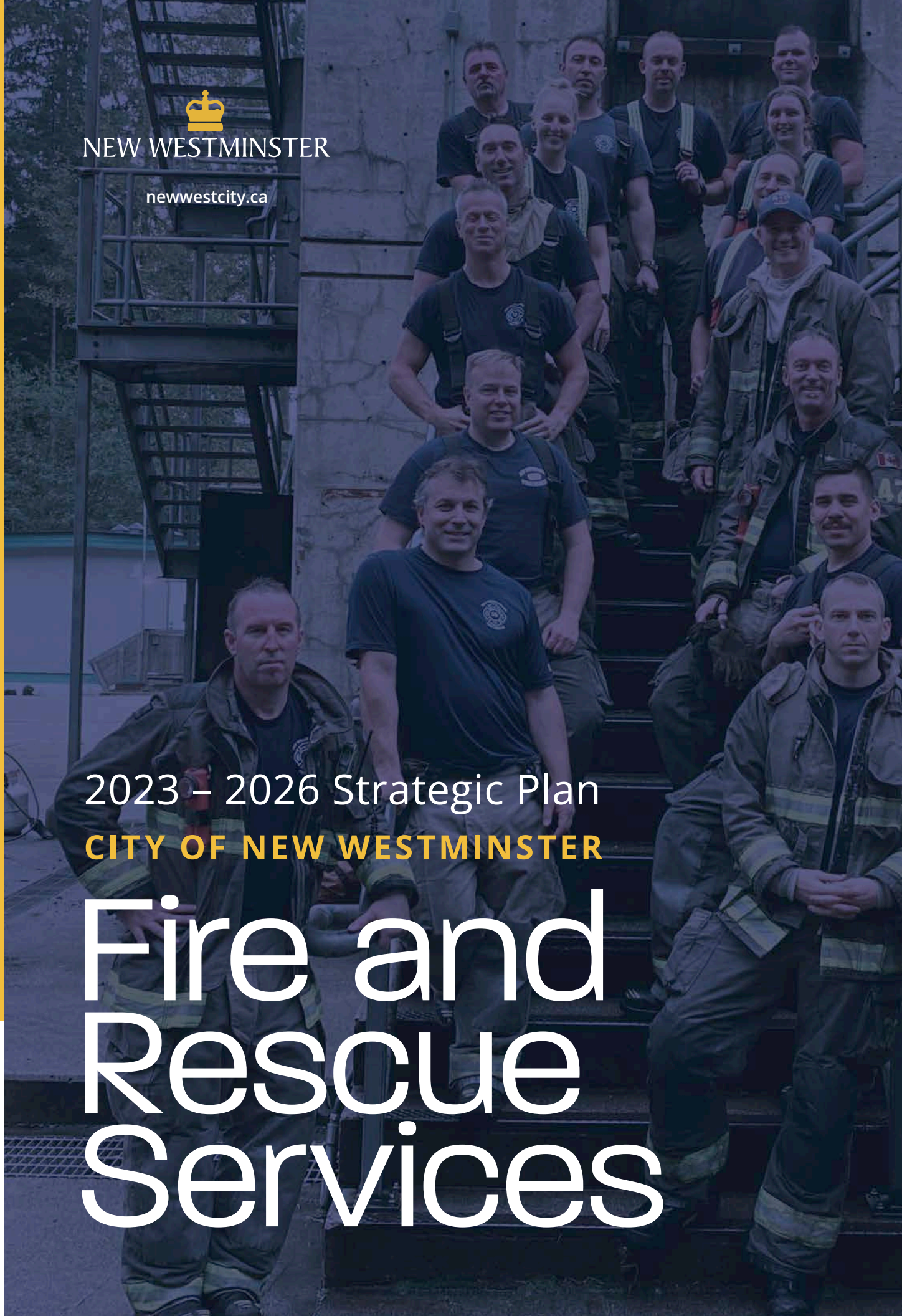
NEW WESTMINSTER

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2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan

CITY OF NEW WESTMINSTER

Fire and Rescue Services

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MESSAGE FROM

Fire Chief Erin Williams

*New Westminster Fire Rescue Services is **one of the oldest** fire departments in British Columbia.*

Established on July 24, 1861, as Hyack Company 1, New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services is one of the oldest fire departments in British Columbia. The original fire hall was located in the 800 block of Columbia Street and the first fire engine arrived in 1863.

New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services (NWFRS or the 'Department') provides a diverse range of essential services including fire suppression, emergency medical response, rescue, special operations, fire prevention, life safety education, community outreach and emergency management to all individuals who live, work, play, and travel through our community. Our staff are fully committed to providing an equitable, compassionate, and inclusive service model to all we serve. The Department currently operates with sixteen staff per shift out of three fire halls with a staff of ninety, serving the community of over 85,000 residents and numerous commuters and visitors.

