



# Eugene-Springfield Fire ESCI 2009 Feasibility Study & 2020 Community Risk Assessment

## Summary

### **PURPOSE**

This document provides a high-level summary of the 2009 Feasibility Study and 2020 Community Risk Assessment conducted by Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI), including a brief overview, executive summary of each report, and summary of the findings/recommendations.

### **2009 FEASIBILITY STUDY**

#### **Overview**

The 2009 Feasibility Study provides extensive analysis of the existing Eugene Fire Department (EFD) and Springfield Fire and Life Safety Department (SFLS) services and explores opportunities for strategic restructuring and cooperation for the two agencies. The Study concludes with key findings, discussion of a preferred option, and action steps.

This Feasibility Study was the basis for the Functional Consolidation of the two fire departments that formed Eugene-Springfield Fire (ESF), which is now tasked with providing Fire, EMS, and Life Safety services to both communities.

#### **Executive Summary**

**Phase I: Project Initiation, Data Analysis and Stakeholder Interviews** (*pp. 1-5*)—Phase I included project initiation; acquisition of administrative and operational information and baseline data for analysis, benchmarking, modeling, and developing recommendations; and interviews to solicit input from internal and external stakeholders regarding their expectations of the current service delivery system. This section presents stakeholder interview results in four categories: vital issues, challenges and concerns, opportunities and current successes, and benefits.

**Phase II: Analysis and Benchmarks** (*pp. 6-70*)—Phase II consisted of evaluation, review, and benchmarking of the current organizations, including organization overview, staffing, financial profile, and capital assets and improvement programs. A thorough overview of existing fire protection services is provided, including topics like existing governance models, history of the fire departments, organizational structures, operating budgets, staffing levels, Standards of Coverage, current and future operational costs, revenue sources, facilities, and apparatus.



**Phase III: Future Service Demand and Financial Impact Analysis** (pp. 71-92)—Phase III consisted of geographic information system (GIS) analysis to provide a geographic depiction of fire department emergency workload and performance. This section explores possible outcomes of interagency options including combined service demand, coverage, ambulance coverage, and effective firefighting force.

**Phase IV: Opportunities and Options** (pp. 93-122) —Phase IV included an overview of the concepts of strategic restructuring and cooperative efforts; available organizational options (cooperation, collaboration, consolidation, contract for services, full integration, and future inclusion of other agencies) and potential outcomes; and a fiscal analysis of partnering options.

**Phase V: Findings, Preferred Option and Action Steps** (pp. 123-132)—Phase V presents the findings, including summary of feasibility, preferred option and other considerations, and a framework for action, including policy action, process issues, and timeline.

## Feasibility Study Findings

### SUMMARY OF OPTIONS

The Feasibility Study presents a continuum of cooperative options, from alliance to integration, available to Eugene and Springfield (see: General Partnering Strategies on page 93). All strategies allowed by Oregon Law were determined to be feasible; however, the report notes that issues of finance and taxation determine the practicality of many cooperative ventures. Following is a high-level overview of the options as presented in the 2009 Feasibility Study (more details can be found starting on page 134 of the Study):

#### ***Collaboration***

Collaboration involves joint planning, mutual and automatic aid, resource sharing, and professional association. With collaboration, there is no permanent relationship and decision-making remains with the individual organizations.

At the time of the Feasibility Study, Eugene and Springfield fire departments already exercised collaborative efforts with other agencies in Lane County and at the state and national levels, as well as local in the form of joint planning for emergency response, automatic aid, and Standard Operating Policies (SOPs).

#### ***Joint Programming***

Joint programming involves a commitment to continue for the foreseeable future, a sharing or transfer of decision-making power, and an agreement. Joint programming may involve a single program (training), a multi-focused program (fire prevention/code enforcement), or an integrated system (9-1-1 dispatch).

In 2009, Eugene and Springfield already had many joint programs.



## ***IGA***

Intergovernmental cooperation grants cities and special districts broad power to contract with other governmental entities for any function or activity the agencies have authority to perform. Public agencies may enter into service agreements, service exchanges, and sharing/partnerships. IGAs are often seen as an intermediary step.

