



ORANGE BEACH FIRE & RESCUE  
STRATEGIC PLAN 2025-2029



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Dear Members and Supporters,

It is with great pleasure and excitement that we present to you the Orange Beach Fire Department's 5-Year Strategic Plan. As an essential part of our fire department family, your support, dedication, and commitment have been instrumental in shaping our mission to serve and protect our community.

This strategic plan is the culmination of extensive collaboration, thoughtful analysis, and a shared vision for the future of our department. It outlines our goals, objectives, and strategies to enhance our capabilities, improve service delivery, and ensure the safety and well-being of every individual in Orange Beach.

Our commitment to excellence in fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire prevention, and community outreach is unwavering. With this strategic plan as our guide, we are poised to adapt to emerging challenges, leverage opportunities for growth, and continue to uphold the highest standards of professionalism and integrity.

We invite you to join us on this journey as we work together to achieve our collective goals and fulfill our mission to serve the residents and visitors of Orange Beach. Your ongoing support and engagement are vital to our success, and we are grateful for your partnership.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the Orange Beach Fire & Rescue Department (OBFR). Together, we will strive to make our community safer, stronger, and more resilient for generations to come.

Sincerely,



Jeff Smith



Orange Beach Fire & Rescue  
25855 John Snook Drive  
Orange Beach, AL 36561  
TEL 251-981-6166

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Orange Beach Fire & Rescue (OBFR) Strategic Plan summarizes the department's key goals and objectives for the years 2025-2029. The goals and objectives contained in this plan will help guide the department over the next five years in continuing to satisfy the mission statement and providing core services to the community.

### **The five major goals are:**

1. Actively pursue rank/position preparedness and development.
2. Develop hiring practices where we hire the top candidates with a focus on the future.
3. Create an enhanced listening and learning environment.
4. Seek accreditation to ensure we are meeting exceptional levels of service quality.
5. Develop and support a well-trained workforce.

### **Plan Development**

The team that developed the 2025-2029 strategic plan included the following: Fire Chief Jeff Smith; Deputy Chief of Operations Bruce Nelson; Deputy Chief of Administration Nelson Bauer; Training Officer Allissa Jacques; Lieutenant Robert Simpson; Engineer Zach Cook; Engineer Frank Minervini, and Office Manager Kris Roberts.

The team met over the course of a year to develop the goals and objectives contained in this plan that will guide us over the next five years. To ensure we are staying on track, this plan will be reviewed annually to document progress and discuss any needed change. A constantly changing economic and political climate may drive the need to change direction and adjust goals accordingly.

## DEPARTMENT PROFILE

The City of Orange Beach, AL marked its beginning in 1984. Since incorporation, new bridges and roads have been built, along with additional marinas, navigational improvements and expansion of other infrastructures. Today, with its bays and bayous and sugar-white sand beaches set against the azure waters of the Gulf, the city has grown into a modern resort.

Currently, the department has 4 fire stations, over 80 full-time employees, and 40+ part-time/seasonal employees. The department possesses multiple engine and truck companies, three fully staffed medical transport trucks, and 2 brush trucks for wildland firefighting.

Fire stations are staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week with minimum daily staffing of 19 personnel. Major programs include Hazardous Materials Response, High Angle Rescue, EMS Transport, Technical Rescue, and Dive/Water Rescue - with many other programs that support the department's mission. The Orange Beach Fire & Rescue Department is the first to respond to all medical emergencies within the city and is the primary emergency transport agency. The department also provides all fire code enforcement activities and plan review services.

The department responded to 3500 incidents in 2023 and approximately 60% of those were medical emergencies. The standard for delivery of service is to achieve an initial full alarm time for low and medium hazard structures within eight minutes and an initial full alarm time for high hazard/ high-rise structures within 10 minutes and 10 seconds. The 'all funds' total for the 2023 fire department budget was \$8,873,282.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Orange Beach is located on Perdido Key along the Gulf of Mexico, and is the easternmost community on Alabama's Gulf Coast, with the community of Perdido Key, Florida bordering it to the east. The city of Gulf Shores is to the west. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Orange Beach, AL has a total area of 15.9 square miles, of which 14.7 square miles is land and 1.2 square miles (or 7.83%) is water. Orange Beach has a humid subtropical climate, with mild-to-warm winters, and hot and humid summers.