As a modern and progressive emergency service, we developed this strategic plan to guide our department to proactively change and serve a growing community with many new challenges. These include a growing and aging population, a changing climate, increasing densification, historic buildings and industrial infrastructure, and changing social demands. As a core public safety service, the Department has several legislated regulatory requirements related to building inspections and community safety including undertaking and maintaining community risk assessments. Through our strategic planning process, we will ensure that we adapt and respond appropriately, in collaboration with other City departments.

Through a collaborative process we reviewed our mission, vision, and values to ensure that as an organization they reflect who we are, where we see ourselves in the future and in alignment with our strategic priorities. The role and services of the Department have increasingly expanded to respond to community and regulatory needs, and we have identified several key priorities to support the accelerated growth envisioned by Council, recruitment, and retention of staff, updated legislative and new and enhanced training and safety requirements.

This strategic plan will act as a living document, be reviewed regularly, and assessed for success as part of our long-range ten-year fire plan. As we move forward as a department, change will inevitably occur, and the strategic plan will act as a roadmap to provide the framework for success and help maintain our service excellence, community safety and wellbeing that we pride ourselves in.

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Our History

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***The City of New Westminster** is approximately 15.3 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 85,708.*

The City continues to grow and densify, with additional densification planned for the area around Royal Columbian Hospital as well as for the areas surrounding each of the five Skytrain stations with the population estimated to reach over 100,000 by 2030. The City is separated by the Fraser River, with Queensborough at the east end and only reached by heavily congested bridges and traffic arteries. The city is also served by several railroads principally on the north side of the Fraser River. The railways impact, to some degree, emergency responses to the industrial properties in the Braid Street area as well as in the downtown core and the Westminster Quay development. Parts of the city, some of which are heavily populated, are also located within a flood plain area and could be threatened by rising water levels and flood events.

The Department previously responded to calls out of four fire halls: Hall 1 on Royal Avenue, Hall 2 in the West End on Edinburgh Street, Hall 3 in Sapperton on Cherry Street, and Hall 4 in Queensborough. Approximately twenty years ago, Hall 1 and Hall 3 were closed. A new Hall 1 was constructed in Glenbrook with staff and apparatus relocated to the new facility. This consolidation has resulted in an increase in response times to the Downtown core, one of the busiest areas for responses, as well as to the increasingly densified areas around Royal Columbian Hospital, the Braid Street Skytrain Station, and industrial properties east of Brunette.

The Department currently operates from three fire halls.



Location of Current Fire Halls

Fire Hall 1
1 East 6th Avenue in the Glenbrook area

Provides services to the central and eastern end of the city. Glenbrook Fire Hall was built in 2008, to building standards applicable at the time of construction. However, current building infrastructure lacks capacity for electrification of the fleet. The following departments are currently operated from this fire hall:

- Administration
- Emergency Operations Center
- Fire Prevention and Public Education
- Training and Staff Development Division
- Emergency Management

The response district for Glenbrook Fire Hall encompasses Royal Columbian Hospital, the Braid Industrial Area, several schools, two skytrain stations with high passenger/ foot traffic and through traffic from designated truck routes.

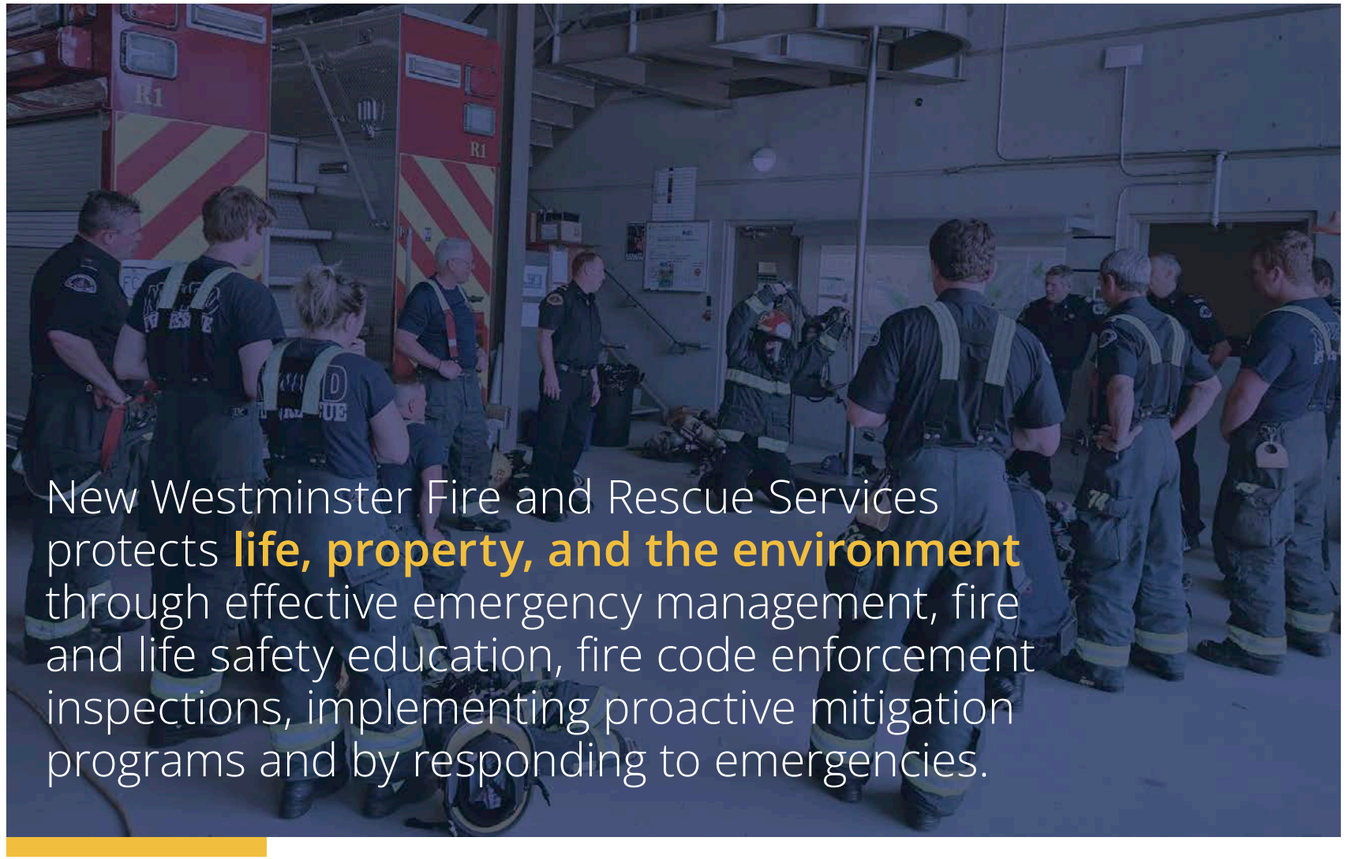
Fire Hall 2
820 13th Street in the West End

