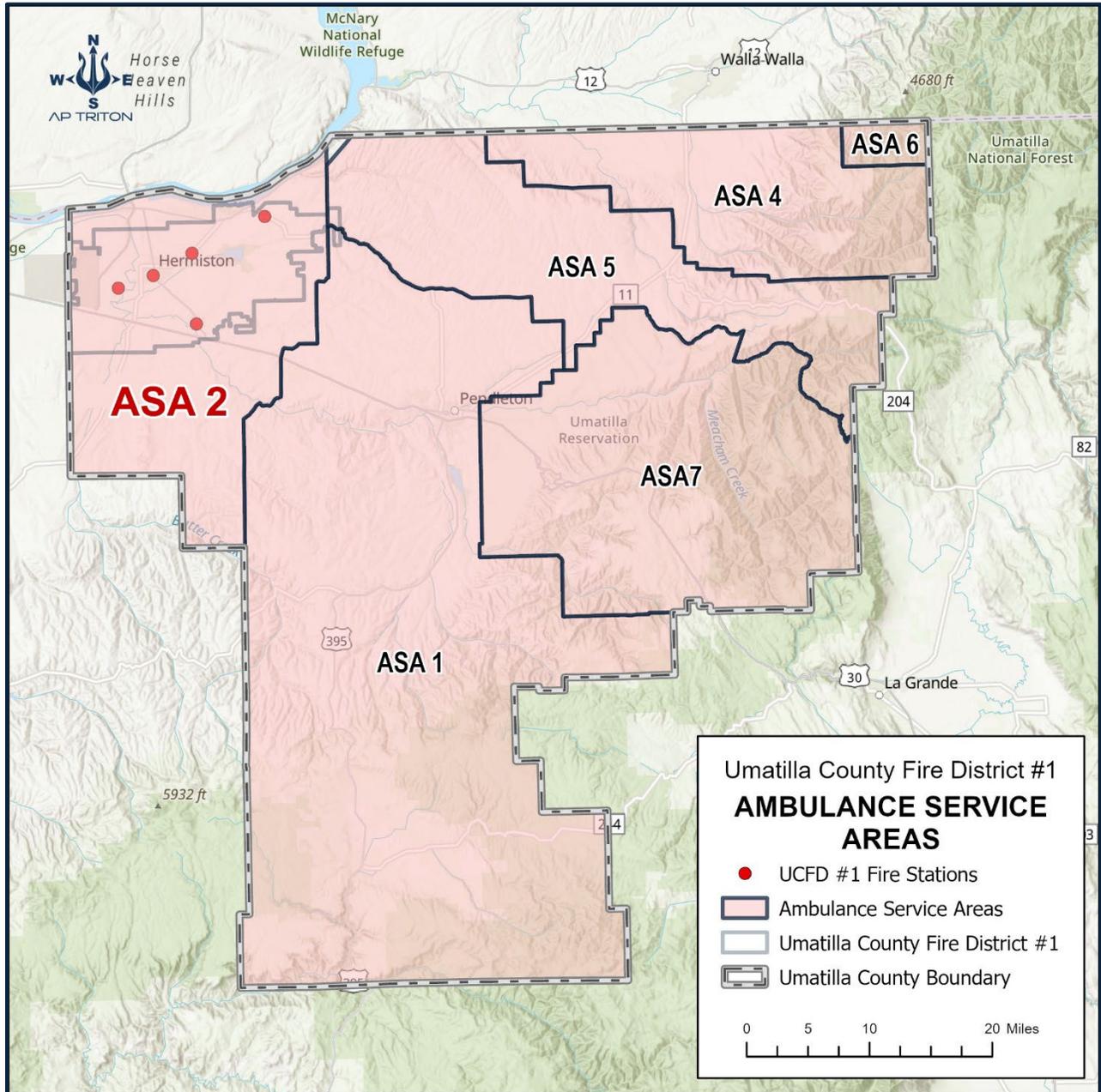oughout the United States to determine rates for fire insurance. In 2019, Umatilla County Fire District #1 was assigned a grade of Class 3 by ISO.

Operations & Deployment

Umatilla County Fire District #1 provides traditional fire protection, wildland firefighting, medical first-response (MFR), and ground emergency medical transport (GEMT) at both the Basic Life Support (BLS) and Advanced Life Support (ALS) levels.

UCFD1 deploys apparatus and personnel from five fire stations—two staffed full-time, two staffed part-time, and one unstaffed. Station 21 on South 1st Street in Hermiston serves as the fire district's headquarters. Career firefighters work a 48-hour work week including a debit day every 28 days. (24 hours on and 72 hours off)

Community Paramedicine

In collaboration with Good Shepherd Medical Center (GSMC), UCFD1 operates a Mobile Integrated Healthcare-Community Paramedicine Program (MIH-CP). The program is staffed with personnel trained as Community Paramedics and serves patients in both Umatilla and Morrow counties. It typically serves patients at high risk for complications following a recent injury, illness, or medical procedure.

The mission of the Community Paramedicine program is to better the health of the community and the patients they serve. Its goal is to provide the "right care at the right place at the right time."

Public Education & Prevention

The Fire Prevention Division of UCFD1 conducts fire inspections, code enforcement, plan reviews, fire-cause investigations, Juvenile Fire Setter interventions, and State inspections/consultations. It also provides various public education and prevention programs, including school presentations and fire extinguisher training.

Special Operations
Unmanned Aircraft System Program
The fire district maintains an Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) or drone program. It has specific operational policies and utilizes the UAS for the following purposes:[5]

- **Disaster Response and Recovery:** aerial intelligence of areas affected by disasters or emergencies; aerial assessment and analysis.

- **Emergency Response:** building fire reconnaissance.

- **Search & Rescue:** aerial intelligence, providing resources to those needing rescue.

- **Training:** assessment and evaluation of department UAS operations, Pilot in Charge (PIC), and department employee training on the use of UAS.

- Collection of aerial images and video for fire district promotion and public information.

- Infrastructure inspection and maintenance.

- Safely facilitating inspections of property.

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[5] Umatilla County Fire District #1 Drone Usage Policy.

Community Survey Results

Community Survey Introduction

In an effort to better understand community expectations, priorities, and perceptions, AP Triton and Umatilla County Fire District #1 conducted a comprehensive community survey in 2024. A total of 62 individuals participated, offering valuable insights into both the emergency and non-emergency services provided by the district. Respondents represented a cross-section of the community, including residents, business owners, frequent visitors, and public safety partners, with 84% identifying as residents within the district's service area.

The survey included a mix of multiple-choice, ranking, and open-ended questions, organized around several core topics:

- Perceived importance of services provided

- Desired service additions and planning priorities

- Expectations of first responders

- Preferred communication and engagement methods

- Satisfaction with past service delivery

- Vision for future district development and transparency
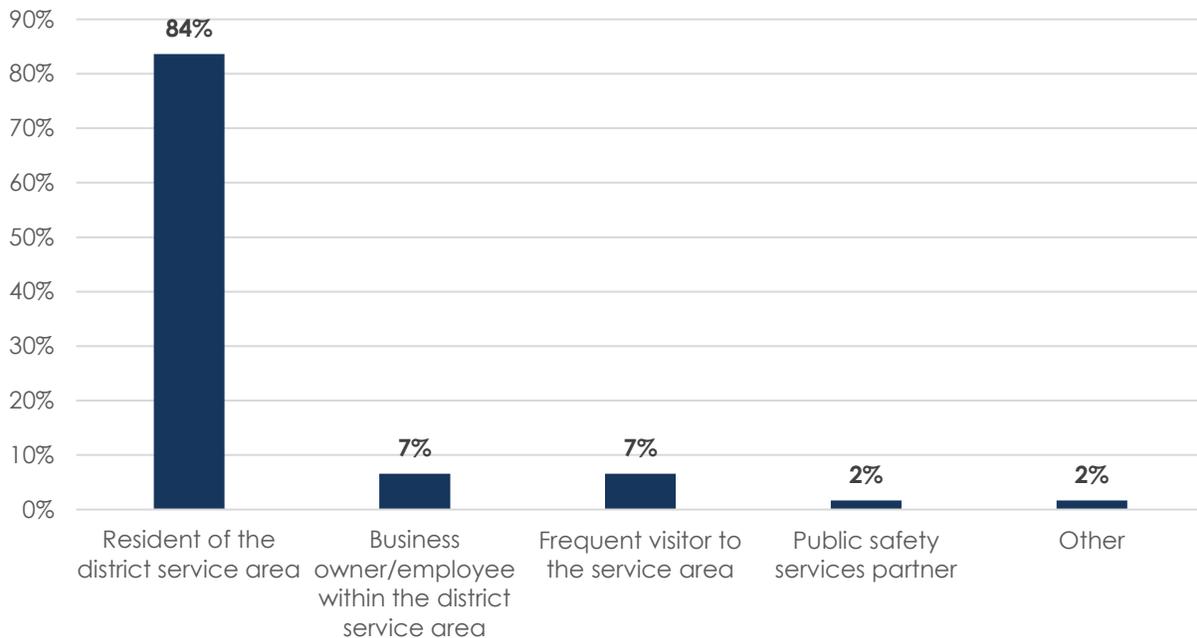
Across the responses, several key themes emerged:

- **Core Services as Top Priority:** Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Fire Suppression were overwhelmingly ranked as the most critical functions provided by the district.

- **Professionalism and Response Times:** Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of well-trained personnel and timely response to emergencies.

- **Community Engagement:** Many participants expressed a desire for increased visibility of the district through public events, digital communications, and outreach to underserved communities.

- **Public Awareness and Communication:** While most respondents felt at least somewhat informed, there was clear interest in expanding communication through platforms like Facebook, the district website, and in-person events.

- **Strategic Growth and Staffing:** Feedback supported maintaining or improving current response levels while being cautious and transparent about future growth, especially in terms of staffing, infrastructure, and resource allocation.

- **High Satisfaction with Service Delivery:** Among those who had received services from the district, satisfaction rates were exceptionally high, with 92% reporting positive experiences.

This input from the community provides a valuable foundation for aligning district operations, planning efforts, and engagement strategies with public expectations. The findings outlined in this report will inform the development of strategic initiatives that reflect both the strengths of Umatilla County Fire District #1 and opportunities for continued growth and connection with the community it serves.

Q1. Which of the following best describes your relationship with Umatilla County Fire District #1 (district)?

The community survey results indicate that a substantial majority (84%) of respondents identified themselves as residents of the Umatilla County Fire District #1 service area. Business owners or employees within the service area and frequent visitors each represented 7% of respondents. A smaller percentage (2%) identified as public safety service partners, and another 2% marked "Other," specifying they were employees of the district. Out of the total survey participants (62 total), nearly all responded to this question, with only one respondent skipping it.

Q2. Please rate the following services provided by the district using a scale of critical priority, important priority, or a low priority.

When asked to prioritize district services, respondents overwhelmingly identified **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** as the highest priority, with 90% classifying it as a *critical priority*. **Fire Suppression** followed closely, marked as *critical* by 85% of participants. These two services clearly stand out as the core functions most valued by the community.

Other operational functions also received significant support. **Emergency Management** and **Specialized/Technical Rescue** were identified as *critical* by 47% and 36% of respondents respectively, with most of the remaining respondents still rating them as *important*. Similarly, **Public Education**, **Hazardous Materials Response**, and **Fire and Arson Investigation** were viewed as either *critical* or *important* by a vast majority of respondents.

On the lower end of the scale, services such as **Community Events**, **New Construction Plan Review**, and **Public Outreach** were more likely to be rated as *low priority* (by roughly one-third of respondents for each). Still, many participants (over 50% in each of these categories) considered them to be *important*, suggesting that while not viewed as urgent, they are still recognized as valuable to the district's overall mission.

In summary, the survey responses demonstrate a clear emphasis on core emergency response services, while also acknowledging the relevance of non-emergency functions such as education, community engagement, and risk reduction.

Q3. If you would like to see a service added, please list it in the comment field.
Of the 62 total respondents, 12 offered written feedback on potential services they would like to see added by Umatilla County Fire District #1. Key themes included improved medical and fire response capabilities, enhanced community engagement, and specific service additions. One respondent expressed concern over property tax increases, indicating sensitivity to financial impacts. Others emphasized the need for **competent emergency care**, **hands-only CPR education**, and **PulsePoint app integration** for better public awareness during emergencies.

Community connection also surfaced as a recurring theme. Several comments recommended a return to active social media use, increased **public education**, and **greater firefighter involvement** with local residents. Suggestions also included **car seat installations**, **support for seniors with smoke detector maintenance**, and creating a system for notifying responders of **home oxygen use**.

Q4. Please rank the following first responder qualities in the order of importance (you can drag-and-drop), with 1 (top position) being the most important.
Survey respondents were asked to rank first responder qualities in order of importance. The results highlight a clear emphasis on professional competence and reliability in emergency situations.

"Highly trained" was ranked as the most important quality, with over half of respondents (52%) selecting it as their top choice and a weighted average score of 5.24. This was followed by **"Prompt in arrival"** (average score: 4.45), which 24% of respondents ranked as their highest priority and 37% placed second—demonstrating the community's strong expectations for both skill and response time.

"Friendly, courteous, and professional" ranked third overall (score: 4.27), showing that while technical performance is key, interpersonal demeanor also plays an important role in public perception.

Qualities like **"Empathetic and compassionate"** (3.42), **"Flexible and adaptable"** (2.29), and **"Involved in the local community"** (1.32) were consistently ranked lower. Nearly 80% of respondents ranked community involvement last, suggesting that while appreciated, these softer attributes are less critical in the eyes of the public compared to operational readiness and professionalism.

