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Nebraska Forest Service: Community Fire Protection Master Planning

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It is the responsibility of the fire department and its governing bodies to put the plan into action, should they choose to do so.

Will a Small Fire Department Benefit from Master Planning?

The Master Planning process benefits fire departments and communities, regardless of size. Many times smaller fire departments receive the most benefit from Master Planning because it allows them to make the most of their limited resources.

Since the inception of the program in 1977, more than 100 communities and rural fire districts have taken advantage of and benefitted from this service.

It Pays to be Proactive

There are two basic styles of management which can be applied to a fire department's operation: reactive and proactive.

Reactive fire departments do not plan ahead and respond to crises with only short-term goals in sight. Reactive departments act impulsively and do not make the best use of their resources.

Proactive fire departments, and their governing bodies, take the needs and desires of the people they serve very seriously. Being proactive means carefully developing long-range plans that will make the most of a community's existing, and projected future, resources.

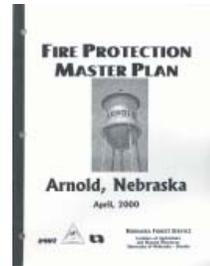
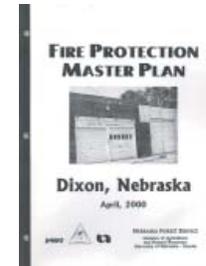
Developing a Fire Protection Master Plan is a proactive step toward developing a successful fire protection program.

For more information
about Fire Protection
Master Planning contact:

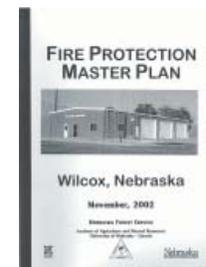
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Nebraska Forest Service



Community Fire Protection Master Planning



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The increasing costs of providing communities with adequate fire protection requires local governing bodies to make strategic decisions about the direction of its local fire department.

Some communities have fewer people volunteering, bringing about the need for other methods of delivering fire protection programs. Some communities may be growing, requiring fire departments to alter existing programs and/or develop new programs that meet community needs. Due to shrinking budgets, some communities must shift the direction of fire protection programs using existing resources. Budgetary issues may also force fire departments to secure new funding sources to develop programs that meet the community's changing needs.

Preparing a Fire Protection Master Plan allows fire departments and their governing bodies to determine the best method(s) available for providing fire protection programs to residents.

What is a Fire Protection Program?

A community's Fire Protection Program involves all aspects of fire protection, including fire prevention, fire suppression, emergency communications and water delivery system.

What is Fire Protection Master Planning?

Fire Protection Master Planning is a process that determines the best method(s) for providing fire protection to a community. Master Planning is an ongoing process that requires annual examinations and modifications to meet a community's changing needs.

Why do Fire Protection Master Planning?

Master Planning provides a fire department's governing bodies with the direction needed to meet the present and future fire protection needs of a community, given available, and potential future, resources.

Who is Involved with Master Planning and is Help Available?

The Nebraska Forest Service will assist with the development of a Fire Protection Master Plan tailored to meet a community's needs, with the involvement of community leaders and/or fire department officers. The information provided by these local officials helps identify ways to increase the effectiveness of the fire protection program.

What is Included in the Master Plan?

Master Plans are long-term documents. The recommendations provided in the Plan anticipate a department's needs for a 20-year period.

The information provided in a Master Plan is divided into three sections:

- a) present resources
- b) recommendations and
- c) supporting information.

The **present resources** section is a comprehensive study of the fire district's and community's existing fire protection capabilities and resources. Areas examined include personnel and equipment, fire history, agreements, insurance ratings and financial capabilities.

The **recommendations** section considers the information obtained in the process of developing the Master Plan and makes suggestions as to how the present fire protection capabilities could be improved.

The recommendations made in a Plan are strictly recommendations. Communities that complete Master Plans are not bound to implement any of the Plan's recommendations. Many of the recommendations provided have proven effective when used by Nebraska fire districts and communities.

Recommendations are general in nature and address two areas: fire prevention and equipment.

Fire prevention recommendations address local fire history and how a fire department can develop a strong fire prevention program.

Equipment recommendations are made based on an examination of vehicle needs and projected vehicle costs, as well as how funding can be established to meet those needs. Some cases may examine building replacement.

The final section contains **supporting information**, such as fire district maps, personnel rosters, equipment listings, emergency phone numbers, wildfire suppression information and Insurance Service Office information. Community leaders and fire department officers can use this information as recommendations from the Master Plan are implemented.

Who Gets the Completed Master Plan?

When completed, the Master Plan is presented to the Rural Fire District Board of Directors, town council and fire department officers during a joint workshop. The Master Plan will provide a starting point from which a fire department and its governing bodies can improve existing and/or develop new fire protection and fire prevention programs.