The city's west end fire hall was constructed in 1947. It is not considered modern, post- disaster construction, and is located on a very small lot which limits its use for training, equipment, and requires special order apparatus to fit into the hall. Fire Hall 2 will be replaced in the future at a new location to improve response times to meet industry standards, align with fire insurance rate requirements, and meet community expectations.

Fire Hall 3
1011 Ewen Avenue in Queensborough

Fire Hall 3 was constructed in 1999 and is a contemporary structure built to post-disaster standards that applied at the time. Hall 3 currently serves as the main training facility for the Department. Planned development in the vicinity has reduced the space allotted for the training ground, and close proximity for higher density development may pose a noise nuisance problem in the future. Hall 3 is also considered an area of refuge for Queensborough residents in the event bridge access is compromised. This facility will also require upgrades to facilitate electrification of the fleet.

Our Services



New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services protects **life, property, and the environment** through effective emergency management, fire and life safety education, fire code enforcement inspections, implementing proactive mitigation programs and by responding to emergencies.

Our Services

- ✓ *Fire suppression and prevention*
- ✓ *Rescue, special operations*
- ✓ *Life safety education, community outreach*
- ✓ *Emergency medical response*
- ✓ *Fire code enforcement inspections*
- ✓ *Emergency management preparedness and response*

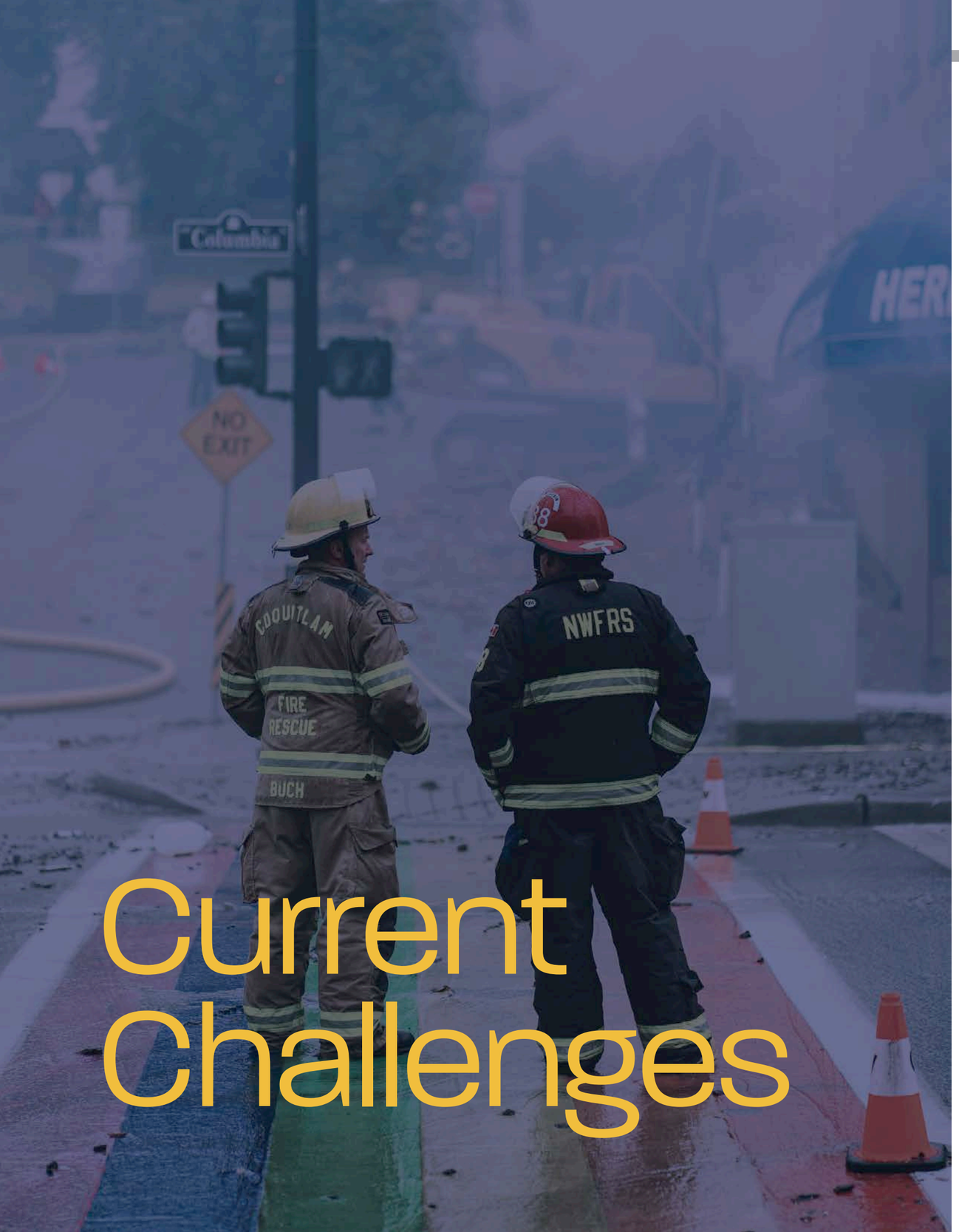