Overall, the data indicates that the community values technical excellence, rapid response, and respectful conduct above broader engagement efforts.

Q5. If you would like to see a first responder quality added, please list it in the comment field.

Of the 62 total survey participants, four respondents offered comments regarding additional first responder qualities they would like to see prioritized. Responses included the **need for more paramedics** and a stronger **focus on community engagement and cultural competence**. One respondent suggested implementing a rotation system among firehouses to broaden community connections and called for **training in cultural understanding and communication** to help newer firefighters build confidence and better serve diverse populations.

Additional qualities noted were **honesty**, **trustworthiness**, and an emphasis on first responders being **healthy and happy**, reflecting a desire for well-rounded personnel who are both capable and emotionally grounded.

Q6. How well-informed do you feel about the services and programs offered by the district?

When asked how well-informed they feel about the services and programs offered by Umatilla County Fire District #1, nearly half of respondents (49%) indicated they are **somewhat informed**. Another 23% reported being **very informed**, while 15% considered themselves **extremely informed**.

Only 13% of participants felt **not so informed**, and none reported feeling **not at all informed**, suggesting that most community members have at least a general awareness of the district's services. However, the data also highlights an opportunity for the district to increase transparency and outreach, as only a minority feel highly informed. Strengthening communication channels and educational efforts may help move more residents from "somewhat" to "very" or "extremely" informed.

Q7. What methods would you prefer that the fire district utilize to deliver emergency preparedness, fire safety, and wildfire information to you? Select all that apply.

When asked how they would prefer to receive emergency preparedness, fire safety, and wildfire information, survey respondents overwhelmingly favored **Facebook**, with 79% selecting it as their preferred method of communication. The district **website** was the second most favored at 57%, followed by **text message or email alerts** (39%) and **in-person public meetings** (38%).

Less frequently chosen, though still relevant, were **newsletters/mailers** (23%), **Instagram** and **newspapers** (both at 21%). Fewer respondents indicated a preference for platforms like **YouTube (11%)**, **Twitter (10%)**, and **NextDoor (0%)**.

Open-ended responses under "Other" reflected both enthusiasm and skepticism toward digital platforms. Some respondents emphasized the importance of **diverse outreach**, such as including mailing list subscriptions on the district website or using **local radio, television ads**, or **community news sites** like Northeast Oregon Now. Others raised concerns over privacy with social media platforms and suggested alternatives like **PulsePoint**, **TikTok**, and **community BBQ events** to build engagement.

Overall, the responses highlight the value of maintaining a **multi-channel communication strategy**, combining popular digital platforms with more traditional and interactive options to ensure broad community reach.

Q8. What are some ways the district could better engage with the community?

Out of 62 respondents, 32 shared their thoughts on how Umatilla County Fire District #1 could better engage with the community. The feedback points to several consistent themes, primarily revolving around **increased visibility**, **diverse outreach efforts**, and a **greater presence at local events**.

Many respondents suggested expanding the district's **social media presence**, specifically noting platforms like **Facebook** and expressing a desire for **more frequent posts**. Several comments mentioned the loss of engagement since the departure of a previous photographer and called for improved communications and storytelling.

Another major theme was the need for **more public-facing events** such as **open houses**, **block parties**, **Saturday markets**, **food events**, and **walk-throughs** at fire stations. Participants emphasized the importance of **firefighters actively attending and participating** in events throughout the service area—not just in Hermiston—to demonstrate their investment in the broader community.

Some respondents highlighted the value of tools like **PulsePoint** for promoting CPR awareness and public safety engagement. Others noted the importance of reaching underrepresented groups, suggesting **stronger partnerships with Hispanic organizations** and **bilingual outreach** efforts.

While a few participants felt the district was already doing a good job, or did not prioritize community engagement, the majority offered constructive feedback geared toward enhancing **transparency, accessibility, and inclusivity** in district outreach efforts.

Q9. Please compare each of the following elements to the others (you can drag-and-drop) and rank the following planning considerations in the order of importance, with 1 (top position) being the most important.

When asked to rank key planning priorities for Umatilla County Fire District #1, survey respondents overwhelmingly prioritized **ensuring the technical competence of all personnel**, with 66% ranking it as their top priority and an overall weighted score of **4.48**, the highest among all options.

Second in importance was **maintaining existing response times**, scoring **3.10**. This was closely followed by **improving response times** at **2.91**, indicating a shared desire to at least preserve, if not enhance, current performance levels.

Equipment and facilities being reliable and well-maintained received a moderate level of importance (score: **2.83**), with respondents recognizing its role in operational readiness but not placing it as a top-tier concern compared to staffing and performance.

The lowest-ranked planning priority was **expanding the types of services offered**, with a score of **1.67**. Over 60% of respondents ranked this last, suggesting that while innovation and diversification of services may have merit, the community currently places higher value on maintaining and refining core emergency response capabilities.

These findings suggest a strong public focus on **competency, consistency, and reliability**, with less emphasis placed on service expansion or diversification at this time.

Q10. Have you received any services from the fire district?

When asked whether they had received services from Umatilla County Fire District #1, a majority of respondents (56%) indicated they had received **emergency response services**, such as fire, EMS, or other urgent assistance. An additional 23% reported engaging with the district through **non-emergency activities**, including community or station events. Only 21% stated they had not received any services.

These results suggest that the district has had direct or indirect contact with nearly 80% of survey participants, reflecting a significant level of community interaction across both emergency and public outreach functions.

Q11. If you responded YES to the previous question, were you satisfied with the service?

Among those who received services from Umatilla County Fire District #1, satisfaction levels were overwhelmingly positive. A full **92%** of respondents reported being either **very satisfied (65%)** or **satisfied (27%)** with the services provided.

Only a small minority expressed less favorable experiences: 4% were **somewhat satisfied**, and just 2% each reported being **somewhat dissatisfied** or **very dissatisfied**. Notably, **no respondents** indicated being outright dissatisfied.

These results reflect a high degree of public confidence and appreciation for the district's service delivery, particularly in emergency and non-emergency interactions.

Q12. How satisfied are you with the district's performance in responding to critical emergencies (e.g., medical emergencies, fires, etc.)?

When asked to rate Umatilla County Fire District #1's performance in responding to critical emergencies, the vast majority of respondents shared positive feedback. A combined **81%** reported being either **very satisfied (40%)** or **satisfied (41%)**.

A smaller portion of respondents expressed moderate or negative experiences: **10% were somewhat satisfied**, **3% somewhat dissatisfied**, and **2% very dissatisfied**. No respondents selected "dissatisfied."

Additionally, **3% chose "Other,"** with open-ended responses indicating that some individuals have not personally used emergency services but hold a favorable perception based on what they observe or hear. One respondent noted they are unsure about the district's response performance due to lack of personal experience.

Overall, the results demonstrate broad public approval of the district's emergency response efforts, with minimal dissatisfaction and a few neutral observations from those lacking direct experience.

Q13. How would you feel if the response time for a 911 call varied depending on the severity of the emergency? For example, would your expectations differ if you were calling for a minor injury compared to a critical medical emergency like a heart attack or stroke?

When asked how they would feel if 911 response times varied based on the severity of the emergency, most respondents expressed **understanding and support** for a triage-based system. Of the 46 individuals who answered, the overwhelming majority agreed that **critical emergencies should be prioritized** over minor incidents.

Many respondents described this approach as **"common sense," "reasonable,"** and aligned with **emergency medical best practices**, often comparing it to hospital triage. Several emphasized that **life-threatening situations**, such as strokes or heart attacks, should receive faster response times than minor injuries.

A few respondents did raise **concerns about how severity is assessed**, noting that it can be difficult for dispatchers to accurately gauge urgency based on limited caller information. Others cautioned that while they supported prioritization in principle, it should be implemented with care and strong protocols to avoid missed critical emergencies.

Only a small number expressed **opposition** or hesitation, with one stating they "would not like it" and a few indicating that **all calls should receive prompt attention** unless there is a clear need to triage due to simultaneous emergencies.

In summary, community members generally accept—and even expect—**differentiated response times based on urgency**, provided that **accuracy, fairness, and effective communication** are maintained throughout the process.

Q14. Please list the top three expectations you have of your fire district.

Community expectations for Umatilla County Fire District #1, as expressed by 41 survey respondents, consistently emphasize core emergency service values and organizational integrity. Across all three ranked categories, several themes clearly emerged:

1. Training and Competency

The most frequently mentioned expectation was that personnel be **highly trained**, **competent**, and **professional**. Phrases like "well trained," "competent trained personnel," and "highly trained people" were repeatedly listed as top priorities, underscoring the community's strong desire for technically proficient responders.

2. Response Time

The importance of **fast and reliable response times** was another dominant theme. Respondents expressed a desire for "quick response," "low response time," "fast arrival," and consistent availability, indicating that timeliness remains a top performance metric for the public.

3. Medical and Emergency Service Delivery

Many residents expect the district to provide **high-quality emergency medical response** and fire suppression. Expectations such as "fire/medical response," "respond to all emergencies," "emergency medical care," and "appropriate response to calls" show that the community prioritizes efficient, life-saving service delivery.

4. Community Connection and Communication

Several responses reflect expectations beyond emergency calls. These include:

- Community involvement and outreach
- Education in the community (especially fire prevention and youth education)
- Transparency and honesty
- Empathy and compassion

5. Stewardship and Resources

Many respondents want the district to be **fiscally responsible**, maintain **adequate equipment**, and **spend tax dollars wisely**. They also expressed concern for **staff retention**, proper **resource management**, and **ongoing training and staffing**.

Residents expect a fire district that is not only technically capable and responsive but also transparent, compassionate, and responsible in managing its people and resources. These expectations reinforce the community's trust in core fire and EMS functions while highlighting opportunities for continuous improvement in communication and outreach.

Q15. What is your fire district doing well?
Among the 44 community members who responded to the question "What is your fire district doing well?," several key areas of excellence emerged, reflecting consistent appreciation for Umatilla County Fire District #1's operations and services:

1. Emergency Response and Professionalism
The most frequently praised strength was the district's **quick and reliable response to emergencies**. Many respondents mentioned positive experiences with fast response times, particularly for medical emergencies. Additionally, **professionalism**, **courteous staff**, and **highly qualified personnel** were repeatedly acknowledged as standout attributes.

2. Community Engagement
Respondents also highlighted the district's efforts in **community involvement**, such as public presence, trainings, and participation in events. Several noted the **Community Paramedic Program** as a particularly beneficial and visible service contributing to positive interactions.

3. Mental Health and Employee Support
A few respondents emphasized the district's initiatives to support **employee mental health**, citing contracts with local providers like the Eastern Oregon Trauma Center as forward-thinking and impactful for both staff and service quality.

4. Growth and Resource Management
Many comments reflected approval of the district's efforts to **upgrade equipment**, **improve facilities**, and **secure grant funding**. While one respondent was critical of a specific station project, the general sentiment was that the district is **growing thoughtfully** and making wise decisions with available resources.

5. Flexibility and Innovation
Several community members appreciated the district's ability to **adapt quickly**, **respond to evolving needs**, and **implement new strategies**, such as enhancing training programs and using advanced equipment.

6. Compassionate Care
There was also strong recognition of the **empathetic, personable, and kind care** delivered by both firefighters and EMS personnel—particularly during stressful or critical situations.

Overall, the feedback reveals that the community views Umatilla County Fire District #1 as a **capable, responsive, and community-oriented organization**, with particular strengths in **emergency service delivery**, **staff professionalism**, and **continuous improvement**.

Q16. What changes or developments would you like to see in the district's services in the next three to five years?

In response to the question about desired changes or developments for Umatilla County Fire District #1 over the next 3 to 5 years, 38 community members provided feedback. The key themes that emerged include:

1. Staffing and Personnel

A majority of responses emphasized the need to **increase staffing**, particularly to fully staff all fire stations and ensure the department can keep up with community growth. Comments reflected concern about **overworked employees**, a **need for more paramedics and ambulances**, and a desire to see more **hiring and retention efforts**.

2. Training and Professional Development

Many respondents highlighted the importance of **ongoing education**, **continued training**, and **technical skill development**, especially in high-risk areas such as industrial facilities. Several called for **more competent EMS and fire care** and encouraged leadership to prevent stagnation by **pushing continuous improvement**.

3. Community Engagement and Outreach

There was strong interest in expanding **non-emergency public visibility**, including CPR classes, car seat checks, booths at community events, and meet-and-greets. A few suggested increased collaboration with specific groups, such as the **Hispanic community**, and supported the continuation or expansion of the **Community Paramedic Program**.

4. Service Expansion and Strategic Growth

While some advocated for **district growth in alignment with community needs**—including adding more stations and locations—others urged caution. A few respondents explicitly recommended that the district **focus on core services** and **avoid unnecessary expansion**, particularly in areas with low service demand.

5. Resource Management and Equipment

Multiple responses addressed the need to **maintain and upgrade equipment responsibly**. While some supported new equipment purchases, others expressed concern about **wasteful spending on cosmetic features** and emphasized **prioritizing medical resources**, like ambulances and medical transport availability, over fire apparatus.

6. Transparency, Public Education, and Visibility

There was a clear desire for greater **public awareness** of the district's services, including better communication around the **Emergency Management process** and expanded efforts to **educate residents**. Tools like **PulsePoint** were mentioned as helpful for engaging the public.

