



# Strategic Plan

# 2026- 2028

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Fire Chief

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# Who We Are

We are more than first responders; we are educators, mentors, and community partners. Our members work tirelessly to provide exceptional emergency response and reduce risk through prevention programs and safety education. We are committed to building trust through transparency, fairness, and consistency, while fostering a culture that values firefighter wellness, professional standards, and continuous training.

CFD is proud of its history of service, but we are focused on the future; modernizing our leadership, strengthening our workforce, and driving measurable outcomes that make Chattanooga safer, stronger, and more resilient.



## Our Values

# Our Vision

Our vision is to be a renowned fire department where the wellness, safety, and training of our members enable us to deliver exceptional service. Through prevention, public education, professional response, and innovative practices, we protect our community today while preparing for the needs of tomorrow.

# Our Mission

**1 LEAD**  
With INTEGRITY

**2 SERVE**  
With COMMITMENT

**3 TRAIN**  
With PURPOSE

Protecting Our Community Today  
While Preparing For Tomorrow



# Your Command Staff

The Chattanooga Fire Department's Command Staff represents the core leadership of the organization. Together, these leaders provide vision, accountability, and direction for every firefighter, division, and station in the city. Under Chief Terry Knowles, the Command Staff is committed to leading with transparency, fairness, and consistency; ensuring that every decision strengthens both our department and the community we serve.

The Command Staff carries the responsibility of turning this strategic plan into action. Their message is clear: expectations will be raised, standards will be upheld, and people will always come first. By investing in training, enforcing professionalism, supporting wellness, and engaging openly with our community, the Command Staff is setting the tone for the next chapter of CFD.



**Chief Knowles**

Fire Chief



**Chief Miller**

Executive Deputy Chief



**Chief May**

Operations Chief



**Chief Matlock**

Fire Marshal



**Chief Tibbs**

Administration Chief

# Your Role

Every member of the Chattanooga Fire Department plays a critical part in bringing this strategic plan to life. It is not just a document for leadership; it is a roadmap that depends on the commitment, skill, and integrity of every firefighter, officer, and staff member. Your role on each call, in every training, and within every station reflects the values we stand for: integrity, humility, and purpose.

This plan sets higher expectations for professionalism, training, and accountability. It also provides the support needed to meet those expectations, from wellness initiatives to leadership development and improved communication across the department. Your responsibility is to embrace these standards, hold yourself and your peers accountable, and model the culture of service and trust that our community deserves.

**“This plan only works if every firefighter makes it their own. Our commitment as leaders is to set clear direction and provide support. Your commitment is to bring it to life; on every call, in every station, every day.”**

**— Chief Terry Knowles,  
Chattanooga Fire Department**



The success of this plan will not be measured only by reports or metrics; it will be seen in the way we show up for one another and for the people of Chattanooga. By living out the daily habits of leading, serving, and training with excellence, you ensure that this plan is more than words on paper. You make it a reality, and in doing so, you strengthen both our department and the city we proudly protect.



# Our Non-Negotiables

1

## Chain of Command

Respecting authority and structure to maintain clarity, order, and trust.

2

## Professionalism

Upholding the highest standards of conduct and skill in every interaction.

3

## Safety

Protecting the lives of our members and community through disciplined practices.

4

## Communication

Sharing accurate, timely, and transparent information across the department.

5

## Accountability

Taking ownership for actions, decisions, and results.

6

## Training and Readiness

Maintaining the training, equipment, and mindset to respond at any moment.



**“Operational readiness isn’t just about equipment or response time: it’s about discipline, training, and trust in one another. Every firefighter has a role in raising our standards and proving to this city that we are ready for any challenge.”**

**— Operations Chief Ashley May**

# The Big Picture



The Chattanooga Fire Department's 2026–2028 Strategic Plan is more than a document, it's our roadmap for excellence. It defines where we're going, why it matters, and how every member plays a part in shaping the department's future.

For the first time, our vision, values, and daily operations are connected through one clear plan. It aligns what we do on every shift with what we stand for: protecting lives, building trust, and strengthening the community we serve. The plan brings structure and accountability to how we lead, train, and deliver service, ensuring every decision, from equipment and staffing to prevention, moves us closer to our vision of being a renowned department built on wellness, safety, and exceptional service.

Our plan is built around four strategic themes that guide every decision: **Operational Excellence, Wellness, Community Trust & Engagement, and Organizational Resilience.** These themes come to life through four areas of focus: **Community & Customer, Internal Processes, Learning & Growth, and Financial Stewardship.** Each is designed to strengthen how we lead, serve, and prepare for the future.

For our firefighters, it provides clarity of purpose, stronger support systems, and professional standards that elevate safety, readiness, and growth. For our citizens, it demonstrates transparency, accountability, and a visible commitment to continuous improvement.

