

# STRATEGIC PLAN

FY 2025-2030

2025



## OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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INTEGRITY | FAIRNESS | SERVICE



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## FOREWORD - A message from Acting State Fire Marshal Jason Mowbray

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Greetings. It is my honor to present the 2025-2030 Maryland Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) Strategic Plan to you. This Strategic Plan is a first of its kind for our agency and is paramount to our continued success in accomplishing our mission, legislative mandates, and operational and administrative goals. This document was borne from a year-long process that, in part, continues.

In the fall of 2023, our office began working with the Superintendent to complete a workforce analysis and assessment. A series of day-long senior command workshops were held throughout the State, including input from each component of our technical workforce. The inclusion of our workforce was tantamount to ensuring diverse perspectives were included. A priority during these workshops was updating the existing OSFM Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Analysis (SWOT) and developing our strategic plan to begin plan implementation. Our work continues, completing our analysis and assessments to fully evaluate and adjust our organization to maximize our effectiveness in serving the public.



Over many months, our agency has been committed to evaluating essential job functions, analyzing organizational effectiveness, and reconciling deficiencies and omissions. This assessment and change is paramount to our agency, ensuring we focus on our legislative expectations and better serve our stakeholders through strong partnerships and communication.

Completing this Strategic Plan demonstrates our agency's commitment to ensuring Maryland is a safer place to live, work, and visit. Our plan ensures our resources will be laser-focused on fire and explosive investigations, engineering and code enforcement, data collection and analysis, and fire prevention through community risk reduction. After completing this Strategic Plan, I look forward to implementing the next phase of the planning process, establishing and updating our long-term goals, which guide the OSFM into the future.

I would like to express my appreciation to Colonel Roland Butler, Secretary of the Maryland Department of State Police, and Major Dalaine Brady of the Superintendent's Office. With the expertise, guidance, and support of the Superintendent's Office, the completion of this critical organizational document was possible.



## OUR VISION, MISSION STATEMENT, AND CORE VALUES

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### ***Vision:***

To serve and protect the citizens of Maryland while remaining focused on our core values of integrity, fairness, and service.

### ***Mission Statement:***

The Office of the State Fire Marshal's mission is the protection of life and property from fire and explosion through the efforts of a diverse, highly trained, and dedicated staff in partnership with other public safety agencies and the community. This is accomplished through aggressive criminal investigation of fire and explosive incidents, quality fire protection engineering services, enforcement of the State Fire Prevention Code, data collection and analysis, and public fire safety education.

### ***Core Values:***

Integrity: employees will:

- Uphold the public trust by being honest; and
- Maintain the highest ethical standards and a moral character.

Fairness: employees will:

- Treat every person with respect and dignity in an unbiased, courteous, and professional manner;
- Remain in control and respond appropriately when dealing with a citizen or an OSFM employee, and
- Protect the constitutional rights of all persons through impartial enforcement of the law.

Service: employees will:

- Provide dedicated and compassionate assistance to all persons;
- Promote leadership, cooperation, and assistance to fellow employees, allied agencies, and other governmental entities;
- Strive to improve the service we provide, the quality of life in the communities we serve, and the relationships we have with the community; and
- Obey all Office of the State Fire Marshal policies.



## A Historical Review

One hundred thirty years ago, in 1894, Governor Frank Brown appointed the first Maryland State Fire Marshal, John J. Jackson. The appointment came after the state legislature passed a law that created the office that year. The legislature created the office at the request of the State's Insurance Department, which was created in 1878. The objective of the Office of the State Fire Marshal was to "check incendiary fires and to so aid in reducing the rate of insurance in the State."

The State Fire Marshal was an ex officio member of the Insurance Commission until it was abolished by the legislature in 1916. Considered redundant and unnecessary by lawmakers, the State Fire Marshal was downgraded to a position within the Insurance Commission.

This changed in 1964 when Governor J. Miller Tawes created the State Fire Prevention Commission, and the Office of the State Fire Marshal was moved again. The State Fire Marshal retained its agency for six years until it was moved in 1970 to the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, where it would remain for 27 years until becoming a part of the Department of State Police in 1997.