In addition to fire suppression, rescue services and emergency medical services, other roles include working with our community emergency services partners at the local and provincial level, developing the youth firefighter program, providing community outreach, and supporting community events and other City departments within the city to enhance community belonging and connecting.

While the name “fire and rescue” suggests the traditional role of dealing with fires and emergency/rescue services, the Department responds to all hazards, including extreme climate and weather events, vehicle and train related incidents, hazardous material responses, technical rope rescue emergencies and supporting province-wide needs such as wildfires when needed.

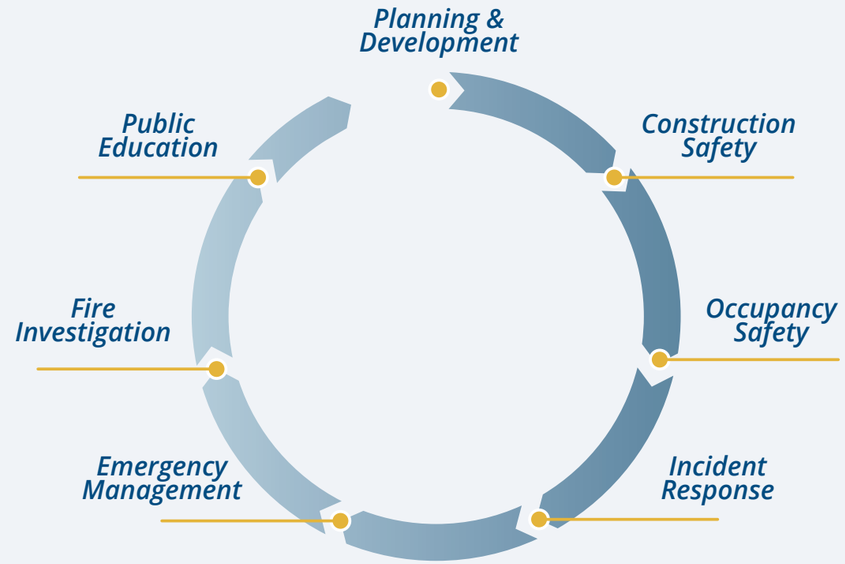


Medical responses have increased with calls ranging from serious medical and mental illness challenges, opioid addiction, and social issues in addition to medical health emergencies resulting from heat and extreme weather events. BC Emergency Health Services has come to rely on the Department as part of a layered response for health related issues in our community and others. We must also adapt to social and technological innovation, changing leadership and decision making strategies based on evidence and analytics, increased vertical construction, and more complex building product materials. To date we have done this with staffing levels that have gone virtually unchanged for several decades.

Further, the Department is involved throughout the building development lifecycle in all aspects including planning and development, construction safety, occupancy safety, incident response, emergency management, fire investigation, and public safety and education. This applies to all building types and forms from single family houses, multiple unit buildings to commercial and public/civic buildings all with a range of ages and building construction types.