## Strategic Themes

## The Big

# 4

**Operational Excellence** – Driving quality, efficiency, and continuous improvement in every system and process.

**Wellness** – Supporting the physical, mental, and emotional health of our members as the foundation for performance.

**Community Trust & Engagement** – Building strong, visible relationships with citizens through prevention, education, and transparency.

**Organizational Resilience** – Preparing for the future by strengthening adaptability, sustainability, and long-term capacity.

# Community/Customer

## **Expand the Fire Prevention Bureau by Adding Plans Review and Water Supply Officers.**

With growth across the city, CFD will strengthen its Fire Prevention Bureau to manage increasing plans reviews and water supply coordination. These positions will ensure faster approvals, safer construction, and stronger collaboration with developers and city partners.

## **Conduct a Community Risk Reduction (CRR) Feasibility Study.**

CFD will evaluate the potential for a formal CRR model that integrates prevention, data analysis, and targeted outreach. This study will help identify the right staffing, resources, and structure needed to reduce community risk before emergencies occur.

## **Formalize Partnerships for Emergency Housing and Shelter Coordination.**

Working with city and nonprofit partners, CFD will establish clear processes for coordinating emergency housing and recovery services after major incidents. This collaboration ensures residents receive timely support when they need it most.

## **Expand the “CONNECT” Program to Include Post-Incident Support and Follow-Up Support.**

The CONNECT Program will grow to include post-incident check-ins for families affected by fire or emergencies. By connecting citizens to resources, counseling, and recovery support, CFD strengthens long-term trust and community wellbeing.

## **Increase Command Presence at Community Events and Strengthen Feedback Systems.**

Visible leadership builds confidence. CFD’s chiefs and officers will take part in community events each month, while new public feedback tools—such as QR surveys and PSAs—will give citizens a voice in how we serve.

Together, these priorities deepen our relationship with the people we protect, reinforcing that CFD’s mission extends far beyond the call.



The Community/Customer Perspective focuses on how CFD serves, engages, and earns the trust of Chattanooga’s citizens. It represents the department’s outward mission — prevention, education, emergency response, and public connection. Every action, from a fire inspection to a community event, shapes how residents experience their fire department. This perspective drives programs that make the city safer, more informed, and more confident in the men and women who protect them.



# Internal Processes

## **Develop and Implement a Policy Audit System for all SOPs/SOGs.**

CFD will create a structured audit and update schedule for every policy to ensure consistency, compliance, and clarity. This system keeps operations aligned, reducing variation and increasing accountability across divisions.

## **Create Standardized Rollout and Communication Processes for Operational Updates.**

To ensure every firefighter receives accurate and timely information, the department will adopt a single, standardized communication process for all new SOPs and operational changes.

## **Launch Quarterly Video Briefings and Department Communication Audits.**

Quarterly “State of the Department” video messages will deliver updates directly from leadership. Regular communication audits will assess how effectively messages reach every shift, division, and rank. This also includes an effort to modernize the CFD website.

## **Redesign Training Systems Incorporating Our New Drill Tower.**

CFD will modernize its training model to ensure every firefighter has equal access to realistic, scenario-based learning and consistent evaluation, turning training into a driver of performance and safety.

## **Optimize Operational Systems, Response Review, and Data Reliability.**

CFD will align and strengthen its digital platforms, automate key reporting, so leaders have accurate, real-time information for decisions. The department will also review response patterns, streamline deployment, and secure reliable IT support to ensure systems stay integrated and efficient.

## **Implement a Comprehensive ISO Class 1 Readiness and Compliance Plan.**

A dedicated ISO 1 compliance team will oversee continuous improvement in training, documentation, and water supply coordination, positioning CFD as a national leader in operational excellence.

These efforts modernize CFD’s internal operations and ensure every system, message, and metric supports the highest level of professional performance.



The Internal Processes Perspective is about what happens behind the scenes. This includes the systems, communication, and operations that ensure every call, training, and decision meets the highest standards. It focuses on consistency, efficiency, and accountability across every division. From updating policies and procedures to strengthening data systems and training protocols, this perspective turns CFD’s operational excellence into daily practice.

# Learning & Growth



## **Redesign and Launch the Officer Development Program (30-Day Field Training).**

The new Officer Development Program will prepare Lieutenants and Captains through hands-on field experiences, mentorship, and evaluated scenarios, building confident, capable leaders for the next generation.

## **Implement the Battalion Chief Leadership Program (60-Day Field Leadership).**

Designed to strengthen command-level decision-making, this program will combine live incident simulations with leadership workshops focused on communication, delegation, and “leadership between the calls.”

