

*Terrell Fire Department*

# *ACE REPORT*

*Annual Chief's Evaluation*



*Shane LeCroy, Fire Chief*  
**1-3-2020**



# TERRELL FIRE DEPARTMENT

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The ACE report has been created in an effort to provide Department members with a summary of accomplishments made in 2019 as well as our goals for 2020. I have provided, in chronological order below, the highlighted accomplishments and the significance related to those accomplishments for each month.

#### **January:**

We were able to attain council approval (resolution 915) to accept FEMA's SAFER grant begin the process of hiring 9 additional firefighters. This was needed so that we may operate within the guidelines of NFPA 1700 and increase the safety of all operating personnel. The additional personnel have also provided us with the ability to restructure operationally which will increase our efficiency moving forward.

Also, in January, we received an inspection by the TCFP which was the first inspection of the Department since I became the Fire Chief. The inspection was successful due in part to each Captain providing required information from their areas of responsibilities as well as revisions to our SOGs.

#### **February:**

We began the process of ordering 3 new administrative vehicles for the Department. Originally, one was all that was approved but the replacement of the remaining two administrative vehicles became an option which we accepted. Replacing all three allowed for one of the three vehicles to be outfitted in such a manner as to become a reserve vehicle for our anticipated Battalion Chief's Vehicle. The vehicles were ordered black so that they may be wrapped in red to reflect our change in color design. The vehicle designated as the potential Battalion Chief's vehicle was wrapped but the other two administrative vehicles remained black for cost saving purposes. The money saved would be later used to wrap Truck 621.

#### **March:**

Received approval for an administrative assistance position which was filled by Brandi McFarland. This position will assist Fire Administration and the Fire Chief with a variety of tasks and projects such as: Budget processes, bill tracking and payments, data entry, data mining, payroll, scheduling, and other administrative tasks as well as being the single source of contact for Fire Administration and the public.

The hiring process for the 9 SAFER Grant Firefighters started. Written exam scheduled for the 2<sup>nd</sup> followed by the physical ability on the 9<sup>th</sup> at Collin College. Collin College is being utilized for the physical ability testing since it is a validated exam. In the past the physical ability testing was done in house which had not been validated. The validation process ensures that the exam is free from any biases and transfers any potential litigation to a third party.





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**April:**

We began a new process when preparing for special events. The Jubilee preparation offered a unique opportunity to show those involved in the Jubilee's event including other City Services, a more formal process to prepare for such an event called an IAP (Incident Action Plan). This would be the first time some event planners had used this tool. The processes involved with building an IAP are valuable since they look at the entire event and force planners to say what if and then prepare accordingly. Although our hope is that the plan is never used in its entirety, there is comfort in the knowledge that one exists if things were to take a turn for the worst. "Failing to plan is planning to fail".

**May:**

Another special event was planned for, the Taco Festival utilizing the IAP process. Emergency Management took the lead and assisted in building a response plan if an emergency were to arise.

**June:**

Five of the 9 needed firefighter positions were hired. Three of the five began immediately while two were sent to Kilgore Fire Academy to receive firefighter training and certification.

**July:**

Special event planning for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration utilized an IAP as the source for its planning model. During this planning preparation, the police department partnered with the Fire Department to unify the command process.

**August:**

Second written exam for the remaining 4 SAFER Firefighter positions was given on the 3<sup>rd</sup> followed by the physical ability exam on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Two of our new hires graduated from the Kilgore Fire Academy.

**September:**

The Terrell Airport hosted its annual Fly-In event with the Fire Department once again taking the lead in emergency management planning through the development of an IAP for this event.

9/11 ceremony was organized and conducted. The Department's Honor Guard assisted in the planning and facilitating of this honored event. The City's flag pole was relocated and a concrete pad poured. The ceremony was organized around the flag and the Department's Bell.

Presentation was given to the Terrell Citizens University. The presentation emphasized our commitment to move from an BLS organization to an ALS organization. This presentation discussed the importance of quick ALS interventions which could improve patient outcomes.

Interviews were conducted from the list of successful candidates from the August 3<sup>rd</sup> written and August 10<sup>th</sup> physical ability exams.