Current Challenges



The City of New Westminster and NWFRS currently face several concurrent challenges, including:

- *Aggressive growth and significant population increases.*
- *Dense urban landscape with vertical buildings and increasing heights.*
- *Increasing social challenges associated with affordability, opioid crisis, homelessness, and vulnerable populations.*
- *Aging building stock with un-sprinklered wood frame and heritage buildings.*
- *Industrial areas with restricted accessibility due to heavily congested traffic networks.*
- *Impacts of climate change including increased extreme weather events.*
- *Increasing number, variation, and duration of calls.*
- *Need for additional staff/human resources and increasing competition for labour.*
- *Expensive infrastructure and equipment costs and utilization constraints.*
- *Located on a flood plain with extensive road and rail networks transporting dangerous goods.*
- *Lack of foreshore fire suppression protection.*

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Contexts & Policies





Photo credit: P. Romein

Several City policies and frameworks guiding our work include:

Climate Action & Environment

It is imperative for the Department to be actively involved with understanding and mitigating the negative impacts associated with climate change and how this impacts the overall environment in which the Department operates. Increasingly extreme weather events have a direct impact on Fire and Emergency Services within the city and region with new hazards to address. Regional crises reduce the ability to rely on traditional mutual aid strategies.

DEIAR (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism)

The work we do will be guided by the DEIAR Framework, which provides a vision and approach towards diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Indigenous Reconciliation

Actively participating, listening and learning from First Nations as part of the City of New Westminster's Reconciliation Working Group and committed to change.

Organizational Effectiveness

Organizational effectiveness is the ability of the City of New Westminster to achieve its strategic plan goals and objectives by efficiently aligning its resources including people, processes, technology, workspace, fleet, and financial resources. It also involves the organization's capability, availability, and capacity to meet customer needs and adapt to changes in the environment while maintaining high levels of employee engagement, performance, and productivity.

The City will be developing three strategies to guide and support organizational effectiveness: a people strategy, an information technology strategy, and a space planning strategy that the Department will actively be engaged in and directly related to our strategic plan priorities.

Public Engagement & Communication

It is essential that the Department undertake public engagement activities, particularly related to engaging residents in community safety and wellness. Public communication and engagement during extreme weather events, emergency situations and activities is essential across multiple traditional and social media platforms that requires new skills and ways of communication with the general public and interfacing with other regional and provincial fire and emergency services and agencies.

Building the Foundation for Success





Our Strategy

This strategic plan will build our foundation over the next three years by focussing on recruiting and retaining staff, making infrastructure and system improvements, and position the department to produce better service outcomes while meeting our regulatory and legislated requirements.

We will:

- Provide an effective response force that has the capability, availability, and capacity to effectively respond to fire and emergency situations within a rapidly growing community.
- Continue to undertake legislated Community Risk Assessments and emergency management requirements.
- Redirect the Fire Department to become progressive industry leaders by understanding and utilizing data resources to introduce analytical decision-making.
- Produce a short-term strategic plan as the foundation to develop a longer term departmental plan.
- Prepare and adapt for the changing environmental factors such as climate emergencies, rapid population growth, mental health, and opioid crises, and new building typologies/materials.
- Maintaining current standards on fiscal responsibility and oversight while continuously looking for improvements and revenue opportunities such as grant funding and partnerships.
- Plan for asset and infrastructure investment along with continued investment in our human resources in partnership with the City and the union.
- Provide a broad range of communication activities with the general public, other City departments, and partners.
- Be a modern apparatus fleet that strives for the goal of being carbon neutral by 2050.

2023 – 2026 Strategic Plan

Our Focus

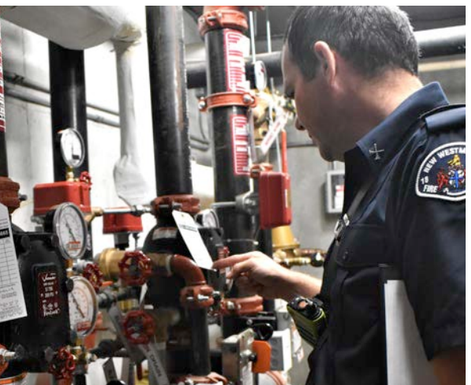
Our Vision

To proudly serve our communities by providing exceptional and innovative fire and emergency rescue services.

Our Mission

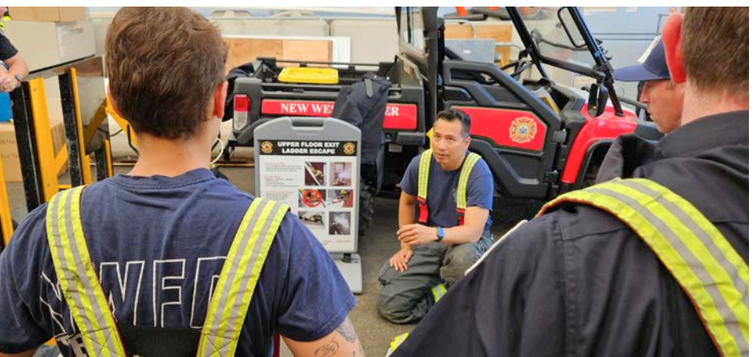
To provide a progressive, effective, and resilient fire rescue service that supports and reflects the diverse community we serve while valuing our rich history and recognizing our role and responsibilities towards proactively planning our future while supporting community safety and wellness.