## **Define Department-Wide Fitness and Wellness Standards.**

CFD will formalize physical fitness and mental health benchmarks for all members, integrating city wellness resources, peer support, and EAP services to sustain long-term health and resilience.

## **Create Cross-Divisional Apprenticeship for Career Development.**

A new program will allow members to experience assignments across Prevention, Training, and Administration, broadening understanding, transferring knowledge, and preparing future leaders toward succession planning.

## **Rebuild the Recognition Program to Celebrate Excellence and Reinforce Culture.**

A revitalized recognition system will celebrate performance, innovation, and service, ensuring members are acknowledged consistently for the excellence they bring to the job every day.

Together, these initiatives invest in the heart of the department—its people—ensuring that CFD’s workforce is healthy, prepared, and proud to serve Chattanooga for generations to come.



The Learning and Growth Perspective centers on the people who make CFD great, the firefighters, officers, and staff who carry out the mission every day. It focuses on leadership development, wellness, mentorship, and career growth to ensure a ready and resilient workforce. This perspective turns culture into capacity, building the skills, strength, and character that define the department’s future leaders.

# Financial



## **Maintain a Replacement Plan for Equipment and Apparatus.**

Firefighter safety begins with reliable equipment. CFD will maintain a proactive replacement schedule to ensure every member has the high performing gear and technology, minimizing risk, extending equipment life, and reinforcing our commitment to readiness.

## **Plan and Secure Funding for New Fire Stations Based on Growth Data.**

As Chattanooga grows, so must our ability to respond. Using population and call-volume data, CFD will identify priority areas for new stations to reduce response times, balance workloads, and strengthen service across the city.

## **Quartermaster Program Study to Standardize Uniform and Equipment Management.**

A centralized system for uniforms and gear will streamline purchasing, improve consistency, and increase accountability. This program will also reduce costs and ensure every firefighter receives the right resources at the right time.

## **Develop a Heavy Rescue Program and Specialized Training Capacity.**

To meet the demands of complex emergencies, CFD will establish a dedicated Heavy Rescue Team equipped for specialized rescue incidents. This investment in training, equipment, and apparatus expands our capability to protect both our members and our community.

Together, these initiatives ensure CFD remains financially responsible while making targeted investments in the people, tools, and facilities that keep Chattanooga safe. This balanced approach supports operational excellence today and sustainability for years to come.



The Financial Perspective ensures the Chattanooga Fire Department remains a strong and sustainable public service organization. It connects every dollar spent to community impact, from the gear that protects firefighters to the stations and apparatus that safeguard our neighborhoods. This perspective focuses on disciplined resource management, long-term capital planning, and strategic investments that enhance readiness without compromising fiscal responsibility. By managing wisely today, CFD secures the ability to serve tomorrow.

# What To Expect



This strategic plan outlines where we are headed, but the real work begins with how we implement it. Over the next three years, you can expect clear priorities, consistent communication, and visible accountability. The plan will not sit on a shelf, it will be used as a guide for decisions, investments, and daily operations across the department.

Expect higher standards in training, professionalism, and wellness, matched by greater support and resources to help every firefighter succeed. From command staff down to each station, this plan will drive alignment, ensuring that everyone knows the expectations and has the tools to meet them. You will see renewed focus on leadership development, recruitment, and community engagement—each tied to the values of integrity, humility, community, commitment, and purpose.

Most importantly, expect transparency around decisions and progress. Progress will be measured, shared, and discussed openly, whether through surveys, staff meetings, or community updates. Success will be defined not only by outcomes on paper but by the culture we create together. Which is one of accountability, trust, and service that makes Chattanooga safer and stronger.

## Next Steps

The next phase is about action. With the framework now in place, our responsibility is to implement and execute this plan with discipline and consistency. Every initiative, from training and wellness to professionalism and community engagement will require follow-through at every level of the department. Success depends on officers, and firefighters working together, holding one another accountable, and living out the values of integrity, humility, and purpose. These next steps are not just about launching programs, they are about turning this plan into daily habits, measurable outcomes, and a stronger Chattanooga Fire Department.



# Stay Connected



The Chattanooga Fire Department is committed to staying connected with both our community and our Fire Professionals. Communication and accountability are at the core of this plan, and we believe progress should be visible, measurable, and transparent. As we carry out the initiatives outlined in the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan, we will provide regular updates through official channels and open forums, ensuring that every firefighter, city leader, and citizen can see how we are moving forward.

Staying connected is about more than sharing information, it is about building trust, reinforcing professionalism, and strengthening our partnership with the people we serve. Whether through community meetings, station visits, or digital updates, we encourage ongoing dialogue and collaboration. Together, we will create a safer, stronger Chattanooga.



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