Eugene and Springfield Fire Departments had a number of IGAs already in place in 2009.

## ***Fire Authority***

The most formal and greatest level of integration involves changes in corporate control. Some states provide a process for the creation of regional fire protection units called fire authorities. The process allows existing governmental jurisdictions (cities, counties, fire districts) to create and govern a new entity (the fire authority). Generally, the participating governmental units continue to fund fire protection through traditional means (such as property tax, sales tax, and fees) although, in some cases the creation of a fire authority includes the power of taxation. In most cases though, each of the jurisdictions essentially contracts for fire protection and emergency medical service from the fire authority and each provides representative officials to serve as the authority's governing board.

The option of a fire authority was not available to the two cities at the time of the Feasibility Study, but the legislative process to authorize regional fire authorities in Oregon was noted as a long-term option.

## ***Merger***

In most cases, states give contiguous fire districts the power to merge. Oregon statutes include such a process, referring to it as "merger; consolidation." That part of Oregon Law pertaining to the consolidation of fire districts is found in ORS 198.885 and provided beginning on page 139 of this report. The statute applies only to fire districts, although other provisions of the law do address contracting between cities and fire districts.

## ***Fire Districts***

Forming a fire district to encompass the two cities represents a higher form of integration. Such a strategy would involve a change in corporate control and structure, including the creation of a new organization, and/or the dissolution of one or more organization.

State Law governs the formation and authority of Oregon fire districts. Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) Chapter 478, Rural Fire Protection Districts, serves as the principal act of each fire district but, as special units of local government, all fire districts are also subject to other statutes, foremost of which includes ORS Chapter 198, Special Districts Generally. There are over 300 rural fire protection districts providing a wide range of emergency services to communities throughout the state.



## **PREFERRED OPTION**

ESCI identified an IGA between EFD and SFLS as the preferred option, which was presented as an intermediary step for a vision of a single fire agency. While annexation to a fire district was also identified as a preferred option by ESCI in the report, it was understood that this was the option recommended by ESCI and not a decision that was made. The report also noted that while a number of fire districts were available for the cities to annex to, ESCI identified those with a current relationship to EFD and SFLS as preferred as this strategy represented the least complex alternative to execute.

Following identification of the preferred option, the Feasibility Study discussed additional issues pertaining to the preferred option in no particular order or priority, including partnership; governance; timelines; employees; negotiation of assets, reserves, and transfer of property; district founding documents; strategic plan, and ambulance service areas (see pp. 128-130).

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

ESCI recommended that the city councils of Eugene and Springfield jointly adopt the outcome of consolidation as the Vision for Regional Fire and EMS delivery. A period of 18 months to two years was the recommended timeframe within which to plan and implement this sort of system change without losing project momentum. The Study recommended that the agencies focus on reaching the goal by July 1, 2011; as an intermediary step, the Study recommended the establishment of a single fire department through the use of an IGA beginning July 1, 2010. The Study further recommended that the cities appoint a Steering Committee that included representation from all stakeholder groups to plan, communicate, oversee, and direct progress toward consolidation.

## **FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION**

Following are landmarks identified by the Feasibility Study for reaching a Regional Fire Protection Vision (see pages 131-132 for additional detail on each item):

- Consult with service partners
- Joint adoption of a Regional Fire Protection Vision
- Organize the Steering Committee
- Obtain definitive legal advice
- Establish the name of the proposed integrated district
- Determine which directors will serve after election
- Cities: Adopt the annexation proposal
- District: Approval the proposal
- Prepare for the election
- Deliver the public education/information campaign
- Election is held
- Annexation is approved



- Prepare the founding documents of the district
- Implement any sidebar agreements concerning governing officials
- Inventory and transfer assets
- Disband the Steering Committee
- Implement a strategic planning process

## 2020 COMMUNITY RISK ASSESSMENT

### Overview

ESF retained ESCI in March 2019 to conduct an All-Hazards Community Risk Assessment, with a focus on fire prevention mitigation efforts and planning for future large-scale sporting events. During the summer of 2019, ESCI representatives analyzed the consolidated ESF organization, including service delivery, current Fire Prevention Division resources, community demographics, and known hazards.