7. Support for Employee Well-being

A few responses recognized the importance of supporting **mental and physical wellness** for staff, advocating for more **resources and programs** aimed at helping responders maintain readiness and resilience.

In summary, respondents envision a future where the fire district continues to grow— **strategically, transparently, and equitably**—with strong attention to **staffing, training, outreach, fiscal responsibility, and public trust**.

Q17. Are there specific expectations of the district that are not currently being met?

When asked whether there are specific expectations of Umatilla County Fire District #1 that are not currently being met, most of the 31 respondents indicated **no unmet expectations**, with many stating explicitly that they were unaware of any issues or felt that services were covered.

However, several comments did surface themes worth noting:

1. Community Engagement and Visibility

A few respondents noted a need for improved **community outreach** and **connection with residents and businesses**. These individuals expressed a desire for the district to be more visible and active in non-emergency settings, reinforcing earlier comments across the survey about expanding public presence.

2. Staffing and Growth

Some responses reiterated the need for **more EMS and fire personnel**, particularly in light of the region's continued growth. One individual noted concern that the district may be **overextending services** outside the urban core, suggesting the need for strategic evaluation of service boundaries.

3. Financial Transparency

Concerns were raised about **financial accountability**, with one respondent stating that big financial decisions should be more visible to taxpayers. Another mentioned a lack of updates following the passage of a bond, asking where funds were allocated and whether this information is accessible online.

4. Infrastructure and Transport

Two respondents pointed to **station locations** and **non-emergency medical transport** as ongoing issues, highlighting logistical and service access gaps that may not yet be fully addressed.

5. Apparatus Maintenance

One comment referenced **mechanical issues** with rigs, implying that fleet readiness could be an area needing attention.

While the majority of participants did not report any unmet expectations, the minority who did brought forward **constructive insights**—specifically regarding **staffing, community visibility, fiscal transparency, non-emergency services, and infrastructure planning**. These comments align with broader themes identified throughout the survey and suggest opportunities for improvement in both **communication and strategic prioritization**.

Q18. We appreciate the time and effort you have invested in completing this survey. If you have any additional comments or opinions, please note them below. If you would like someone to contact you directly, please list your contact information. Thank you again!

At the conclusion of the community survey for Umatilla County Fire District #1, a small number of respondents (9 individuals) provided open-ended comments. The majority of this feedback was appreciative and supportive. Several individuals took the opportunity to thank the district for its service, highlighting the quality of personnel and expressing gratitude for the work being done. Others offered constructive suggestions, including a recommendation to increase public engagement through platforms like Facebook and to provide regular updates on call volume, trends, and fire prevention tips. The use of PulsePoint was also mentioned as a positive tool for community awareness.

However, a few comments expressed concern. One respondent voiced significant apprehension about the long-term financial sustainability of staffing increases made possible by the SAFER Grant, suggesting that the district may be overextending itself. The individual opposed any future tax increases to support staffing levels once the grant ends, and raised concerns about perceived inequities in how services are distributed between urban and rural areas. Another respondent provided sharp criticism of district leadership, citing concerns about ego and a perceived lack of focus on employees and community priorities.

Overall, the comments reflect a blend of **appreciation, constructive ideas, and a desire for continued transparency and accountability**. While most respondents appear supportive of the district's direction, a minority voiced concerns that underscore the importance of clear communication around fiscal planning, leadership priorities, and equitable service delivery.

Internal Survey Results

Internal Survey Introduction

To support strategic planning, organizational development, and continuous improvement efforts, AP Triton and Umatilla County Fire District #1 conducted an internal staff survey in June 2025. A total of 30 individuals participated in the survey, with no respondents skipping questions. The survey was designed to gather feedback from internal personnel on a range of topics relevant to operational performance, work environment, leadership, facilities, service priorities, and community relations.

The survey included a combination of Likert-scale rating questions, multiple-choice selections, and open-ended comment prompts, enabling both quantitative analysis and qualitative insight. Questions were grouped into key categories that align with organizational effectiveness and employee experience, including:

- Work Environment & Morale

- Facilities & Apparatus

- Community Relations & Public Perception

- Program & Service Prioritization

- Expectations of the District

Several core themes emerged across the survey responses:

- **Pride and Professionalism:** Nearly all respondents reported feeling proud to be part of UCFD1, and most rated the work environment as good or excellent. This reflects a strong culture of commitment and identification with the mission of the organization.

- **Core Services Are Prioritized:** Emergency Medical Services and Fire Suppression were universally ranked as critical priorities. Wildland Firefighting and Emergency Management also received high importance ratings, indicating broad support for maintaining and enhancing these capabilities.

- **Facilities & Maintenance:** While most respondents agreed that fleet testing (e.g., pump, hose, ladder) occurs regularly and that apparatus are generally well maintained, opinions on the overall condition and adequacy of facilities were more mixed. Comments and ratings suggest room for improvement in facility upkeep and timely repairs.

- **Apparatus & Equipment:** Most staff agreed the current fleet is adequate, though maintenance response time was flagged as a concern. This indicates the need to ensure reliability and efficiency in apparatus repair workflows.

- **Community Engagement & External Relations:** Staff strongly agreed that UCFD1 maintains cooperative relationships with external agencies and is respected by the public. However, internal opinions varied regarding the district's level of direct community engagement, suggesting opportunities to expand visibility and public outreach.

- **Public Perception:** Respondents believe the district has a positive image in the community, with 70% describing the public view as "good" or "excellent." This aligns with broader survey indicators of professionalism and high service satisfaction.

This internal feedback provides a valuable snapshot of workforce perceptions and organizational strengths, as well as constructive areas for continued focus and improvement. These insights will help guide strategic decision-making, resource allocation, and staff engagement efforts moving forward.

Q1. Please identify your total number of years of experience (paid and volunteer) in the fire service:
The survey demographics for Umatilla County Fire District #1 reflect a workforce with significant experience and a strong representation from line staff.

Years of Experience in the Fire Service (Paid and Volunteer):

A total of 30 respondents answered this question. The majority of participants have extensive experience, with 43% (13 individuals) reporting 11–20 years of service, and 33% (10 individuals) having 20+ years. A smaller portion have mid-level experience, with 13% (4 individuals) having 1–5 years, and 10% (3 individuals) with 6–10 years. No respondents had less than one year of experience.

Q2. Please identify your total number of years of service for Umatilla County Fire District #1:

Years of Service Specifically with Umatilla County Fire District #1:

All 30 respondents answered. While many have long-standing ties to the district, the distribution shows a slightly newer workforce. The largest group—40% (12 respondents)— have been with the district for 11–20 years. One-third (33%) reported 6–10 years of service, and 23% (7 individuals) have served between 1–5 years. Only one respondent (3%) reported more than 20 years with UCFD1, and none were new with under a year of service.

Q3. Which one of the following best describes your current position?

Current Position:

Of the 29 who responded, nearly half—45% (13 individuals)—identified as **Line Staff**, making them the largest group represented in the survey. Command Staff, Company Officers, Support Staff, and Volunteers each made up 14% (4 individuals per group), indicating a balanced distribution of perspectives across various ranks and roles within the organization.

Overall, the survey responses were shaped by a highly experienced workforce with the largest voice coming from line personnel, offering a valuable frontline perspective on internal culture, operations, and areas for improvement.

Q4. Please identify your level of agreement with each of the following statements about training and professional development opportunities provided by Umatilla County Fire District #1:

The responses to the survey section on training and professional development at Umatilla County Fire District #1 reveal a mix of confidence and concern across various aspects of the program.

Overall, **training related to emergency incidents** received the most positive feedback, with **86%** of respondents either strongly agreeing (43%) or somewhat agreeing (43%) that their training prepares them for the types of emergencies they are likely to encounter. Similarly, **training records** were largely viewed as reliable, with **67%** of respondents agreeing they are accurate and current.

My training prepares me for the types of emergency incidents that I am likely to encounter in my job.

43%	43%	7%	7%

The district's training records are accurate and current.

30%	37%	17%	7%	10%

I have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the district's training program.

20%	47%	20%	10%	3%

The training program meets the needs of the district.

13%	57%	17%	10%	3%

In general, all district personnel are adequately trained to do their jobs.

13%	43%	30%	10%	3%

My district has a clear plan in place for my professional development.

17%	27%	30%	20%	7%

Training is consistent throughout the district.

17%	23%	23%	33%	3%

Members who are promoted are usually well prepared by the district's professional development program for their new duties.

17%	10%	37%	30%	7%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

■ Strongly Agree   ■ Somewhat Agree   ■ Somewhat Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree   ■ No Opinion

In terms of **understanding the goals and objectives** of the district's training program, **67%** agreed (20% strongly, 47% somewhat), though 30% expressed some level of disagreement or uncertainty. A majority (70%) also felt that the **training program meets district needs**, though 27% disagreed to some extent.

Views on **the adequacy of training across all district personnel** were more mixed. While 56% agreed that personnel are adequately trained, 40% disagreed or had no opinion, suggesting room for improvement.

Perceptions of **consistency in training across the district** were notably divided, with just 40% agreeing and **56% expressing disagreement**, including 33% who strongly disagreed—indicating this is a significant concern.

Respondents were also split on whether the **district has a clear professional development plan**, with **44% in agreement** and **50% disagreeing**. Similarly, confidence in the **district's ability to prepare members for promotion** was low—only 27% agreed, while **67% disagreed or were unsure**.

In summary, while training related to emergency response is seen as strong, respondents expressed concerns about consistency, clarity of development plans, and the effectiveness of promotional preparation. These areas may benefit from renewed focus and strategic planning to strengthen confidence and alignment district-wide.

Q5. In which subjects or areas would you like to see more training?
Survey responses from Umatilla County Fire District #1 reflect a strong interest in expanding training opportunities across a variety of subject areas, with several recurring themes emerging. One of the most frequently mentioned topics was **officer development and leadership training**, including professional development for current and aspiring leaders. Respondents expressed a need for more structured and proactive efforts to prepare individuals for supervisory roles, particularly middle management. There is concern that promotions sometimes occur before personnel are fully equipped, which can lead to leadership challenges. Suggestions included offering internal pathways such as Fire Officer II/III, Instructor II, and Task Force Leader training.

Participants also indicated a desire for more **hands-on and practical training**, both for firefighting and EMS operations. Many called for a move away from passive learning methods like PowerPoint presentations and instead requested scenario-based training involving skills such as EMS charting, protocol changes, company evolutions, search and rescue, venting, and forcible entry. Rescue and extrication training were specifically identified as underrepresented areas needing more emphasis.

In terms of **fireground operations**, respondents asked for additional training in structure fire tactics, wildland firefighting (particularly Type 6 operations), and ladder truck operations. Several also noted the importance of regular training with neighboring agencies to improve interoperability during joint responses.

Some participants identified gaps in the district's **internal systems and organizational processes**, requesting more education on how to navigate forms, request training, submit reimbursements, and understand positional roles and responsibilities. This administrative knowledge was seen as important for ensuring day-to-day effectiveness.

A few respondents commented positively on the existing training program but emphasized the importance of **consistency** across instructors and shifts. They recommended creating a well-defined training roadmap to guide task-level instruction and ensure alignment with district goals.

Finally, **wellness, physical fitness, and peer support** were mentioned as areas where additional focus could enhance overall employee development. There was also interest in expanding **internal training offerings** with a clear path for advancement and bringing in outside instructors to diversify perspectives and content.

Overall, the responses suggest a desire for a more comprehensive, hands-on, and forward-looking training program that balances operational readiness with leadership development and internal process clarity.

Q6. If you could change one thing about the district's training program, what would it be?
Survey responses from Umatilla County Fire District #1 regarding what respondents would change about the district's training program suggest a strong desire for **greater consistency, structure, and hands-on engagement**. Many participants voiced concerns about the **lack of standardization across shifts**, noting that training often varies depending on who is facilitating it. A number of comments called for the training division—not shift officers—to lead instructional efforts to ensure a unified and high-quality experience across the organization.

Several respondents expressed frustration with the reliance on **computer-based training programs**, such as Target Solutions, which were described as generic and unengaging. There was a clear preference for **department-specific, scenario-based, and in-person training**, especially for skill-building and reinforcing district policies and procedures. Hands-on training was described as not only more effective but also more aligned with the realities of the job.

Others noted the need for **more dedicated training time**—opportunities when crews can train uninterrupted by emergency calls or competing priorities. This includes suggestions for off-shift training sessions and makeup days for drills. In addition, a few responses mentioned **bureaucratic barriers** that make it difficult to attend external training, citing lengthy approval processes for travel, classes, and meals that often result in missed opportunities.

Leadership development and promotional preparedness were also recurring themes. Respondents want to see a **more deliberate focus on professional development**, with structured pathways and leadership training offered earlier in an employee's career. They also emphasized the need for a policy requiring personnel to **hold and use certifications over time before advancing**, which would encourage deeper understanding and skill retention.

Participants recommended bringing in **outside experts and instructors** to introduce new ideas, share best practices, and supplement internal expertise. There was also support for the development of a **district-specific training philosophy**—what one respondent described as the "UCFD1 way"—that reflects the unique needs and expectations of the district and its citizens.

Lastly, respondents expressed a desire for **more proactive planning and communication** about training schedules. Some suggested adopting a monthly or yearly training calendar so crews can better prepare and align their shift-level efforts with department goals. Overall, the feedback reflects a strong appetite for a **more strategic, consistent, and forward-looking training program** that better prepares personnel for the roles they hold and the challenges they face.