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EMS hard copy reports were resumed and required on all patient contacts. This is a TDSHS requirement but also will assist us in quality assurance and trending analysis.

#### October:

One additional Firefighter paramedic from the August hiring process was hired which adds to the total hired for the SAFER Grant to 6.

A third Firefighter entrance written exam was given on the 19<sup>th</sup> followed by the physical ability exam on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Hiring requirements have remained the same, candidates must hold a paramedic certification to be hired.

2019-2020 Budget approved. The approved 19-20 budget has been significantly increased in order to fund the Department's goals and direction. The budget for 2019-20 has been set at \$4,142,360. This is an increase of approximately 58% from past budgets. This increase is partially due to the following:

- The increase in staffing levels.
- A second set of PPE is to be purchased and for all personnel. The second set is vital for our initiative to reduce personnel's exposures to the products of combustion which are linked to a dramatic increase in Fire Service cancers. Also, gear bags for PPE.
- Assortment of training opportunities such as: Swift Water training; Active Threat training; Fire Inspector certifications; Blue Card certification training; Fire Officer I & II training and certifications; Driver pumper operator certification and training; Officer leadership training; and administration training.
- Additional uniforms to be purchased on an annual replacement schedule and additional uniform accessories to be purchased as well.
- Outside inspectors to be contracted to assist with inspections of Tier II facilities and identified Target Hazards.
- Replacement of aged equipment as identified on our newly developed replacement schedule such as: Gas detectors; Refrigerators; Water fountains; Portable radios, AEDs and Outdoor Warning siren's electronic components.
- New Rescue Equipment.
- Wrapping Engine 611 and Truck 621. Outfitting and re-purposing the Squad for a Command Vehicle.
- Promotional Study Material for each rank and each station.
- Santa Around town and the awards banquet.





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This budget will also see further increases with an anticipated budget amendment scheduled for February to fund 3 Battalion Chief positions. Although we did not see a salary increase for this budget, we are anticipating an increase in salaries with the addition of education and certification pay for employees after January 1, 2020.

#### November:

In preparations to move from an BLS to ALS First Responder Organization, discussions with CareFlite were conducted and paramedic CE's scheduled. CareFlite has also agreed to provide the Department with (2) Zoll 12-lead ECG monitors. We should take possession of these monitors following completion of routine maintenance and testing. The significance of moving from BLS to ALS demonstrates our commitment to providing the citizens of Terrell with the best pre-hospital medical care possible. I am positive that this move will have a significant impact on the lives of future patients.

#### December:

Several special events took place during December. Participation in the Christmas Parade took place on the 14<sup>th</sup>. The afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup> kicked off the Department's Santa Around Town program with the Fly-In of Santa at Ben Gill Park at 6 pm. The Santa Fly-In was received well by the public and was an addition to last year's program. Also changed from last year's program were the city routes taken. This year saw Santa driving routes according to council districts on the 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. In doing so, it allowed council members to be present and assist with getting the word out to their constituents which they seen value in. Our participation in this event has demonstrated our caring and commitment to those we are sworn to protect.

The 15<sup>th</sup> of December was the date for the first Terrell Fire Department awards ceremony. This date was chosen due to its historical significance which was the day the Terrell Fire Department was established in 1879. Along with presentation of awards such as the Firefighter of the Year and the Michael Roscoe Fire Chief's award, several Commendations and Unit Citations were also presented. The significance of this event is to provide a platform to recognize members on an annually bases for their exemplary performance and or achievements. Some awards have been named after past members to honor their contribution to the Department.

Approval was received to move forward with the process to establish the rank of Battalion Chief. The process will entail: Fire Chief's presentation to council on January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020; Human Resource's request to council to change the Civil Service Ordinance to include the new positions on January 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 first





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reading; Second reading of the Civil Service Ordinance change will be on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 along with the needed budget amendment. If all is approved as anticipated, the promotional processes will begin to include: approval by the Civil Service commission to fill the new and soon to be vacated positions: Official posting of exams for these positions to include study materials; and purchasing of study material for all required areas (Library, City Hall, and both stations).