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Orange Beach Fire & Rescue Department (OBFR) is dedicated to providing essential emergency response, prevention, and education services to the Orange Beach community with pride, honor, and integrity.

## VISION STATEMENT

To create a safer Orange Beach.

## CORE VALUES

- **Accountability** – The Orange Beach Fire & Rescue Department is committed to upholding accountability to our employees and the community by responsibly managing our resources and taking ownership of our actions.
- **Courage** – The Orange Beach Fire and Rescue Department displays physical bravery while undertaking all risks in emergency mitigation efforts and exhibits moral fortitude by prioritizing the safety of our colleagues and community by doing what is right.
- **Honor** – The Orange Beach Fire & Rescue Department stands united in promoting excellence of character and integrity while adhering to what is right and ethical.
- **Professional** – The Orange Beach Fire & Rescue Department exhibits professionalism through intense preparation and mastery over all with which we have been entrusted.
- **Relevant** – The Orange Beach Fire and Rescue Department employees are committed to being life-long learners and educating future generations.

ORANGE BEACH FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT  
Office of the Deputy Chief - Administration

Dear Members and Supporters,

The Orange Beach Fire and Rescue Department (OBFR) stands as a seasoned and adaptable force in handling all hazards. Throughout our 30 year journey, we've evolved alongside a rapidly changing world. While originally tasked with safeguarding our community from fire-related threats, our mission now extends far beyond those boundaries.

Our mission, "The Orange Beach Fire & Rescue Department (OBFR) is dedicated to providing essential emergency response, prevention, and education services to the Orange Beach community with pride, honor, and integrity," embodies the ethos of our personnel.

This document encompasses more than merely our Mission Statement. Our diverse team of employees worked diligently to narrate our story in a manner that resonates with our community, helping them comprehend our current initiatives and the challenges we confront.

It is my aspiration that both internal and external stakeholders perusing this document will gain insight into OBFR's current operations and our strategies to address the evolving needs of our community. We operate with a steadfast commitment to safety and the well-being of those we serve. We aim to continuously learn, evolve, and innovate, refusing to settle for mediocrity. We persistently strive to discover better ways to serve our citizens and all visitors to Orange Beach.

Warm regards,



W. Nelson Bauer, Ph.D.



Orange Beach Fire & Rescue  
25855 John Snook Drive  
Orange Beach, AL 36561  
TEL 251-981-6166

## S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

<p><u>Strengths (Internal)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Customer service excellence</li> <li>● Talented and capable employees</li> <li>● Youth and eagerness</li> <li>● Community support</li> <li>● Resources</li> <li>● Prioritization of physical fitness</li> <li>● Employees/leadership who genuinely care about this department</li> <li>● Regional Training Center</li> <li>● Plenty of underutilized talent that can be molded, guided, and encouraged.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Weaknesses (Internal)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information technology solutions</li> <li>● Diversity/Recruitment</li> <li>● Lack of experience.</li> <li>● Succession planning</li> <li>● Brotherhood and moral support (outside of shift/stations)</li> <li>● Attracting line personnel to administrative positions</li> <li>● Communication – how information is received</li> <li>● Internship Program consistency and vision/mission/goals/values.</li> <li>● Lack of consistency</li> <li>● Training</li> <li>● Underutilizing our Regional Training Center</li> <li>● Awards system scope</li> </ul>
<p><u>Opportunities (External)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Review service delivery</li> <li>● Collaboration/ increased partnerships</li> <li>● Diversity – promoting recruitment</li> <li>● Community awareness of services &amp; needs</li> <li>● Succession planning/mentoring</li> <li>● Employee development</li> <li>● Encourage culture of leveraging talents</li> <li>● Program appraisals for accreditation</li> <li>● Collaboration with area departments/networking</li> </ul>	<p><u>Threats (External)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recession and lodging income loss</li> <li>● Disasters including oil spills, hurricanes, state park fires, and flooding.</li> <li>● Adequate staffing of ladder company</li> <li>● Community growth</li> <li>● Aging community</li> <li>● Information technology support</li> <li>● Limited promotional opportunities</li> <li>● Funding restrictions</li> <li>● External recruitment</li> <li>● Distance to medical facilities</li> <li>● Informing tourists about beach safety</li> </ul>