Q7. Please identify your level of agreement with each of the following statements about performance reviews and evaluations conducted by your district:

The survey responses regarding performance reviews and evaluations at Umatilla County Fire District #1 indicate a generally positive but varied perception of the evaluation process.

Performance evaluations include recognition for superior work and accomplishments. — Strongly Agree 37%, Somewhat Agree 37%, Somewhat Disagree 17%, Strongly Disagree 7%, No Opinion 3%

I know what standards will be used to evaluate my performance. — Strongly Agree 33%, Somewhat Agree 40%, Somewhat Disagree 17%, Strongly Disagree 7%, No Opinion 3%

Performance evaluations include suggestions for improved performance. — Strongly Agree 33%, Somewhat Agree 37%, Somewhat Disagree 13%, Strongly Disagree 10%, No Opinion 7%

I receive regular feedback (reviews) from my supervisor about the quality of my work. — Strongly Agree 20%, Somewhat Agree 40%, Somewhat Disagree 30%, Strongly Disagree 3%, No Opinion 7%

■ Strongly Agree ■ Somewhat Agree ■ Somewhat Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ No Opinion

Most respondents agreed that **performance evaluations include recognition for superior work**, with **74% in agreement** (37% strongly agree and 37% somewhat agree). However, 24% either disagreed or had no opinion, suggesting that while recognition is occurring, it may not be consistently applied or observed across all roles.

Similarly, **knowledge of evaluation standards** is relatively strong, with **73% agreeing** (33% strongly, 40% somewhat) that they know what standards will be used to evaluate their performance. Only 24% disagreed or had no opinion, indicating that expectations are fairly well communicated overall.

When it comes to **constructive feedback**, 70% reported that evaluations include **suggestions for improvement** (33% strongly agree, 37% somewhat agree), though 20% disagreed or were unsure—highlighting an opportunity to ensure these elements are consistently included in evaluations.

The most divided response came from the question on **regular feedback from supervisors** outside of formal evaluations. While 60% of respondents agreed they receive regular feedback, 30% somewhat disagreed and 3% strongly disagreed. This suggests that day-to-day supervisory engagement may be inconsistent, which could impact employee growth and morale.

In summary, the majority of employees feel performance evaluations provide clarity, recognition, and development opportunities. However, there remains room for improvement in ensuring consistent feedback, clearer expectations, and regular supervisor engagement across the district.

Q8. With regard to the current evaluation process, what should the Umatilla County Fire District #1 be doing more of?

Survey responses regarding the current evaluation process at Umatilla County Fire District #1 reveal several areas for improvement, with a particular focus on **consistency, frequency, and clarity**. Many respondents expressed a desire for **performance-based standards**, including **physical capabilities and skill assessments** to encourage continuous improvement. Some suggested implementing **bi-annual evaluations** to increase the accuracy and effectiveness of feedback, ensuring that reviews are more aligned with staff progress throughout the year. Additionally, there were calls for more frequent check-ins, such as **quarterly reviews**, to track progress on goals and provide more timely support to staff. This would allow for early intervention in cases where employees are not meeting their goals, rather than waiting for the annual review.

There was also feedback suggesting the **simplification of the evaluation process** and **forms**, with many recommending that **training** be provided to ensure everyone understands how to properly complete the evaluations. Some respondents highlighted that evaluations should play a more prominent role in the **promotion process**. The feedback further emphasized that supervisors should be motivated to provide **genuine feedback** rather than being compelled by deadlines or threats of disciplinary action. Many respondents also noted that **self-evaluations**, **command climate surveys**, and **blind evaluations** by subordinates could provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee performance and leadership effectiveness.
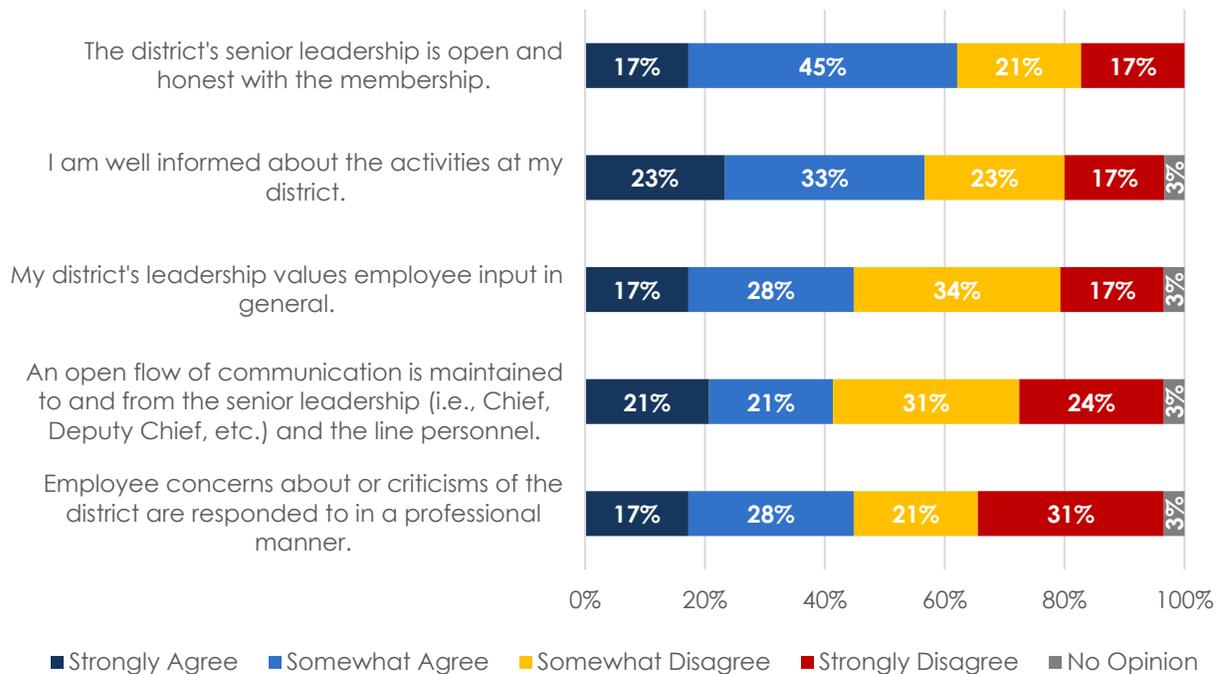
Several participants expressed the need for **shorter, more frequent feedback sessions** that occur throughout the year, helping employees to stay on track and address any performance issues before they become significant problems. This approach was seen as more effective than a single end-of-year evaluation. There was also a strong desire for more **recognition of volunteer contributions** and **acknowledgment of positive performance**, as respondents felt that the department tends to focus more on areas of weakness rather than celebrating successes.

A common suggestion was to **update the evaluation forms**, making them more position-specific and ensuring that important aspects of performance are captured without unnecessary repetition. Some respondents noted that the current evaluation system was inconsistent, with some employees receiving only a handful of evaluations over many years. Furthermore, there was a concern about **leadership succession**, with many calling for **early preparation of future leaders** to address the significant loss of knowledge and skills anticipated in the coming years due to retirements.

In conclusion, the feedback points to a desire for a more **structured, consistent, and development-focused evaluation process** that emphasizes both recognition and improvement, with greater involvement of staff in the process to ensure more balanced and meaningful evaluations.

Q9. Please identify your level of agreement with each of the following statements about communication at Umatilla County Fire District #1:

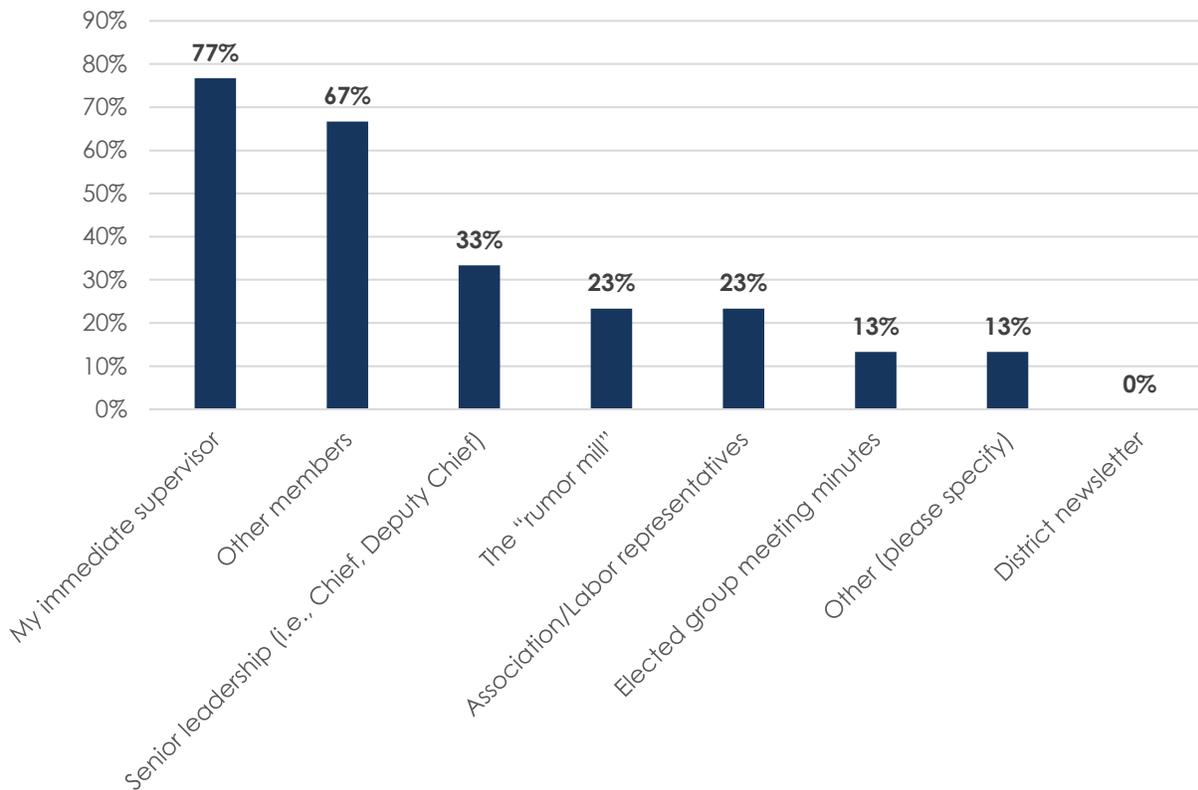The survey results on communication at Umatilla County Fire District #1 reveal mixed perceptions across key areas:

- **Employee concerns and professionalism:** Only 45% agree (17% strongly, 28% somewhat) that employee concerns are handled professionally. However, **52% disagree** (21% somewhat, 31% strongly), indicating this is a significant area of concern. This item also had the highest weighted average score (2.76), suggesting strong dissatisfaction.

- **Open communication with senior leadership:** 42% agree that there is an open flow of communication between senior leadership and line personnel, while 55% disagree. This shows a clear **disconnect in perceived accessibility and transparency from leadership**.

- **Valuing employee input:** Only 45% agree that leadership values their input, while 51% disagree. This reflects a **perceived lack of engagement** between leadership and staff.

- **Being informed:** Just over half (56%) agree they are well informed about district activities, while 40% disagree. This suggests **room to improve internal communication and information sharing**.

- **Honesty and openness of leadership:** Though this statement had the highest percentage of agreement (62%), 38% still disagreed, and it carried the **lowest weighted average score (2.38)**. This implies that while some trust exists, there is a noticeable level of skepticism about leadership transparency.

While some employees feel communication is adequate, the majority identify **significant concerns with transparency, responsiveness to concerns, and valuing employee input**. These results indicate an urgent need to improve two-way communication and rebuild trust between leadership and staff.

Q10. Which one of the following do you most frequently rely on as a source of information about activities at your district? Select all that apply.

The results of the survey question, "**Which one of the following do you most frequently rely on as a source of information about activities at your district?**" provide valuable insight into the perceived effectiveness and reliability of communication channels at Umatilla County Fire District #1:

- **Immediate Supervisors (77%)** and **Other Members (67%)** are by far the most relied upon sources of information. This suggests that **peer-level and direct chain-of-command communication** is functioning as the primary method of information dissemination within the organization.

- **Senior Leadership (33%)** ranks significantly lower, reflecting a **limited direct flow of information from higher-level administration** to most personnel.

- **The "Rumor Mill" and Association/Labor Representatives (23%)** are both cited frequently, highlighting the prevalence of **informal channels** that may fill perceived gaps in official communication.

- **Elected Group Meeting Minutes and "Other" (13%)** were noted by only a small portion of respondents, with **no one selecting the district Newsletter**, which may indicate it is either underutilized or ineffective.

- Respondents mentioned sources such as **Active 911**, **students**, and specific **individuals** as more reliable than official channels.

- One respondent expressed concern that the **rumor mill undermines credibility**, stating they only trust **direct communication from chiefs** but noted line staff often challenge or reinterpret information.

The findings suggest a strong reliance on direct supervisors and peer communication, while **formal communication from leadership is underutilized or less trusted**. The presence of the rumor mill and alternative informal sources indicates a **gap in timely, consistent, and transparent communication from official channels**. The district may benefit from strengthening top-down messaging, improving transparency, and making formal tools (like newsletters) more engaging and relevant.

Q11. In your opinion, what is the best way to communicate information at Umatilla County Fire District #1?