#### SUMMARY INTERPRETATION:

Upon my arrival into the Department in November 2018, I first met with each station by shift to discuss what direction members would like to see the organization head. Overwhelmingly, members wanted this Department to become a progressive, professional and a model for other Departments to follow. I was glad to hear this since that was/is my wish as well.

Now that we have a full year to look back on, it is important for us to evaluate what we have accomplished to ensure it is aligned with the direction we wish to head. Applying for and then being awarded the FEMA SAFER grant in August 2018 was a momentous accomplishment which took place prior to my arrival. However, an important step was overlooked during the process which had the potential for derailing the acceptance of the grant. In June of 2018 prior to the grant being awarded, FEMA requested a letter of support for the grant to ensure if we received the grant we would follow through and fund the positions. The letter of support was signed by the then City manager but did not receive approval from city council which was a crucial omission.

Due to this omission, we basically got the cart before the horse. To rectify this situation, council was presented the facts of the process and given a presentation over the importance of the grant and the additional personnel. In January 2019, council approved resolution 915 which allowed us to move forward with accepting the grant and starting the hiring process. The additional 9 personnel will allow us a better opportunity to meet the standards of NFPA 1710 which aligns us with our mission to be the most professional department possible.

The Department's firefighter entrance requirements were changed to also align us with our defined direction which is to be a more progressive Department. The majority of our calls for service is EMS related. With this being the case, it only makes sense where our focus should be, on EMS. With EMS being the focus, the 9 SAFER firefighters which we are still in the process of hiring have been required to hold a paramedic certification in order to be hired. By adding this requirement to the new hires, we will be able to advance our current TDSHS First Responder Organization certification from a Basic Life Support (BLS) organization to an Advanced Life Support (ALS) organization. In doing so, we will be able to provide a higher level of care to the citizens of Terrell.





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Other areas aligned with our mission which were accomplishments this past year included:

- Addition of an administrative assistant position. This position has been needed for some time. Administrative tasks can be all consuming without assistance. It is difficult if not impossible for a single administrator to keep up with the volumes of required paperwork, certifications, bills, payments, and internal requests which is required to maintain and operate a professional department.
- The defining of station Captain's responsibilities. With the advent of defined responsibilities for station Captains, the workload has been disseminated through the shifts so that a more singular focus can now take place. Required tasks are now being scheduled and tracked such as Apparatus PMs, Pump Testing, Ladders, SCBA flow testing, Training, Certifications tracking, etc.
- Addressing special events in a professional manner through the use and development of IAP (Incident Action Plan). Organizationally, taking the lead during this event and demonstrating the level of planning required for all events demonstrates our professional approach to emergency mitigation not only internally within the City but also externally.
- Requiring complete EMS reports on all incidents will now allow us to look at such things as "Trending" which will allow us to plan accordingly for future incidents. Reports also gives us a way to ensure "Quality Control" and address training deficiencies which is a sign of a progressive department.
- Community outreach programs such as smoke detector installations, home inspections, and Santa Around Town are all programs designed so that we may interact with the community and provide a higher level of service.
- Review and Revisions to our current SOGs are yet another sign of being professional and progressive. Our current SOGs that have been revised are being done so with "Best Practice" recognition in mind. Best Practice is a recognition from the Texas Fire Chief's Association that denotes a department that is meeting the "Industry Standards" in how it carries out its business. Although we are sometime out before applying for this, it is my belief that the value of this recognition is in the process you go through to achieve it not the formal recognition afterwards.
- Increase in our operating Budget. A Budget is a one-year business plan. As I previously discussed, we were able to grow our budget approximately 58%. This was needed to move forward with our department initiatives such as firefighter health and safety; modernizing out of date equipment; defining replacement schedules; gaining needed higher level certifications and allowing for outside training offerings for personnel.





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I believe it is equally important to note things we were unsuccessful on and that does not align with our mission.