Our Core Values

Integrity
We act with honesty and truthfulness, adhering to strong ethical principles in everything we do.

Accountable
We are prudent and fiscally responsible in all aspects of our work, being mindful of our community and cost effective solutions to address financial challenges.

Compassion
We take pride in our work and foster an environment of kindness, respecting diversity and inclusion, and place a high value on caring for and understanding others, especially those we serve.

Innovation
We embrace creativity and proactively seek new solutions and ideas that enhance the positive impact of our work and solutions that respond to current day challenges and issues.

Openness / Transparency
We conduct our business with transparency, communicate clearly and respectfully, and value meaning engagement with our community.

Partnerships
We collaborate across City departments and with other valued partners in our community to advance mutual goals and objectives and support our collective priorities.

Teamwork & Wellness
We foster a supportive working environment that promotes collaboration and physical and mental well-being.

Excellence
We strive to exceed expectations and aim to be leaders in public safety and firefighter and emergency services.

Our Strategic Priorities

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Improve Community Safety & Wellness



As an essential service with legislated regulatory requirements, the safety and wellbeing of people and structures is at the heart of New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services.

It is our passion and our individual and collective commitment to community service. Our department supports the City of New Westminster's priority of Community Connecting and Belonging and the vision of a vibrant, compassionate, resilient city where everyone can thrive. Our main priority is to improve and safeguard the safety and wellness of our staff and our community.

Improving community safety and wellness is at the centre or heart of our key strategic priorities, that have been identified as follows:



People & Human Resources



The City of New Westminster's population has grown steadily over the past few decades and is projected to reach over 100,000 people by 2030.

Staffing levels have remained at the same levels for the past decades and there is a significant risk that current staff levels cannot support current demands as evidenced by increasing call volume, emergency incident duration, complexity of emergency incidents, and Worksafe regulation changes. This is not sustainable and can impact performance outcomes as well as contribute to first responder burnout. With an aging population, changing workforce, and increasing pressure and competition from surrounding municipalities for limited human resources, more emphasis on recruiting, training, expanding, and diversifying the workforce will be needed.

OBJECTIVES

1. Focus on recruitment and retention at all levels of the Department.
2. Support training, professional development, physical and mental wellbeing of Department human resources.
3. Enhance community engagement, public education and community outreach.