Survey responses from Umatilla County Fire District #1 reveal a shared understanding that **effective communication requires a blend of consistency, accessibility, and intentionality. Email** emerged as a commonly preferred method, particularly for formal updates, memos, or announcements that require documentation and reference. Respondents emphasized the importance of using a department-wide email list rather than manually selecting recipients and noted that all personnel should have access to a department-issued email address to avoid being left out of critical messages.

In addition to email, many respondents highlighted the value of **face-to-face communication**. This method was seen as particularly effective for conveying complex or significant information that may prompt questions or require clarification. Several participants mentioned that **in-person communication helps prevent misinterpretation**, ensures everyone receives the same message, and promotes accountability among leadership and staff. Morning meetings and shift briefings were praised as recent improvements that support this kind of open, real-time dialogue.
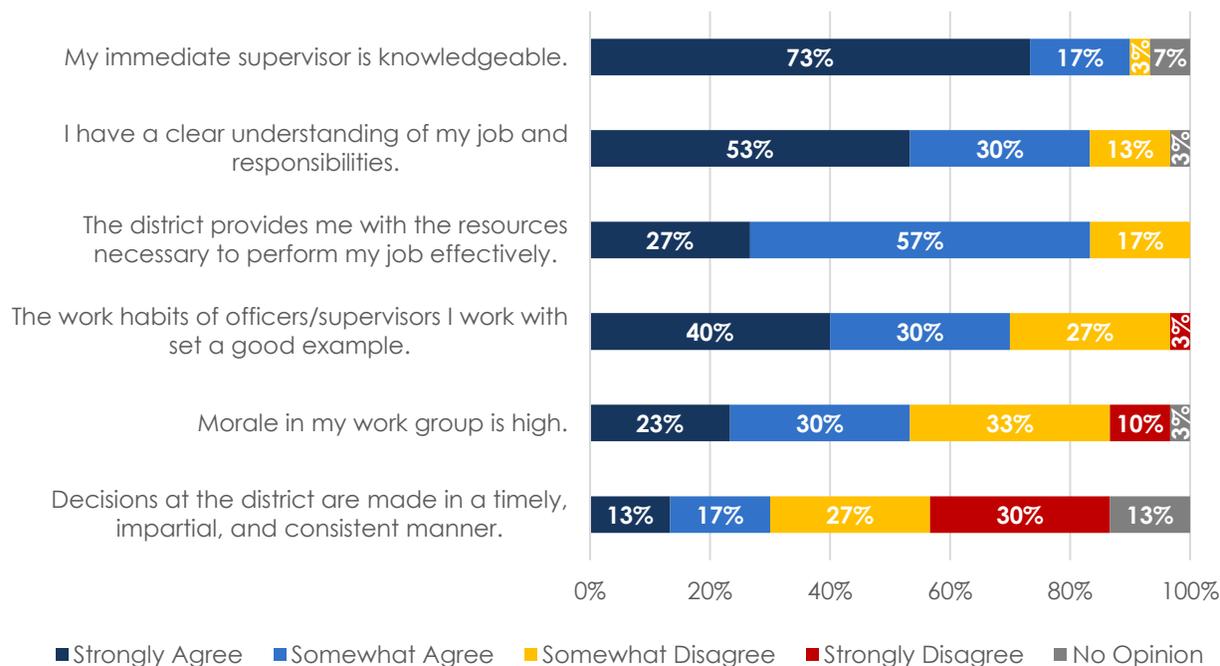
There was also a strong endorsement for communication **through the chain of command**, which respondents said supports structure and reinforces lines of responsibility. Others encouraged direct outreach from the Fire Chief or Battalion Chiefs, especially when sharing district-wide priorities or updates, noting that leadership visibility and personal connection help build trust and understanding.

While some respondents recognized that **the best method may depend on the situation**, there was a clear consensus that significant changes or policy shifts should always be communicated in writing and not delivered informally without follow-up. A few individuals also recommended centralized messaging—one person delivering the same information to all shifts—to avoid inconsistencies and the "game of telephone" that can result in mixed messages.

Overall, the feedback indicates a desire for a communication strategy that is deliberate, inclusive, and multi-faceted—one that balances written documentation with direct interpersonal interaction, and ensures timely, clear messaging across all levels of the organization.

Q12. Please identify your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your work environment at Umatilla County Fire District #1:

The responses to this survey question provide insight into employee perspectives on the overall work environment. Here's a breakdown of key takeaways:
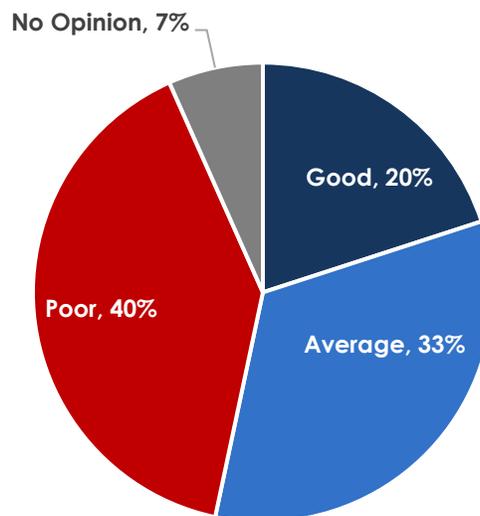

Strengths

- **Supervisor Knowledgeability:** A strong majority (73%) *strongly agree* their immediate supervisor is knowledgeable, with an additional 17% *somewhat agreeing*. Only 3% disagreed, suggesting high confidence in direct supervision.

- **Clarity in Job Role:** 83% of respondents *agree* or *strongly agree* that they clearly understand their job responsibilities.

- **Adequate Resources:** 84% feel the district provides the resources necessary to perform their job effectively, a positive reflection on operational support.

- **Supervisor Work Habits:** 70% agree or strongly agree that officers/supervisors set a good example in terms of work habits, although 27% *somewhat disagree*, suggesting room for consistency improvements.

Areas for Improvement

- **Morale:** Only 53% expressed agreement (23% *strongly agree*, 30% *somewhat agree*) that morale is high in their work group. Notably, 33% *somewhat disagree* and 10% *strongly disagree*, indicating potential morale challenges within some teams.

- **Decision-Making Processes:** This was the most critical area. Just 30% feel that decisions are made in a *timely, impartial, and consistent* manner, while a significant 57% express disagreement (27% *somewhat disagree*, 30% *strongly disagree*), and 13% selected *no opinion*. This signals **a lack of confidence in organizational decision-making**, possibly tied to communication or leadership dynamics.

Overall, employees trust their supervisors and feel equipped for their roles, but the survey highlights systemic issues with morale and organizational decision-making. Addressing these two areas through improved communication, transparency, and leadership consistency may yield the greatest positive impact on the work environment.
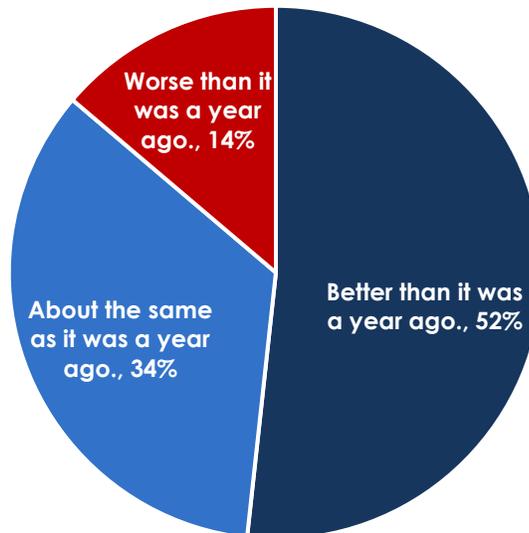
Q13. How would you rate morale at the district?

- **40%** of respondents rate morale as **Poor**

- **33%** rate it as **Average**

- **20%** rate it as **Good**

- **0%** rate it as **Excellent**

- **7%** had **No Opinion**

A combined **73%** of employees rate morale as either **Average or Poor**, signaling a need for continued or enhanced morale improvement efforts.

Q14. Complete the following statement: Overall, employee morale at Umatilla County Fire District #1 is:

- **52%** believe morale is **Better than a year ago**

- **34%** say it's **About the same**

- **14%** say it's **Worse**

While current morale remains a concern, the majority acknowledge that conditions have improved over the past year. From other sections of the survey, morale also appears influenced by:

- Inconsistent communication and leadership transparency.

- Mixed experiences with training consistency and support.

- Low confidence in the impartiality and timeliness of decision-making.

- Moderate levels of trust in performance evaluations and feedback.

Q15. What suggestions do you have for improving employee morale at the district?

Survey responses regarding employee morale at Umatilla County Fire District #1 center around themes of **transparency, consistency, communication, leadership accountability, and culture**. Many respondents emphasized the importance of open and honest communication from leadership, particularly when it comes to decision-making, staffing plans, and operational direction. There were repeated calls for **consistent messaging**, with suggestions that information should come from a single source to avoid confusion and miscommunication across shifts and ranks.

Several responses expressed frustration with perceived inconsistencies in leadership and the need for **follow-through on commitments**, noting that trust has been eroded over time. Suggestions to rebuild that trust included **improving administrative skills**, establishing a formal **leadership development program**, and encouraging upper management and officers to work periodically alongside crews to stay connected with frontline operations. Many respondents also stressed the importance of **showing appreciation for staff** and recognizing their contributions through both words and actions.

Cultural concerns were raised as well, including a desire to shift away from what some described as a negative or reactive environment. Respondents encouraged the district to **identify and invest in a culture that reflects shared values and team-oriented behavior**, treating employees as professionals and individuals with value. Events like BBQs, bowling nights, and holiday parties were mentioned as ways to support team bonding and cross-shift relationships.

Some respondents felt morale had already started to improve, particularly with recent leadership changes, while others remained cautious, noting that long-standing issues with **accountability and favoritism** still need to be addressed. A few individuals highlighted the need for a **reality check among certain staff**, pointing to behaviors that strain relationships with volunteers and mutual aid partners. Overall, the responses reflect a desire for **a culture of respect, clear expectations, transparent leadership, and unity** throughout the organization.

Q16. In your opinion, what should the district's senior leadership be doing more of?
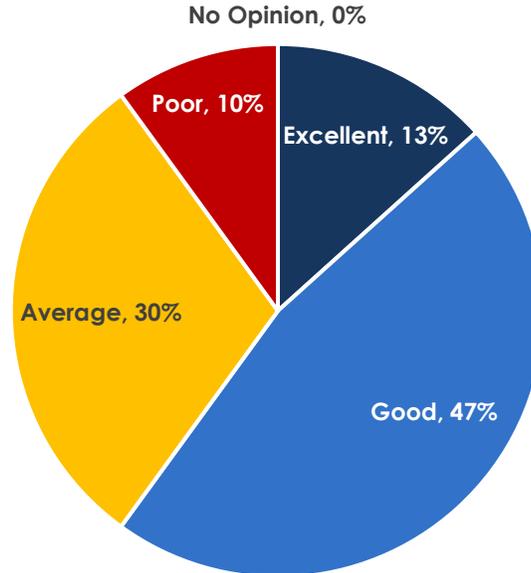
Responses to the question of what senior leadership at Umatilla County Fire District #1 should be doing more of centered on **communication, consistency, visibility, and connection with line staff**. Many participants expressed a desire for leaders to be more present and engaged with crews, suggesting they spend time riding along on calls, visiting stations, and interacting with personnel beyond formal settings. Several comments emphasized the value of **face-to-face engagement**—not just for operational awareness, but also to build relationships, boost morale, and bridge the divide between administration and field staff.

Consistent messaging and follow-through were repeated themes. Respondents pointed out that leadership often initiates projects or goals without seeing them through, or changes direction abruptly, leaving staff unclear about priorities. There was a call for leaders to **make clear plans and stick to them**, while also involving employees in the planning process to foster buy-in and a sense of ownership. Respondents felt that more collaborative goal-setting would improve long-term outcomes and departmental cohesion.

Several individuals recommended that leadership place more focus on **supporting and empowering staff**, trusting them to do their jobs while providing clear expectations and guidance. Suggestions included being more genuine, considerate, and human in their approach—showing appreciation, remembering names, and listening actively to concerns. Some referenced a need to **slow down and focus on fewer initiatives**, prioritizing foundational needs during a period of growth and transition.

There was also appreciation for the recent implementation of **morning Zoom briefings** and interest in continuing and expanding those efforts. Ideas like shared meals with chiefs and more informal opportunities for dialogue were proposed as additional ways to build unity.

Overall, while some respondents acknowledged that leadership is making positive strides, there remains a clear call for **greater consistency, visibility, approachability, and engagement** across all levels of the organization.

Q17. How would you rate your overall personal work environment at the district?

- **60% of respondents** rated their personal work environment positively:
    - 13% rated it as **Excellent** (4 responses)
    - 47% rated it as **Good** (14 responses)
- **30%** rated it as **Average** (9 responses)
- **10%** rated it as **Poor** (3 responses)
- **0%** selected "No Opinion"

While a majority feel positively about their personal work environment, with nearly half selecting "Good," 40% of respondents rated their experience as Average or Poor, suggesting room for improvement.

Q18. How proud are you to tell other people that you are a member of Umatilla County Fire District #1?

- **97% of respondents** expressed pride in their association with the district:
  - 47% are **Very Proud** (14 responses)
  - 50% are **Somewhat Proud** (15 responses)
- **0%** selected "Not Proud"
- **3%** had **No Opinion** (1 response)

Despite some morale or work environment concerns, overall pride in being part of the district remains strong and broadly shared.

Q19. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is excellent and 1 is poor, how would you rate the following external services and programs provided to the public by the district?