# STRATEGIC GOALS

## **Goal #1: Actively pursue rank/position preparedness and development.**

### **Objective 1.01 – Establish a comprehensive training program for each rank within the department by 2026.**

- 1.01.01 Create training assessments that are entirely focused on preparing juniors and seniors of each rank for promotions. This includes (but is not limited to) a writing center, incident commander fire simulation training, inbox training, resume writing, and oral interview practice.
- 1.01.02 Develop an in-depth checklist to prepare each rank for the next step. This includes a guide/checklist, much like we currently have with our intern firefighters.
- 1.01.03 Utilize a combination of in-house training sessions, external workshops, and online courses to cover technical, leadership, and administrative aspects.

### **Objective 1.02 – Provide opportunities for firefighters to attend leadership courses and workshops.**

- 1.02.01 Promote and partner with the National Fire Academy to have staff members actively apply for and attend courses and executive programs.
- 1.02.02 Offer in-house leadership training sessions led by experienced professionals within or outside of the department.
- 1.02.03 Identify reputable leadership development programs and sponsor interested personnel to attend.

### **Objective 1.03 – Implement a mentorship program where experienced personnel guide and support those seeking advancement.**

- 1.03.01 Pair junior personnel with seasoned mentors who can provide guidance, advice, and support throughout their career progression.
- 1.03.02 Facilitate regular meetings between mentors and mentees to discuss career goals, challenges, and development plans.

### **Objective 1.04 – Regularly assess the skill sets and knowledge required for each position and provide training accordingly.**

- 1.04.01 Conduct periodic competency assessments to identify gaps in skills and knowledge. Pair junior personnel with seasoned mentors.

- 1.04.02 Tailor training programs based on the assessment results to address identified deficiencies and ensure alignment with evolving job requirements.

**Goal #2: Develop hiring practices where we hire the top candidates with a focus on the future.**

**Objective 2.01 – Revise recruitment strategies to attract diverse, highly qualified candidates.**

- 2.01.01 Utilize targeted advertising campaigns, job fairs, and outreach programs to attract a diverse pool of applicants.
- 2.01.02 Develop partnerships with community organizations and educational institutions to promote firefighting careers to underrepresented groups.

**Objective 2.02 – Establish clear criteria for evaluating candidates’ potential for long-term growth within the department.**

- 2.02.01 Define attributes and competencies indicative of future leadership potential, such as adaptability, initiative, and teamwork.
- 2.02.02 Incorporate these criteria into the hiring process, including application screening, interviews, and assessment centers.

**Objective 2.03 – Incorporate behavioral and situational assessments to identify candidates with strong leadership potential.**

- 2.03.01 Integrate situational judgment tests and behavioral interviews into the selection process to assess candidates' decision-making, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills.

**Objective 2.04 – Create partnerships with educational institutions to cultivate a pipeline of talented individuals interested in firefighting careers.**

- 2.04.01 Collaborate with high schools, technical colleges, and universities to promote firefighting and EMS as viable career options.
- 2.04.02 Offer internship programs, career days, and educational workshops to expose students to the firefighting profession and provide hands-on experience.

**Goal #3: Develop and support a well-trained workforce.**

**Objective 3.01 – Regularly assess training needs and develop a comprehensive training schedule.**

- 3.01.01 Conduct periodic training needs assessments to identify gaps in skills, knowledge, and certifications.
- 3.01.02 Develop an annual training calendar that addresses mandatory training requirements as well as specialized skill development needs

**Objective 3.02 – Provide opportunities for firefighters to obtain advanced certifications and specializations.**

- 3.02.01 Offer financial support or reimbursement for firefighters pursuing advanced certifications or specialized training programs.
- 3.02.02 Facilitate access to external training opportunities, workshops, and conferences relevant to firefighters' career development goals.

**Objective 3.03 – Invest in state-of-the-art training equipment and facilities.**

- 3.03.01 Allocate budget resources for the purchase and maintenance of modern training equipment, simulators, and technology.
- 3.03.02 Seek grant opportunities to enhance our training equipment.
- 3.03.03 Upgrade training facilities to replicate real-life scenarios and provide immersive learning experiences.