- Pay scale re-alignment. Our current pay scale is very compressed and must be revised in order to provide the necessary incentive/reward for promoting. Currently, a step 8 firefighter will only move 1.1% when promoting to a step 1 Driver/Engineer. A step 4 Driver/Engineer will move 2.8% when promoting to a step one Captain. I have and will continue to propose at least a 5% increase from rank to rank and at least 2.5% between steps. Also, the Driver/Operator's rank only has 4 steps while the Fire Captain's rank has 5. I feel 5 steps is appropriate. I will continue to set this at a high priority as we move into the FY 20-21 Budget talks.
- Pay raise for department members. I was unsuccessful in procuring a pay raise for members during this past budget negotiations. I did however, present HR and the City Manager with a salary survey of 12 comparable cities during the budget preparation process. The cities in which I utilized were: Coppell, Waxahachie, Little Elm, Wylie, Rockwall, Rowlett, Burleson, Lancaster, Midlothian, Corinth, Cleburne, and Greenville. Based on this comparison, TFD's firefighters ranked 12<sup>th</sup>; Driver/Engineers ranked 9<sup>th</sup>; and Fire Captains ranked 12<sup>th</sup>. If the proposed pay scale re-alignment had been successful, all TFD's positions would have moved up and been ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in comparison with the other cities thus putting us in the midrange of the survey. I will be pursuing a similar pay comparison for FY 20-21 utilizing the procedural knowledge I gained from this past budgetary process.

Although the following should not be considered as unsuccessful budget proposals, they have been delayed which has resulted in further adjustments/delays to be made on planned items/tasks that are to build upon them as we move forward.

- Adding the rank of Battalion Chief. I originally proposed the addition of the Battalion Chief rank to begin on October 1, 2019. However, the acceptance process for this position has been moved to January which means the earliest this position may be filled will be around mid-June. Although I am confident the position will be approved by council and funded accordingly, the delay has had an effect on a certain training opportunity that was planned for those members promoting into these positions. Adjustments will be made as move forward.
- Certification/Education pay incentives. These incentive pays were also proposed during the budget process with an implementation date beginning October 1, 2019. However, as with the acceptance process of the Battalion Chief position it too has been moved to begin in January, 2020. Also changed from the original proposal is the amounts to be paid to members for each certification/education hours earned. HR has been tasked with justifying pay specific to each individual department's certification and education priorities.





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Becoming and/or maintaining a professional, progressive department in which other department will wish to model after does not happen overnight and does not come without dedicated hard work. However, the end result is a department that we will be extremely proud of, not because of the notoriety but because of the work it took to get us there.

Throughout this first year we have continually worked towards our mission in all that we have done. The department is growing and will continue to grow until we reach our goals. To grow an organization is much like building a house or any other structure. It all starts with the foundation and then the walls and the roof. The structure will only be as strong as its foundation in which it rests on. Our foundation is our members and is strong. I am and will remain committed to keeping our foundation strong and strengthening it whenever possible.

#### 2020 Goals:

1. Complete the transition from a BLS First Responder Organization to an ALS First Responder Organization.
2. Fill the Battalion Chief position which will also include: Restructuring our incident response matrix to include the new rank; Provide the necessary initial training for new Battalion Chiefs; and Provide the necessary work space needed for an additional shift Officer.
3. Facilitate and Produce a 5-year strategic plan.
4. Fire Inspections: Begin performing Fire Inspections by contracted Inspectors on all "Target Hazard" facilities; Provide the training necessary for 6 personnel to become TCFP certified Fire Inspectors so that shift base inspections may begin.
5. Emergency Management: Provide annual EOC exercises involving all City Department Heads; Create and Implement a joint "Active Threat" SOG with Fire and Police.
6. Begin the process of evaluating current Fire Stations and researching the need for additional Fire Stations.
7. Begin the process of conducting systematic Pre-Fire Planning for targeted commercial structures and structures with the potential for high loss of life.
8. Perform Hydrant Testing and Hydrant Reflector Installations.
9. Review and Revise current SOGs to reflect organizational direction and changing structure.
10. Prepare for the upcoming FY 20-21 Budget by: Creating an Apparatus Committee to Research and Recommend a replacement Fire Engine; Perform a Salary survey of comparable Cities to present to council; Bring in outside consultants to assist with current Fire Stations evaluations and project need for future Fire Stations.

  
Shane LeCroy, Fire Chief

01/03/20  
Date