Respondents were asked to rate the **external services and programs provided to the public by Umatilla County Fire District #1** on a scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). Overall, the feedback indicates strong satisfaction with core emergency services, while ancillary services were viewed as more mixed in their performance.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) received the highest rating with a weighted average of **7.38**. No respondents rated EMS as poor (1–2), and over 65% scored the service at 7 or higher, suggesting it is widely viewed as a reliable and essential function of the district.

Fire Suppression followed closely behind with an average rating of **7.21**. Like EMS, there were no low-end (1–2) ratings, and 48% of responses were 8 or higher, reinforcing that fire suppression is also regarded positively and is a perceived strength of the district.

Public Education earned a moderate rating of **6.07**, with most responses clustering around the 5–8 range. This suggests that while the community education component is generally valued, it may benefit from increased consistency or visibility.
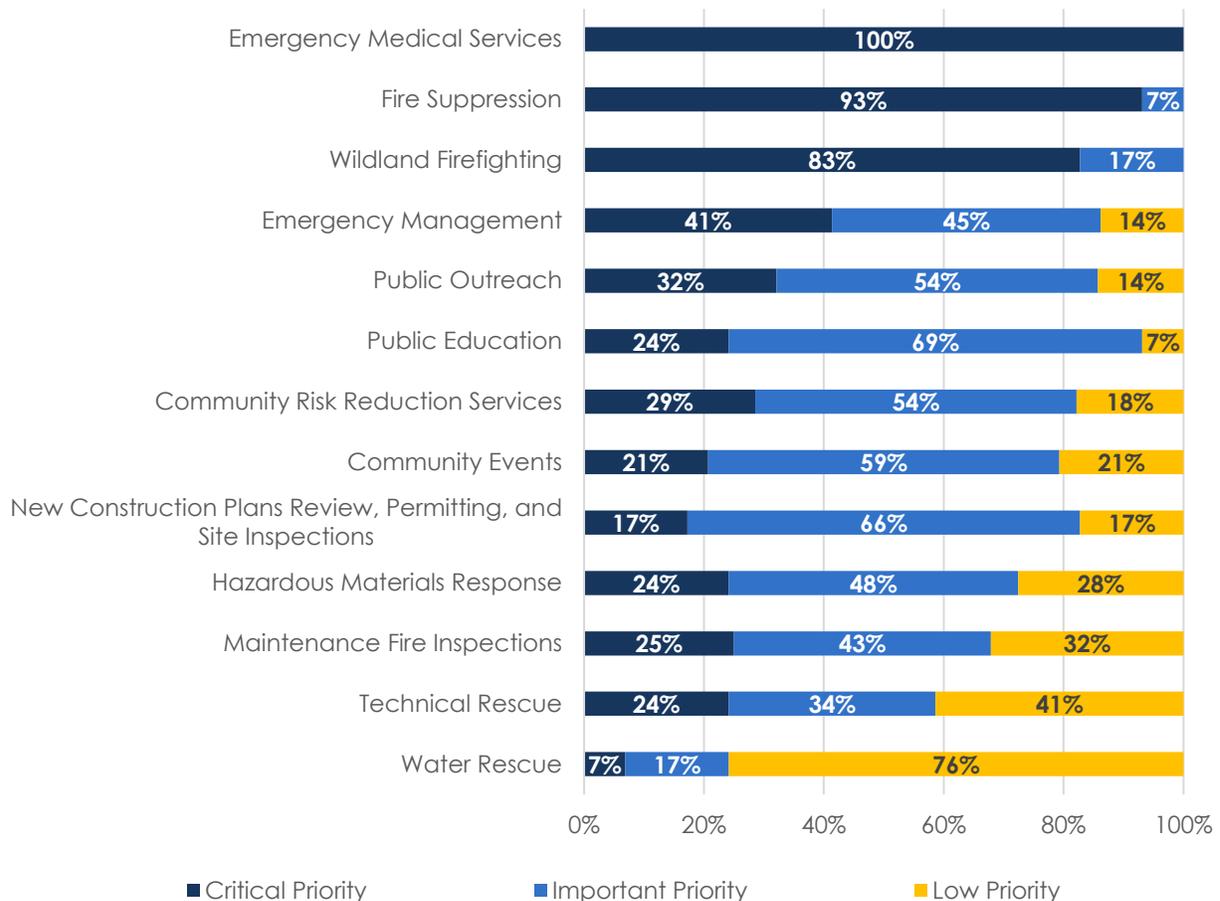
Code Enforcement was rated at **6.00** on average. Although one of the less frequently rated categories, the range of responses suggests a neutral-to-positive perception with room to grow, particularly in how enforcement activities are perceived by the public.

Hazardous Materials (Haz Mat) and **Plan Inspections** both averaged **5.79**, placing them in a mid-tier category. Responses were spread across the entire scale, indicating variability in experience and perception among respondents.

Technical Rescue (as currently provided) received the lowest score, averaging **4.59**. While some individuals rated the service highly (10s and 9s), a significant portion of ratings fell in the lower half of the scale, including several responses at 3 or lower. This suggests an area that may warrant further review regarding capabilities, visibility, or alignment with expectations.

Q20. Please rate the following services using a scale of critical priority, important priority, or a low priority for the district to offer.
When asked to rate the importance of various services offered by the district, respondents demonstrated clear consensus on the highest priority areas while also identifying programs they view as less essential.

Top-Tier (Critical) Priorities

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) was rated the **most critical service**, with **100%** of respondents identifying it as a critical priority. Fire Suppression followed closely behind, receiving a **93% critical priority** rating. Wildland Firefighting was also seen as essential, with **83%** of respondents ranking it as a critical priority. These results indicate strong alignment among respondents on the core emergency response functions of the district.

Mid-Tier Priorities

Services such as **Emergency Management**, **Public Outreach**, **Public Education**, and **Community Risk Reduction** were generally seen as important. Emergency Management had **41%** of respondents rank it as a critical priority, while another **45%** identified it as important. Public Outreach and Public Education received significant support as well, with **86% and 93%**, respectively, marking them as either critical or important priorities.

Lower-Tier Priorities

Services like **Technical Rescue**, **Maintenance Fire Inspections**, **Hazardous Materials Response**, and **Water Rescue** were more frequently categorized as lower priorities. Water Rescue, in particular, was viewed as a **low priority by 76%** of respondents. Technical Rescue also showed limited critical support (**24%**) and had a notable **41% low priority** rating. Maintenance Inspections and Haz Mat Response had more mixed results, with 25% and 24% calling them critical priorities, respectively, but significant portions still marked them as lower priority.

Planning & Community Services

New Construction Plan Review and Permitting was seen largely as an **important priority** (66%), with few critical (**17%**) or low (**17%**) responses, suggesting it is valued for compliance and safety but not viewed as an emergency function. Similarly, **Community Events** saw the majority (**59%**) classify them as important, although they had a higher share of low priority responses (**21%**) than public education-focused initiatives.

Q21. If you would like to see a service added, please list it in the comment field.

Responses to the question regarding whether a new service should be added at Umatilla County Fire District #1 were mixed, with several respondents expressing a desire to **maintain current service levels** rather than expand. A few individuals clearly stated that the district is already doing too much and should not take on additional responsibilities at this time. Others offered "no opinion" or marked their responses as "N/A," indicating either no preference or a lack of interest in adding new services.
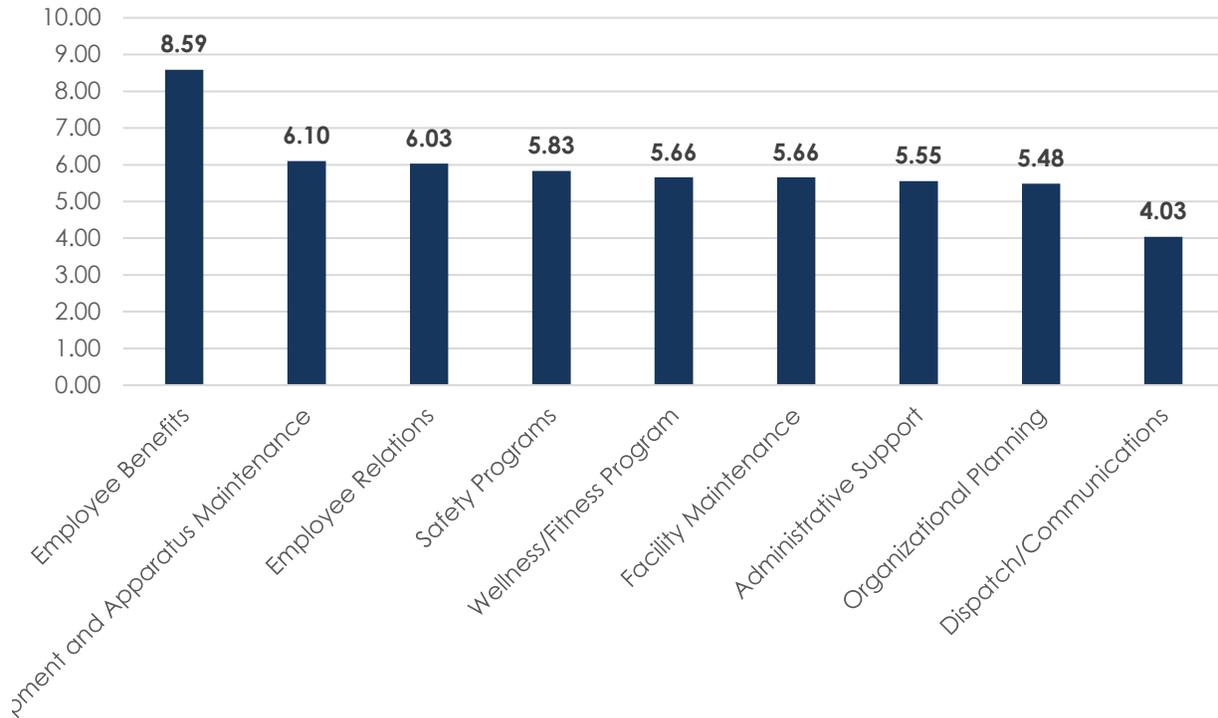
However, a few respondents suggested improvements or expansions to **existing services** rather than proposing entirely new offerings. Several noted a strong need to **expand the Public Education (PubEd) and Community Paramedic (MIH/CPP) programs**, although one respondent identified MIH/CPP as a low priority. There was also interest in increasing **support for inspections**, with one individual stating that business inspections alone could be a full-time role due to the frequency with which preventable issues are discovered during these visits.

A couple of responses focused on **community engagement**, with one recommending that the district participate in more genuine community events—emphasizing outreach that isn't tied solely to paid appearances. Another pointed to the need to **revive the district's social media presence**, noting it had once been an active and widely followed platform that helped connect with the public but has since gone silent.

Finally, **technical rescue services** were suggested as a potential area of future development. While support for new services was limited, the feedback highlights specific areas—particularly community involvement, education, and visibility—where respondents see value in renewed focus or expansion.

Q22. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is excellent and 1 is poor, how would you rate the following internal services and processes provided by the district?

When evaluating the internal services and processes of the district on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 is excellent), participants clearly distinguished between areas of strong performance and those in need of improvement.

Highest-Rated Service

Employee Benefits stood out as the most positively rated internal service, with a **weighted average of 8.59**. A combined **72%** of respondents rated this area as either a 9 or 10, and **no respondents rated it below a 6**, suggesting broad satisfaction and perceived value in this benefit offering.

Moderately Rated Services

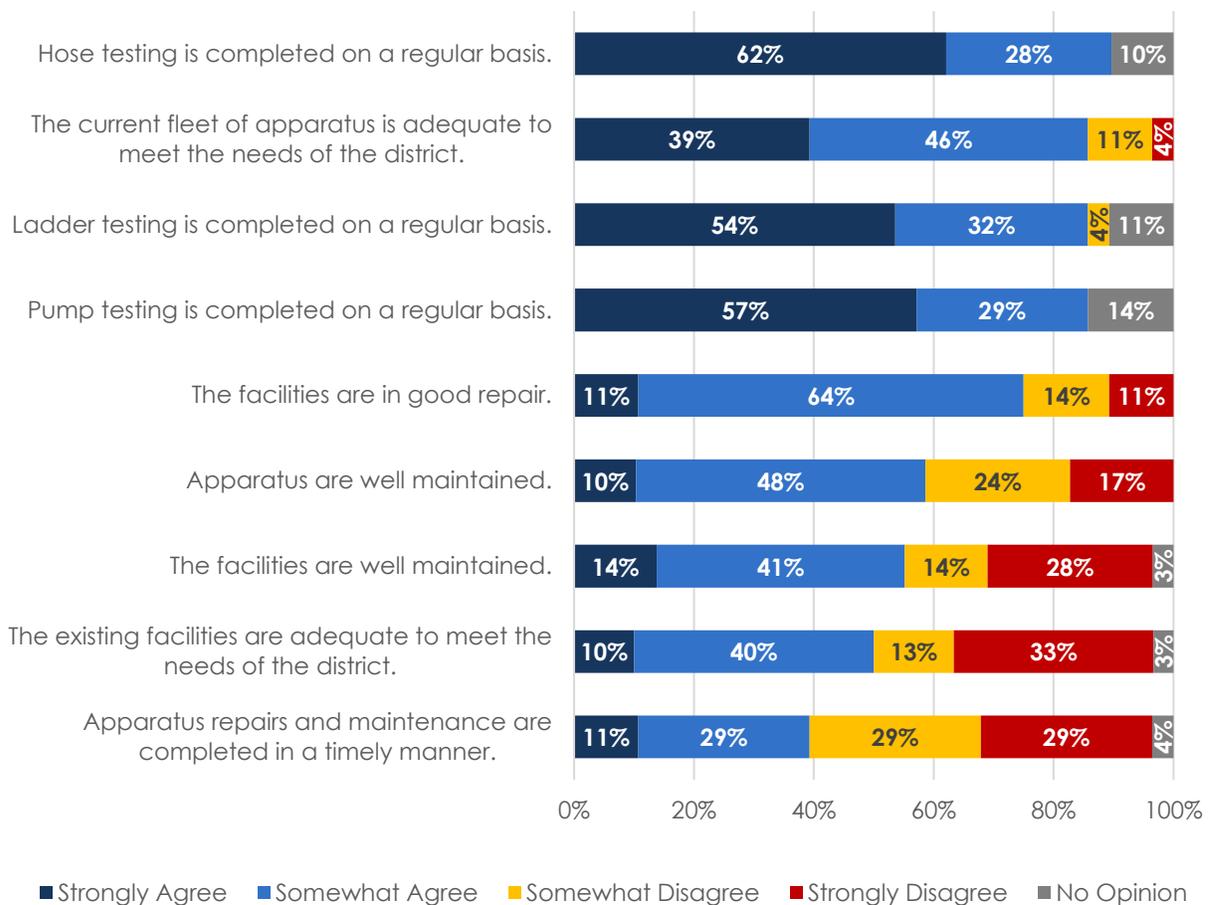Several internal services received moderate ratings, clustered around the **5.5 to 6.1 range**:

- Equipment and Apparatus Maintenance (6.10)
- Employee Relations (6.03)
- Safety Programs (5.83)
- Wellness/Fitness Program and Facility Maintenance (each 5.66)
- Administrative Support (5.55)
- Organizational Planning (5.48)

These services received a mix of favorable and neutral-to-low responses, indicating room for improvement in consistency, accessibility, or effectiveness.