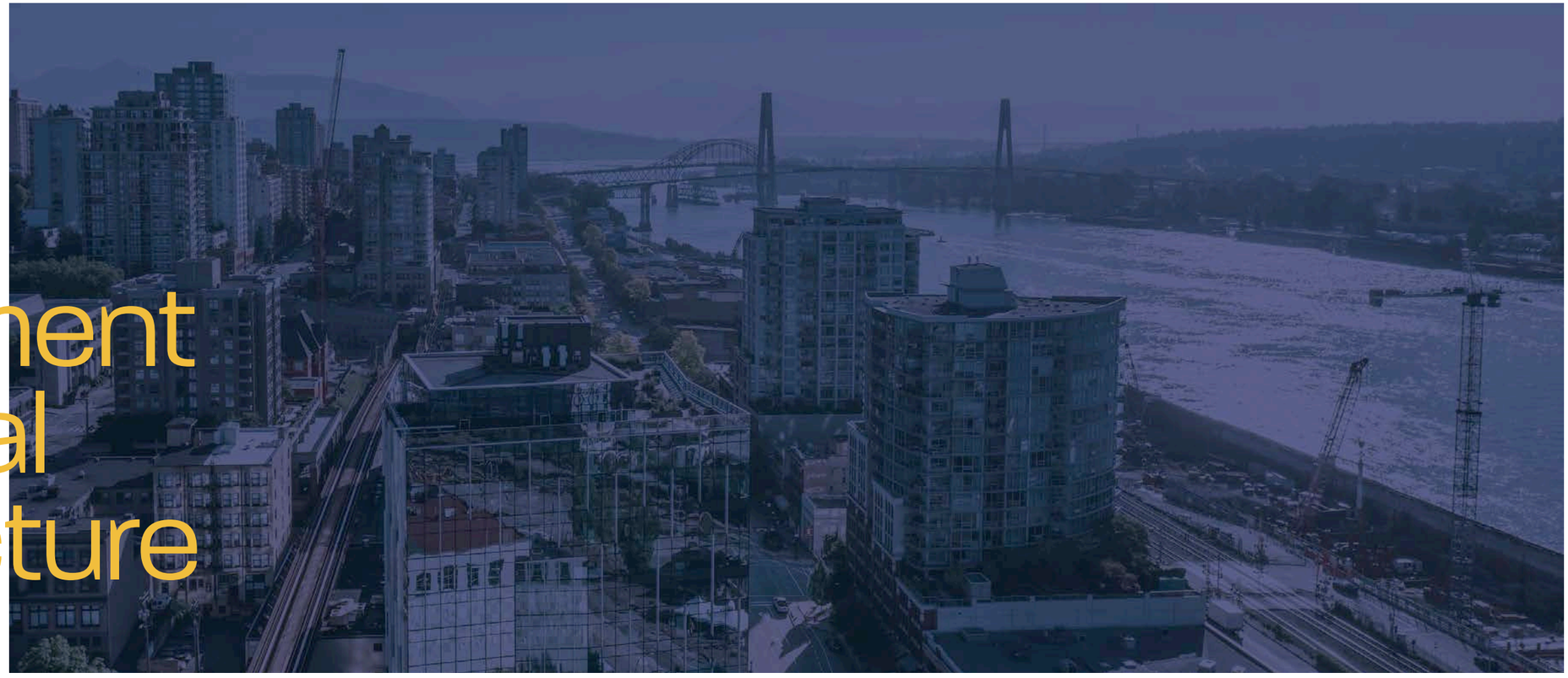
OUTCOMES

Increase number of staff and diversity of human resources to meet increased population and service operational performance expectations and standards.

Increase efficiencies in the core response model priorities that align with evolving community challenges, as well as add increased capacity in specialized skill sets and the Office of Emergency Management while ensuring staff mental health and wellbeing is prioritized.

Undertake a broad range of communication activities with the general public, our membership and union, other City departments and other internal and external interest groups.

Asset Management & Physical Infrastructure



Asset management includes physical buildings, regular, and specialty equipment needed to respond to increasingly varied situations.

Asset management plans are designed for several reasons. First, to guide the Fire Chief, management, and the municipality in planning and decision-making. Second, to aid in the creation of short-term and long-term financial plans as well as operational plans. Further, to spark community engagement for the service and support continued investment and improvement.

OBJECTIVES

1. Modernize and improve existing facilities to be better located and meet post-disaster standards and support the transition to being carbon neutral.
2. Upgrade training facilities and training opportunities.
3. Plan for future facilities, equipment, and apparatus through a detailed Asset Management Plan in alignment with and part of the City of New Westminster's Asset Management Plan.

OUTCOMES

Actively plan for a new Fire Hall 2 in a location that better serves a growing community and reduces response time to meet industry standards.

Develop training facilities and opportunities that support fire personnel and industry innovations.

Add additional office and flexible community meeting space and apparatus and equipment that responds to increased demand for service and changing building typologies and density.

Technology & Data Analytics



Increased access to data, analytics, and emerging technology will improve decision making and organizational efficiency.

Innovative uses of technology can improve response times, emergency incident mitigation strategies, and community safety. Risks can also be reduced by identifying opportunities for emergency prevention programs which can help the City achieve their strategic priorities through immediate and long-term planning.

OBJECTIVES

1. Invest in technology systems that support effective and efficient operations and compliance.
2. Use best practices, data and advice to help guide service excellence and informed decision making.
3. Through incident mapping, support city-wide initiatives such as Vision Zero, community engagement through enhanced social media and diverse communication platforms.

OUTCOMES

Implement data-driven decisions by introducing a strategy and process to collect and monitor data and performance metrics to inform policy and decision-making.

Improve response strategies, prevention, organizational efficiency, and City decision making.

Understand the impact and integration of new and emerging policies on provision of services.

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Organizational & Climate Resiliency



Extreme weather and climate related events are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate changes.

A resilient, multi-functional, and well-resourced Fire Rescue Services that supports the Emergency Management Office is vital to manage these events for overall community safety and wellbeing. Organizational and climate resiliency includes new ways of engaging and communicating with the broader community and proactively working to minimize negative impacts on people, buildings, and the environment.

OBJECTIVES

1. Improve business systems and processes.
2. Increase effective communications with both internal and external interest groups.
3. Proactively work to minimize disruption from climate related events (heat, snow) and be prepared to respond accordingly.

OUTCOMES

Ensure systems and plans are up to date to support organizational effectiveness, operational performance, and compliance.

Increase utilization of diverse communication methods and social media platforms.

Support business continuity, Emergency Management Office response plans, organizational risk assessment, community risk assessment and emergency incident response preplans.