### Executive Summary

**Section 1: Community and Organizational Overview**—Section 1 includes background information on the Cities of Eugene and Springfield, including weather and climate, regional demographics, and economic and jobs information. Section 1 also provides a brief description of each city’s governance structure and the respective emergency management/response organizations, including programs and services; organizational structure; vision, mission, and values; emergency management; ESF Fire Department Division; and funding sources.

**Section 2: Service Delivery**—Section 2 provides an overview of ESF service delivery, including responses by incident type, temporal variation, response time performance, EMS service delivery, and spatial analysis of service demand. Section 2 also presents results from a fire prevention staffing survey of regional fire departments serving similarly sized communities.

**Section 3: Community Risk Assessment**—Section 3 provides information about the principles and methodologies used in assessing community hazards and vulnerabilities, with the intent of assisting fire department officials (1) in identifying fire/EMS-related hazards and risks within communities; (2) prioritizing risks to develop effective risk reduction strategies; and (3) Determining the appropriate resources necessary to reduce these risks and attain desired outcomes. This section also provides an analysis of natural, human-caused, and technological hazards and vulnerabilities; assesses risk by geographical planning zone and incident type; discusses Community Risk Reduction strategies; and anticipates community growth and risk associated with future development.

**Summary & Recommendations**—This section provides key recommendations to address risk and hazards in Eugene and Springfield.



## Summary of Recommendations

The 2020 Community Risk Assessment concludes that ESF exhibits a high level of engagement, professionalism, and adaptability and noted that ESF already had detailed disaster planning and preparedness efforts already in place, especially in the realm of natural hazards mitigation planning. The analysis of ESF operations, resource allocation, and community risk revealed several realities:

- The cities of Eugene and Springfield have significant natural, human, and technological hazards and risks that require constant attention and allocation of mitigation resources and efforts.
- Lane County, and the public and private entities within, have developed contemporary and comprehensive plans for identifying and mitigating natural hazards throughout the region.
- ESF is a robust all-hazards fire department, with significant emergency operations resources and contemporary deployment strategies.
- The consolidation of Springfield Fire and EMS and Eugene Fire Department appears to have resulted in an enhanced and more efficient emergency services delivery system.
- The recently completed occupancy survey in both cities identified thousands of commercial occupancy hazards that were not previously inventoried (or identified).
- The current resources allocated to fire prevention and life safety code enforcement in both cities is likely not enough to ensure fire and life safety code compliance.
- Lack of **full** integration and coordination of internal ESF administration and operations may be an impediment in efficiently responding to, and managing, large-scale disasters.

ESCI offered the following observations and recommendations to better position ESF and the community for addressing identified risks (see pages 84-86 for additional detail):

- **Continue a Targeted Wildfire Prevention/Mitigation Program**—ESF should continually dedicate efforts to those living and working in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) neighborhoods about their wildlife risk, steps they can take to prepare, and WUI fuels reduction.
- **Increase Fire Prevention Staff and Inspections**—The department should consider increasing Fire Prevention Division staffing to ensure life safety code compliance is maintained in all relevant occupancies.
- **Improve Radio/Data Communications System Planning and Interoperability**—There is a need for better coordination and integration of the various emergency responder radio systems that integrate with the Central Lane 911 Center.
- **Standardize Administrative Policies, Procedures, and Processes**—The merger of the two fire departments would eliminate incongruencies in policies and procedures, would likely streamline administrative support tasks and communications, and may eliminate barriers that prevent administrative cross-training that may be critical in a disaster situation. Short of a full merger, ESF should compare these divergent policies



and procedures, and combine or adopt single policies and procedures where possible for all employees, regardless of employer affiliation.

- **Increase Collaboration and Coordination Between Emergency Management & ESF**—Efforts should be undertaken to improve coordination of emergency management planning, education, and preparation activities between ESF and both cities.
- **Address the Unhoused Issue**—ESF should take steps to collect specific data related to this issue, including identifying unhoused EMS patients and any related fire and life-safety issues to determine whether ESF procedures are in alignment with the service area’s overall goals. ESF should also participate in relevant community planning efforts to address this issue.