Lowest-Rated Service

Dispatch/Communications received the **lowest overall rating**, with a **weighted average of 4.03**. Over **44% of respondents rated it a 2 or below**, and only 10% gave it a rating of 9 or 10. This suggests a significant concern among staff and may indicate issues related to system reliability, response coordination, or communication clarity.

Q23. Please identify your level of agreement with each of the following statements about the district's facilities and apparatus:

Respondents provided varied perspectives on the district's facilities and apparatus, with higher levels of agreement in operational testing areas and more mixed or critical feedback on maintenance and infrastructure adequacy.

Areas of Strong Agreement

Hose Testing received the most favorable feedback, with **62% strongly agreeing** and an additional **28% somewhat agreeing** that it is completed on a regular basis. No respondents disagreed, and only 10% had no opinion.

Pump Testing also scored highly, with **86% total agreement** (57% strongly, 29% somewhat), and no disagreement. However, 14% marked no opinion.

Ladder Testing followed closely, with **86% agreement** (54% strongly, 32% somewhat), minimal disagreement (4%), and 11% expressing no opinion.

Fleet Adequacy was well-regarded, with **85% of respondents agreeing** the current fleet meets the district's needs.

Moderate Agreement with Notable Concern

Facility Condition received relatively favorable scores: **75% agreed** that facilities are in good repair (11% strongly, 64% somewhat), although **14% somewhat disagreed** and **11% strongly disagreed**.

Apparatus Maintenance was viewed somewhat favorably, with **58% agreement** overall. However, nearly **one in six respondents (17%) strongly disagreed**, and **24% somewhat disagreed**, indicating concern about maintenance consistency.

Lower-Rated Areas with Divided Opinions

Facility Maintenance drew concern. While **55% agreed** that facilities are well maintained, **28% strongly disagreed** and **14% somewhat disagreed**—suggesting dissatisfaction with maintenance standards or consistency.

Facility Adequacy was flagged as a significant issue. While **half agreed** that the existing facilities meet the district's needs, **33% strongly disagreed** and **13% somewhat disagreed**, showing a sharp divide in perception.

Timeliness of Apparatus Repairs and Maintenance was the most contentious item. Only **40% agreed**, while **58% disagreed** (split evenly between somewhat and strongly), indicating a widespread perception that repairs are not completed promptly.

Q24. If you could change only one thing about the work environment at the Umatilla County Fire District #1, what would it be?

Survey responses about what one thing respondents would change in the work environment at Umatilla County Fire District #1 reveal strong interest in improving **morale, accountability, communication, and leadership culture**. Many participants called for a shift toward a more unified and supportive atmosphere, moving away from an "us vs. them" dynamic between administration and labor. Some noted that recent changes have started to close that gap but emphasized that more progress is needed to foster a truly collaborative culture.

Low morale was a recurring concern. Respondents linked morale issues to inconsistent leadership, a lack of trust, and what some described as a "pass the buck" mentality. Several called for leadership to be more supportive, encouraging curiosity and learning rather than blame. There were also concerns about punitive reactions to mistakes, with some advocating for a more educational, problem-solving approach when issues arise.

A few comments highlighted **operational challenges**, such as the need for unit-level dispatching to reduce unnecessary wakeups, improved vehicle maintenance, and faster, more complete equipment repairs. Others mentioned the importance of **developing middle management** to ensure daily accountability and more direct support for line personnel.

Several respondents encouraged narrowing the district's focus to become exceptional in core areas, rather than trying to do too much with average outcomes. Suggestions included allowing more input from line staff during decision-making processes and encouraging honest, two-way communication about changes and priorities.

Additional responses stressed the value of **supervisors leading by example**, being subject matter experts, and showing consistent presence and professionalism. Some also proposed changes to scheduling practices and expressed concern about generational differences in attitudes toward work and experience levels.

Overall, the responses suggest a need for cultural realignment, stronger leadership, clearer communication, and operational improvements to strengthen the work environment and boost employee satisfaction.

Q25. Please identify your level of agreement with each of the following statements as they relate to the district's community relations:

Feedback regarding the district's relationship with the community and external partners was generally favorable, with certain areas showing room for improvement.

Statement	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
The district is respected by the community that it serves.	47%	43%	10%		
The district leadership strives to maintain cooperative working relationships with neighboring emergency service providers.	38%	52%	7%	3%	
The district is sufficiently engaged in the community.	24%	28%	28%	17%	3%

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree   ■ Somewhat Agree   ■ Somewhat Disagree   ■ Strongly Disagree   ■ No Opinion

Perceived Respect from the Community

The district is largely viewed as **respected by the community it serves**, with a **combined 90% agreement** (47% strongly agree, 43% somewhat agree). No respondents expressed disagreement or selected "no opinion," indicating strong consensus in this area.
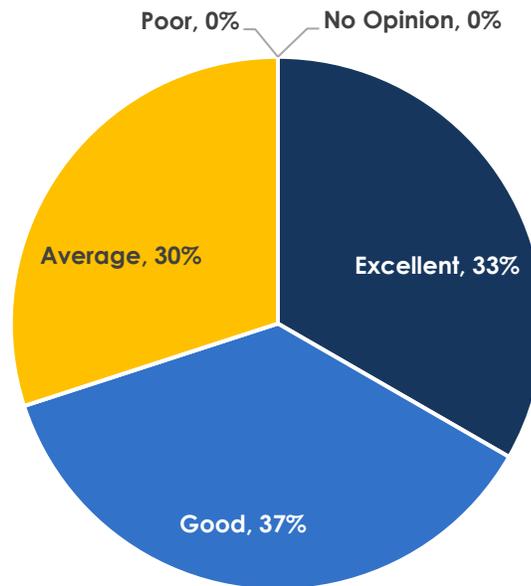
Efforts to Foster Interagency Cooperation

A high percentage of respondents (**90% total agreement**) also felt that **district leadership strives to maintain cooperative working relationships with neighboring emergency service providers**. This includes **38% who strongly agree** and **52% who somewhat agree**, with minimal disagreement (7% somewhat, 3% strongly).

Engagement with the Community

Perceptions of the district's **community engagement** were more divided. Only **52% of respondents agreed** that the district is sufficiently engaged in the community (24% strongly, 28% somewhat), while a notable **45% expressed disagreement** (28% somewhat, 17% strongly). Additionally, 3% had no opinion. This suggests that while there is a base of support, a significant portion of staff feel that the district could enhance its visibility or involvement with the community.

Q26. In your opinion, what is the community's overall image of Umatilla County Fire District #1?

Staff generally believe that the community holds Umatilla County Fire District #1 in high regard. According to responses:

- 33% rated the community's image as "Excellent,"

- 37% rated it as "Good," and

- 30% considered it "Average."

Notably, **no respondents rated the image as "Poor"** or selected "No Opinion," suggesting that all participants believe the district maintains at least a satisfactory reputation in the eyes of the public.

This positive assessment aligns with earlier survey results indicating that a significant majority believe the district is respected by the community it serves.

Q27. In your opinion, what is the district's single greatest strength?

Survey responses about Umatilla County Fire District #1's single greatest strength highlight a consistent appreciation for the **line staff and their dedication**, resilience, and commitment to getting the job done despite challenges. Many respondents pointed to the frontline personnel as the backbone of the organization, recognizing their ability to adapt, overcome staffing limitations, maintain positive attitudes, and support one another—especially through recent transitions, increased demands, and complex emergencies. Their willingness to continue performing at a high level under pressure was frequently cited as a defining strength of the district.

Several participants also emphasized the district**'s adaptability and flexibility**, noting the ability to handle a wide variety of responsibilities and respond effectively to evolving community needs. This includes everything from public engagement to emergency responses, with some highlighting the district's progress in areas like staffing expansion, operational adjustments, and working relationships with other agencies.

Personnel quality overall—including both individual character and team cohesion—was a recurring theme. Respondents commented positively on having good people in the organization, driven by the right reasons, and noted a youthful and motivated workforce eager to grow and improve.

Other strengths mentioned included **pay and benefits**, **equipment and infrastructure**, and the district**'s visibility and connection with the public**. A few participants also noted recent improvements, including the shift to a 24/72 schedule, and ongoing efforts by leadership to advance the organization.

While one response acknowledged that community relations are both a strength and a weakness—due to underutilized engagement opportunities—overall, the responses reflect a strong sense of pride in the district's people, operational adaptability, and continued progress toward growth and improvement.

Q28. In your opinion, what is the district's single greatest weakness?

Survey responses regarding the greatest weakness at Umatilla County Fire District #1 point to several interconnected challenges, most notably **staffing shortages, inconsistent leadership, communication breakdowns, and organizational overreach**. Many respondents cited insufficient personnel—both in terms of staffing levels and experience—as a primary issue affecting response readiness and operational reliability. The district's rapid growth, both geographically and in service demands, has exacerbated these challenges, making it difficult to keep up with needed resources and infrastructure.

A number of participants expressed concern that leadership is disconnected from the realities faced by line staff. Some described a lack of clear direction, shifting priorities, and an imbalance in workload between field personnel and administrative staff. Several respondents criticized the number of chiefs relative to front-line responders, and the perception that successes are claimed by leadership while failures are blamed on crews. There were also pointed comments about the lack of follow-through and how frequent changes undermine long-term planning. Respondents expressed hope that the strategic plan would help establish a more stable and sustainable path forward.

Communication was another major theme, with comments suggesting that the organization struggles with transparency, consistent messaging, and two-way dialogue between leadership and line staff. Several noted that communication issues contribute to a larger **culture of mistrust**, low morale, and frustration within the workplace.

Operationally, concerns were raised about **station placement**, a lack of adequate funding for equipment and staffing, and insufficient attention to long-term planning. Respondents also noted gaps in **training**, **public engagement**, and **professional standards**, as well as a sense that the district is moving too quickly to implement changes without fully understanding their impact.

Ultimately, the feedback reflects a strong desire for **stability, thoughtful leadership, clear priorities, and genuine engagement**—both internally and with the community the district serves.

Q29. In your opinion, what single greatest opportunity should the district take advantage of in the future?

Survey responses regarding the greatest opportunity Umatilla County Fire District #1 should take advantage of in the future point to a mix of **community engagement, workforce development, funding sources, and organizational improvement**.

Many respondents emphasized the importance of increasing **community involvement**, recognizing that the district operates in a region where visibility and public trust can be built through proactive outreach. Suggestions included participating in festivals and events, expanding public education efforts, visiting schools, and encouraging line staff to attend non-paid community functions. This was seen as an opportunity to deepen local relationships, demonstrate value, and grow public support.

Several participants highlighted the need to invest in the **next generation of employees**, including better recruiting efforts at the high school or college level, hiring qualified candidates early, and developing a strong leadership program. There was strong support for molding newer personnel into future leaders by creating a culture of empowerment and accountability "from day one." Others advocated for building up the current workforce through training, leadership development, and fostering stronger internal relationships.

Funding and growth opportunities were also recognized, particularly through **Amazon-related tax income and donations**, which multiple respondents mentioned. Tapping into these resources was seen as a way to improve staffing levels, equipment, and infrastructure. Alongside financial growth, some pointed to the need for more **employees**, better **technology**, and exploring **mutual aid agreements** or **consolidation with other agencies** as potential areas for improvement and expansion.

Operationally, several responses mentioned the need for a **better dispatch system**, enhanced **internal technology infrastructure**, and expanded access to **outside training opportunities** like specialized fire service programs.