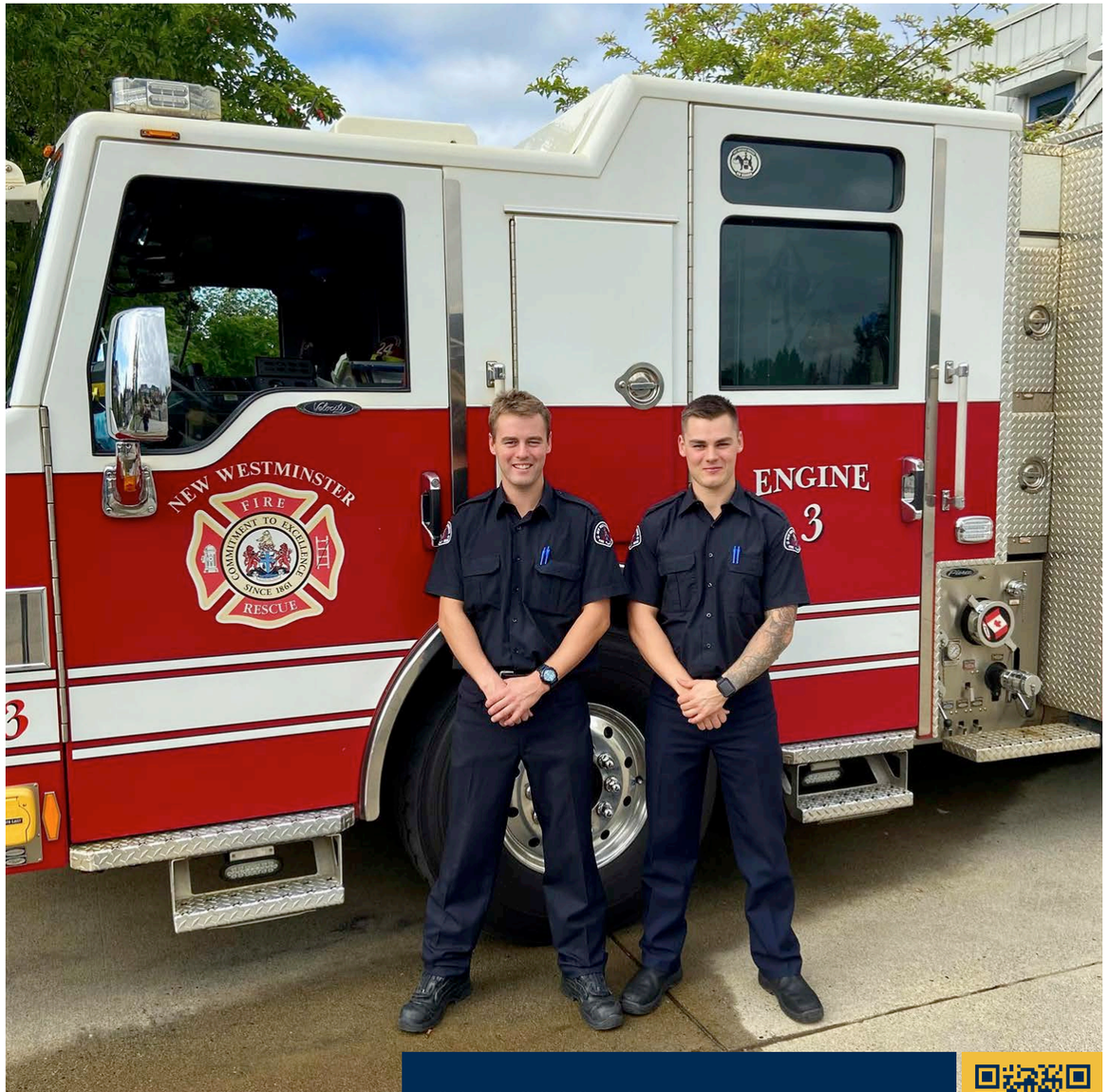
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Improve Community Safety and Wellness

PRIORITIES	People & Human Resources	Asset Management & Infrastructure	Technology & Data Analytics	Organizational and Climate Resilience
OBJECTIVES	Focus on recruitment and retention at all levels of the Department. Support training, professional development, physical and mental wellbeing of Department human resources. Enhance community engagement, public education and community outreach.	Modernize and improve existing facilities to be better located and meet post-disaster standards and support the transition to being carbon neutral. Upgrade training facilities and training opportunities. Plan for future facilities, equipment and apparatus through a detailed Asset Management Plan in alignment with and part of the City of New Westminster's Asset Management Plan.	Invest in technology systems that support effective and efficient operations and compliance. Use best practices, data and advice to help guide service excellence and informed decision making. Through incident mapping, support city-wide initiatives such as Vision Zero, community engagement through enhanced social media and diverse communication platforms.	Ensure systems and plans are up to date to support organizational effectiveness, operational performance, and compliance. Increase utilization of diverse communication methods and social media platforms. Support business continuity, Emergency Management Office response plans, organizational risk assessment, community risk assessment and emergency incident response preplans.

CONTEXTS

Climate Action and Environment, DEIAR, Organizational Effectiveness, Public Engagement and Communication, Indigenous Reconciliation



New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services is a department of the City of New Westminster. As such, it is strategically aligned with the strategic plans and long-range plans of the City including:

2023-2026 – Strategic Priorities Plan

Our City 2041 – Official Community Plan

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Thank You

If you have any questions, please contact us.

New Westminster Fire and Rescue Services

E fire@newwestcity.ca