**Objective 3.04 – Establish partnerships with other agencies and organizations for cross-training opportunities.**

- 3.04.01 Collaborate with neighboring fire departments, emergency services, and specialized rescue teams to facilitate cross-training initiatives.
- 3.04.02 Arrange joint training exercises, workshops, and skill-sharing sessions to enhance interagency cooperation and resource sharing.

**Goal #4: Seek accreditation to ensure we are meeting exceptional levels of service quality.**

**Objective 4.01 – Research and identify reputable accreditation bodies relevant to fire departments.**

- 4.01.01 Explore accreditation options such as the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) or the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS).
- 4.01.02 Evaluate accreditation criteria, benefits, and requirements to determine the most suitable accreditation pathway.

**Objective 4.02 – Conduct a gap analysis to identify areas where the department needs improvement to meet accreditation standards.**

- 4.02.01 Review accreditation standards and assess current departmental practices, policies, and procedures against these benchmarks.
- 4.02.02 Identify areas of non-compliance or areas needing improvement and prioritize corrective actions.

**Objective 4.03 – Develop and implement policies and procedures aligned with accreditation requirements.**

- 4.03.01 Update existing policies and develop new ones as needed to meet accreditation standards.

**Goal #5: Create an enhanced listening and learning organization**

**Objective 5.01 – Actively engage employees**

- 5.01.01 Every workgroup will meet with an administrative chief twice annually; one meeting shall be with the Fire Chief
- 5.01.02 Conduct annual group meetings with all supervisors
- 5.01.03 Conduct a biennial employee survey of all OBFR personnel beginning in 2025

**Objective 5.02 – Develop and promote an employee feedback process by June 2025**

- 5.02.01 Develop a mechanism to ensure a response to every suggestion/question
- 5.02.02 Publicly celebrate/recognize successes and contributions

## APPENDIX A: OBFR SERVICES

**The Human Factor:** From the entry level employee to our most senior member, our personnel are our greatest asset and most valuable resource. We ensure compliance with all City and department policies and employment law, as well as Civil Service Rules regarding recruitment, hiring, organizational development, and promotional testing.

**Customer Service:** All employees of the OBFR are community problem solvers. They provide non-emergency support at community events, and they assist citizens in need with everything from keys locked in vehicles to helping stranded motorists. Our employees care for the citizens of Orange Beach as if they were family.

**Emergency Response:** As an all hazards department we respond whenever our citizens call. Personnel in the Operations Division respond to all manner of fires, hazardous materials incidents, and rescues wherever they arise; from the city to our beaches. This division also responds to medical incidents, providing both advanced and basic life support as well as medical transport.

**Fire and Injury Prevention:** These services range from the education of our most vulnerable citizens to fire code enforcement and fire investigations. The professionals in the Division of the Fire Marshal issue permits as well as burn restrictions, and they review building plans and inspect new and existing structures. This group is also responsible for property assessments.

**Medical Services:** The OBFR Operations Division provides continuous medical education, equipment and medication research, testing, and quality assurance reviews for all of the advanced and basic life support providers in our department. Our Community and Public Health section is an innovator in mobile integrated health services. Personnel help individuals reliant upon the 9-1-1 system to find more effective and efficient solutions to their healthcare needs. In collaboration with the Orange Beach Police Department, we also address the needs of patients in a behavioral health crisis, providing them options which appropriately address their healthcare concerns.

**Emergency Planning and Recovery:** Personnel from all divisions fill critical roles on the Orange Beach Emergency Management team . This work entails planning for incidents, logistical assistance for planned events, and supporting field responders as they provide emergency services to those in need. Recovery work can take months, but begins sometimes as an emergency unfolds.

**Support Services:** Certified and non-certified personnel work together to support the operations of the OBFR. We have personnel who develop specifications for, order and maintain our apparatus, tools, and equipment. Others who inspect and ensure the maintenance of our facilities, many of which are 24/7 operations. This division also has the responsibility of training new and incumbent employees in all phases of fire and emergency response.

**Finance:** Nothing happens without budgetary support. Our finance team helps every work group to identify and articulate their needs for the next year, then assembles a budget plan to properly request the highest priority items. This group also performs statistical analysis for planning purposes, and they support our information technology needs.