Overall, the feedback underscores a collective focus on **community trust, staff development, operational upgrades, and seizing strategic partnerships and funding** to strengthen the district's future.

Q30. In your opinion, what is the single most significant challenge that the district faces in the future?

Survey responses identifying the most significant future challenge for Umatilla County Fire District #1 overwhelmingly point to **staffing and organizational growth**. A majority of respondents expressed concern over the district's rapid expansion, particularly the need to **hire, train, and retain a large number of new personnel** in a short period. The projected onboarding of 16–22 new staff members was repeatedly mentioned, with several respondents warning of the risks of promoting individuals too quickly without adequate preparation, which could lead to poor leadership and loss of trust among crews.

Closely related to staffing is the challenge of **sustained funding**. Respondents noted that growth in call volume and service demands will require more personnel, equipment, and infrastructure—none of which are possible without stable and sufficient financial support. The district's ability to secure funding long term is seen as crucial to meeting both operational and personnel needs.

The issue of **inexperience and a lack of senior leadership depth** also emerged as a major concern. Several respondents expressed that a wave of retirements is looming, and without a formal leadership development or officer training program in place, the district risks a loss of institutional knowledge and continuity. This situation could result in inexperienced staff assuming key roles before they are ready, which many warned could cause organizational setbacks.

Beyond staffing, other challenges included **communication inconsistencies between shifts**, **dispatch reliability**, and **the need for a clear, unified vision and leadership strategy**. Some also expressed frustration with decision-making at the top level, stating that changes often seem unilateral or disconnected from employee input.

Overall, respondents see the convergence of **rapid growth, inexperienced leadership, strained resources, and inconsistent communication** as the most pressing challenges the district must overcome to ensure long-term success.

Q31. If you were in charge, what would you include in your strategic plan for the next 3–5 years?

Responses to the question, "If you were in charge, what would you include in your strategic plan for the next 3–5 years?" from Umatilla County Fire District #1 staff reflect a clear and consistent focus on **strategic growth, operational standardization, leadership development, and staff well-being**.

A major theme across responses was **unit-level dispatching**, with several individuals stating it is critical to improving operational efficiency and reducing unnecessary disruptions to crews during overnight hours. Additionally, many respondents emphasized the need for **better station placement and infrastructure planning**, with specific mentions of leveling or relocating stations, staffing underserved areas, updating Station 22, and considering expansion near Umatilla.

Officer development and leadership training were also repeatedly highlighted, with strong interest in implementing structured programs that support growth from firefighter to chief officer. This includes developing leadership fundamentals, promoting personal and team accountability, and empowering problem-solvers across all levels of the organization.

Staffing and resource planning were also front and center. Many called for a three-person minimum staffing model at each station, dedicated ambulances for both emergency response and transfers, and plans for **apparatus replacement**, noting the need to stagger future acquisitions to avoid replacement bottlenecks. Budget planning for capital improvements and sustained funding strategies—including efforts to pass levies—were noted as essential priorities.

Respondents also stressed the importance of **transparency, clear timelines, and employee engagement** during organizational changes. There was encouragement for honest communication, opportunities to ask questions, and acknowledgment of leadership missteps when they occur.

Additional priorities included improving **training consistency**, strengthening **community involvement**, building **staff morale**, modernizing **fleet maintenance**, enhancing **wellness programs**, and considering long-term governance opportunities such as a **fire authority model** or increased automatic aid agreements.

Altogether, the feedback presents a forward-looking vision rooted in **sustainable growth, strong leadership, operational clarity, and organizational integrity**.

Q32. Please use the space below to tell us your suggestions or final thoughts for improving the Umatilla County Fire District #1.

Final comments from Umatilla County Fire District #1 personnel reflect a mix of **optimism, concern, and calls for meaningful change**, particularly around leadership, staffing priorities, morale, and internal communication. While several respondents noted that progress is being made and morale is on the rise, others emphasized that significant work remains in key areas.

A recurring theme was the importance of **valuing and supporting line staff**. Many respondents stressed the need for leadership to listen more actively and treat frontline employees as essential contributors. Concerns were raised that line personnel sometimes feel undervalued or replaceable, and there were calls to ensure they are included in conversations about changes that directly impact their work.

Morale and retention were noted as ongoing concerns, with suggestions that stronger appreciation for the field staff and a more transparent, unified leadership approach could go a long way in improving both. The importance of **unit-level dispatching** was repeatedly emphasized, with one respondent calling it the district's #1 operational priority.

Several respondents urged leadership to **slow down and focus on long-term sustainability** instead of short-term "quick fixes." The need for more deliberate planning, especially with incoming staff and limited middle management, was highlighted. Others emphasized the need for **consistent messaging and alignment** among the senior leadership team to reduce confusion and increase trust.

Some comments expressed frustration with perceived **conflicts of interest at the board level**, suggesting a lack of accountability and objectivity. Others shared concern about **resource allocation**, such as investment in part-time or volunteer programs that may not deliver consistent results.

On a positive note, many agreed that the district is **headed in the right direction**, and there is pride in its services and reputation. There was encouragement to **keep investing in people, leadership development, and operational standards**, while fostering a culture of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges

As part of the strategic planning process, AP Triton created surveys to gather input from both internal and external stakeholders and facilitated a community meeting, which provided residents with an opportunity to share their perspectives on the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges.

The Planning Committee conducted an in-depth analysis of existing services, projected future growth within the service area, and gathered valuable insights from both internal and external stakeholders. This comprehensive approach enabled the district to identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges, positioning the district to proactively address community needs and enhance service delivery.

- **Strengths:** Strengths are internal attributes and resources that contribute positively to an organization's ability to achieve its objectives. These may include skills, assets, capabilities, or qualities that enhance performance, or lead to success in service delivery to the community.

- **Weaknesses:** Weaknesses are internal limitations, deficiencies, or areas of vulnerability that hinder an organization's performance or ability to reach their goals. These could include lack of resources, inadequate skills, poor processes, or any other factors that prevent optimal performance or effectiveness.

- **Opportunities:** Opportunities are external factors or circumstances in the environment that can be leveraged to create positive outcomes or benefits for an organization. These may include emerging trends, technological advancements, new partnerships, or any other favorable conditions that present the potential for efficiencies, innovation, or improvement.

- **Challenges:** Challenges are external or internal obstacles, difficulties, or problems that pose barriers to achieving desired objectives or outcomes. These could include economic downturns, regulatory hurdles, organizational conflicts, or any other factors that require effort, creativity, or strategic planning to overcome.

Community SWOC Analysis

This chart reflects the community's perspective, gathered during an in-person meeting with community members and supplemented by insights from an extensive community survey conducted by AP Triton.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Internal	• Yes, from the survey responses. • Intersections with staff and students. • Advocacy for the district, grant writer, the internal team supports the greater district/community and the community outside of the district. E.g., going to state, etc. • Community engagement, kids' interactions, builds trust, community support, etc. • Education, school programs. • Response times are excellent. • The "full wagon"—Farm City Rodeo first responders' recognition night. • The Leadership really cares about the membership of the district.	• Communication, finding the right mode of. • Communications at the City-level. • Communications at the association-level, churches, electric utility company (email lists), hospital contacts/electronic patient records. • Social media use (recent). • Dashboard metrics, visible displays to communicate. • Retention and retainment, recruiting. • Finances, transparency, and visibility, how do we get the district to a healthy financial situation? • Partner with local schools, colleges, bridge the gap.
	Opportunities	**Challenges**
External	• Other community events? Underrepresented community events, partner with Hispanic Advisory Committee. • Other avenues for communication? Different platforms. • Partner with local schools, colleges, bridge the gap, career fairs. • Partnerships with other associations, volunteers to help promote the message of recruitment and retention. • Support for employee well-being. • Further transparency for financial spending, how funds are allocated, messaging can be tailored as an educational opportunity for how much things truly cost. Tell the story.	• Grant-funded positions (SAFER Grant, etc.). • Financial sustainability. • Community growth and changing demographics. • Recruitment and retention.

Strategic Planning Committee SWOC Analysis

Strengths

- Tenured people.

- Evaluations recognize superior work.

- Working on communications (e.g., morning meetings).

- Superiors are knowledgeable.

- Station 21 construction.

- Community Paramedicine (CP) program, reduced workload for other responders, follow-up on calls, right resource to the right calls, understanding the outcome of calls, connections with other social services.

- Strong relationships with neighboring agencies: Echo and Umatilla Rural FPD relationships, mutual aid; Pendleton and Boardman FDs for larger incidents, ALS.

- Good EM relationship.

- Hope for positive change, stations, staffing, "those who can see past today."

- You can "Be you."

- People are proud to work at UCFD1.

- Staff see the positive momentum.

- Move to Lexipol is a positive move—but needs a lot more work (focus).

- Deputy Fire Marshal add to Fire Prevention.

- Training Division is receptive to suggestions, visible, responsive; resources, props.

- Labor relations.

- Employee benefits.

- Health & Wellness, injury prevention, mental health services.

- Club24 memberships for active personnel since workout areas are limited in the stations.

- Discussions about improving promotional processes.

- Good progress on employee assistance and peer support.

- Training center (but would like to use more, live fire).

- Apparatus and fleet quality.

- Training competencies are good (but staffing doesn't meet some needs).

Weaknesses

- Communication, top to bottom, and bottom to top (organization structure).

- Staffing resources/availability: not enough operational staff.

- Recruitment and retention.

- Members may not be prepared for promotion.

- SAFER Grant-funded positions.

- Unmanned Aircraft System program work to be done, training, set up, structure.

- Dispatch—no AVL, dispatch doesn't have predetermined resource selection, can't see CAD details of other agencies dispatched.

- Communication—mistrust (COVID origins), inconsistency, different messages, possible generation gaps, lack of transparency.

- Lack of understanding about leadership roles/responsibilities.

- Training Division:

  - Training is inconsistent.

  - Officer development training.

  - Focused Fire/EMS training.

  - Do better hands-on.

- Not much feedback on performance.

- Professional development.

- Burnout.

- Policies and procedures are long, inconsistent, and cumbersome.

- Morale—so much change, too much all the time, inconsistency, miscommunication.

- Merger—not all the way through the challenges, but may be just a few, and focused on the volunteers.

- Expectations for apparatus and equipment between career and volunteer stations.

- Evolution of the organization; Challenges with the organizational cohesiveness (union, volunteer, EMS only, shifts, EMT/Paramedic); merger.

- Decisions perceived to not be timely, impartial, or consistent by a majority of staff.

- Not all crews have company-level leadership.

- Apparatus/equipment maintenance is perceived as not done well, probably because of the workload compared to staff, work is good, just not enough resources.

- Maintenance work orders—don't really know what's happening in real time.

- HR doesn't have dedicated staffing.

- Fire prevention is reactive rather than proactive.

- Physicals not utilized.

- Onboarding process (6 months).

- Apparatus location inventory—where are they?

- SCBAs 6 years old.

- Facilities:

  - Fire Station 22 needs updated/remodeled.

  - Paving needed at Station 23, gravel surface isn't conducive to training.

  - Build out station alerting for unit dispatch.

  - Dedicated workout space is limited at stations (problem if offsite when a call comes in).

  - Live fire training is cumbersome.

- Lack of confidence in data analytics systems.

- Room for improvement in EMS program KPIs.

- Job descriptions but no formal succession plan in place.

- HazMat team is a struggle, level of training needed is not being kept up. Training budget is from the state.

- Call processing times.

- Data accuracy of turnout time. Volunteer apparatus included, tracking, data entry, etc., Dorm locations in stations, CAD not recommending the unit.

- Are we forward-thinking enough? Community paramedicine? Opportunities? Vision? Long-term, future trends?

Opportunities

- Unmanned Aircraft System program could add to increased awareness, wildfire, etc., staffing options.

- Partnerships for CP program [and others].

- Explore relationships with other agencies, associations, etc.

- Explore working with SAR; services.

- Professional development, officer

- Training

- Communication

- Team building

- FTO program and peer to peer

- Building out a data warehouse.

- Lowering entry-level qualifications can provide an opportunity to train "our way" from the beginning.

- Outside resources for training.

- Health and wellness communications, follow-up, member support.

- Fire Officer Academy discussion.

- Fire station alerting.

- More live fire training.

- Build a more robust KPI program.

- Formalize succession plan and professional development opportunities.

- Partner with State to improve HazMat program.

- Fund a PDU IFT car. Discuss with the hospital about a more routine schedule for IFTs.

Challenges

- Concurrent calls.

- IFTs or resources available when calls are outside of district boundaries.

- Station 21 construction.

- Financial sustainability—funding for CP program (only one Jess).

- Dispatch not really interested in changing, cultural difference, lack of follow-through (FD).

- "Change fatigue"—impact on morale,

- FINACIAL: Tax revenue not keeping up with expenses. No room for reserve fund or to keep up with growth. Limitations on taxing enterprise zones.

- Funding for apparatus and vehicle replacement, still short after the bond (unfulfilled: engine, tender, brush, staff vehicles, and one station).

- Adapting to changing environments and cultural shifts.

- RMS: need more options in menus, old database vs. current software.

- In-service, hands-on training.

- Evaluation process is a hard process.

- Maintaining a state HazMat team.

- Higher disability population than the state (2%).

- Higher poverty level (5%) and number of uninsured than the state (2%).

- Risks: railroads, very little hydranted areas, concentrated target hazards, HazMat sites, school districts, mass gathering sites; multi-story and large sq. ft. buildings are concentrated at the district's core, wildfire, flood zones.

- CWPP may need updated for accuracy.