A 130-Year History of the Office of the State Fire Marshal





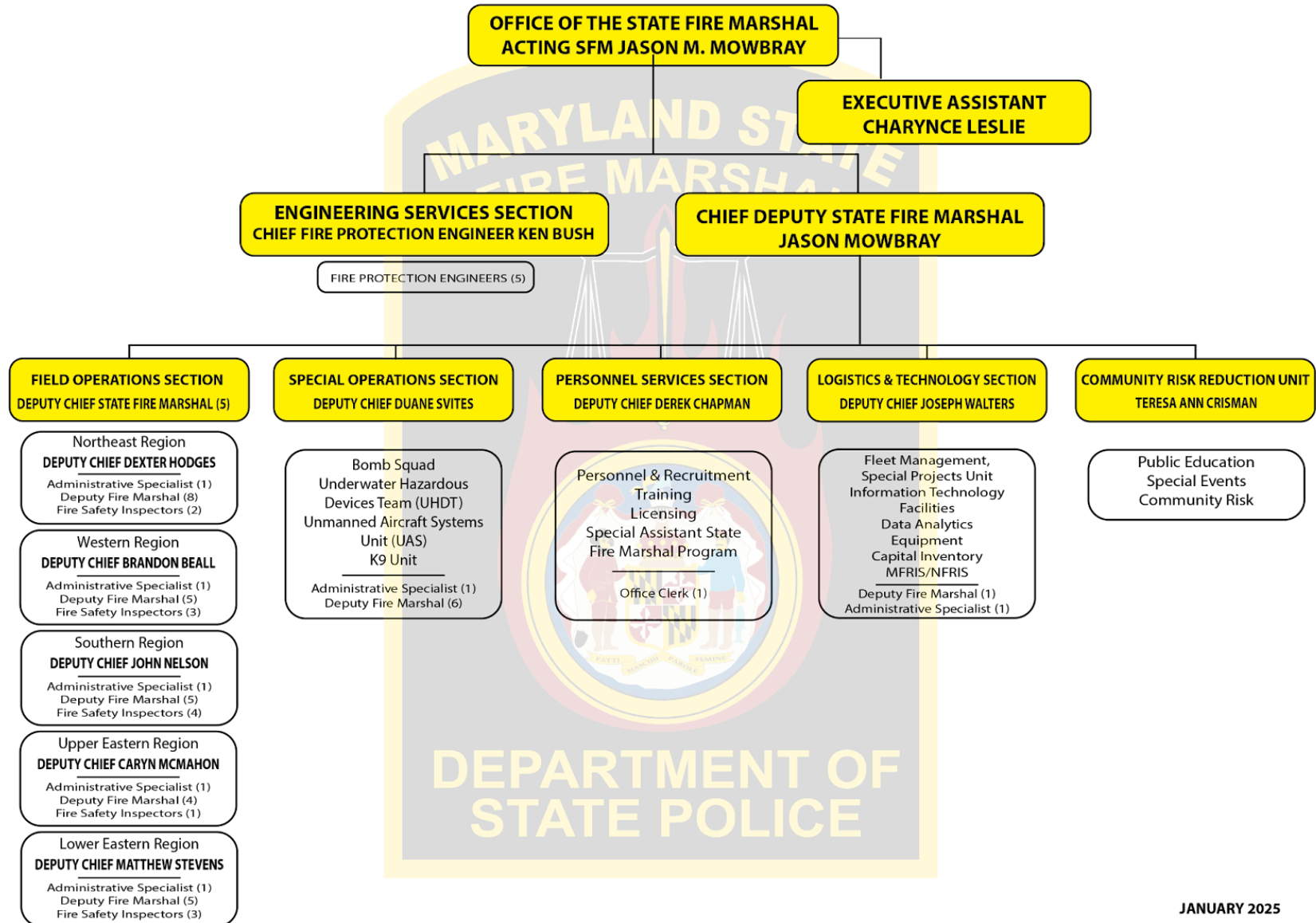
The Bomb Squad was created in the 1970s by Fire Marshal James C. Robertson. The K9 Unit joined them in 1988 at the behest of Chief Deputy John H. Farrell and approved by then-Fire Marshal Rocco J. Gabriele. At the time, it was one of only two accelerant detection K9 programs in the nation. Maryland would become the first state to implement this program statewide. In 2011, the Underwater Hazardous Device Team was created. This specialized team allows the agency to respond to and manage explosive incidents in or around Maryland's waterways and shipping industry. Bomb Technicians assigned to the maritime explosive response team receive advanced training in underwater diving, boating, and tactical operations. Lastly, in 2014, the agency's Unmanned Aircraft Systems team began. This team was one of the first in Maryland and grew significantly with the assistance of the Maryland State Police



## ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



### Office of the Maryland State Fire Marshal Maryland Department of State Police



## EVALUATING TODAY

The OSFM constantly assesses its status. To be as efficient and effective as possible, the agency must acknowledge its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (S.W.O.T.). Annually, senior leaders of the OSFM meet to review this plan. Below is the current analysis for the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
<b>I N T E R N A L</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cohesive, collaborative, multi-disciplined, mission-focused work environment</li> <li>• Nationally recognized for special operations, investigations, engineering, and fire prevention.</li> <li>• Technically Skilled Workforce (Subject Matter Experts)</li> <li>• Agency arson case closure rate</li> <li>• Bomb Squad &amp; Underwater Hazardous Device Team (capability and expertise)</li> <li>• K-9 Program (capability and expertise)</li> <li>• Fire Protection Engineering Program</li> <li>• Improved Employee Health and Safety Program</li> <li>• Statewide Jurisdiction</li> <li>• Statewide and national committee membership</li> <li>• Reliable and trusted fire prevention program relationships (state and national)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of software solutions (report writing/records management)</li> <li>• Outdated policy updates</li> <li>• Defined and undefined backlog and unassigned statewide engineering services/plan review Public Safety Article, Titles 6, 9, 10, and 11 and corresponding State Fire Prevention Code</li> <li>• Defined and undefined backlog and unassigned inspection services (places of assembly, schools, theaters, churches, and all institutions owned by State, county, and municipality government) Public Safety Article, Titles 6, 9, 10, and 11 and corresponding State Fire Prevention Code</li> <li>• Inconsistent and unreliable vehicle fleet funding (Fleet Sustainability and Replenishment Plan not on schedule)</li> <li>• Inconsistent and unreliable operational equipment maintenance and replenishment funding</li> <li>• Special Operations Command Sustainability Plan is underfunded and not on schedule</li> <li>• Lack of continuity of operations plan</li> <li>• Lack of competitive salaries for civilian technical staff (Fire Protection Engineer, Fire Safety Inspectors)</li> <li>• Lack of administrative support for critical administrative functions (policy, licensing, data analysis, auditing, PIO)</li> <li>• Lack of first-line investigative supervision.</li> <li>• Underutilized resources and underdeveloped relationships at the Department of State Police level</li> </ul>





		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underutilized potential and expertise of the Fire Safety Inspector classification</li> <li>• Recruitment of Fire Protection Engineering staff</li> <li>• Inadequate and deteriorating statewide OSFM dedicated office space</li> <li>• Lack of communication agency-wide</li> <li>• Lack of a statewide community risk reduction plan</li> <li>• Lack of dedicated statewide explosive disposal facility</li> <li>• The budget lacks the necessary detail to account for/support essential agency functions</li> <li>• Fail to conduct quality assurance audits of delegated investigative and inspection services</li> </ul>
	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<b>E X T E R N A L</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juvenile Justice Reform / Juvenile Firesetters Program</li> <li>• Partnerships with Allied state and national law enforcement and fire service agencies</li> <li>• Support local county and municipal agencies through the Task Force Officer program</li> <li>• Grant opportunities for Special Operation Command</li> <li>• Partnerships with state and national community outreach &amp; risk reduction entities</li> <li>• Opportunity to educate the public on preventing fire, reducing injuries and death from fire, and being vigilant to identify criminal firesetting.</li> <li>• Bring resources and expertise from state and national committee memberships to Maryland to help in achieving agency goals and objectives</li> <li>• Utilize statewide jurisdiction to enhance the delivery of statewide investigation, fire prevention, plan review &amp; inspection services.</li> <li>• Use the recognition of our Fire Protection Engineering program to recruit new engineers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to define and properly account for investigative, licensing, inspection, and plan review services rendered to the public</li> <li>• Lack of interoperability and information sharing nationally and within the State</li> <li>• Unable to complete required statewide engineering services/plan review pursuant to Public Safety Article, Titles 6, 9, 10, and 11 and corresponding State Fire Prevention Code</li> <li>• Unable to complete required statewide inspection services (places of assembly, schools, theaters, churches, and all institutions owned by State, county, and municipality government) pursuant to Public Safety Article, Titles 6, 9, 10, and 11 and corresponding State Fire Prevention Code</li> <li>• Unable to keep employees safe and mitigate the threat of carcinogen exposure</li> <li>• Unable to respond to critical incidents with required specialized equipment</li> <li>• Unable to provide equitable statewide fire prevention, engineering and inspection, investigation, and special operations services</li> </ul>



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Office of the State Fire Marshal is a diverse public safety agency with roles in law enforcement, fire service, and the regulatory industry, serving all of those who live, work, and visit the State. As such, the agency's role in the community is very dynamic. Community needs differ between urban and suburban areas. Service needs differ as the climate and topography change across our great State. The agency must do its very best to meet all of these needs. To safeguard the mission of "ensuring that Maryland is a safe place to live, work, and visit," the agency has created the following goals.

### Goals:

- **Strategic Goal # 1**

Prevent and investigate fire and explosive-related incidents while supporting allied public safety agencies.



- **Strategic Goal # 2**

Enhance the safety of all Marylanders and visitors to our State by the enforcement of laws, regulations, and requirements pertaining to:

- ❖ The prevention of fire
- ❖ Explosives, combustibles, and other dangerous articles
- ❖ Installation of equipment intended to control, detect, or extinguish fire
- ❖ The suppression of arson

- **Strategic Goal # 3**

Support citizens and the communities in which they live by the implementation of fire safety programs and assistance in fire prevention matters.

- **Strategic Goal # 4**

Enhance the safety of all who work and visit Maryland's State property by:

- ❖ Developing fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures for State property
- ❖ Providing fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures to State employees

- **Strategic Goal # 5**

Ensure the safety and quality of fire and explosive-related industry professionals through the issuance of permits and licenses.

- **Strategic Goal # 6**

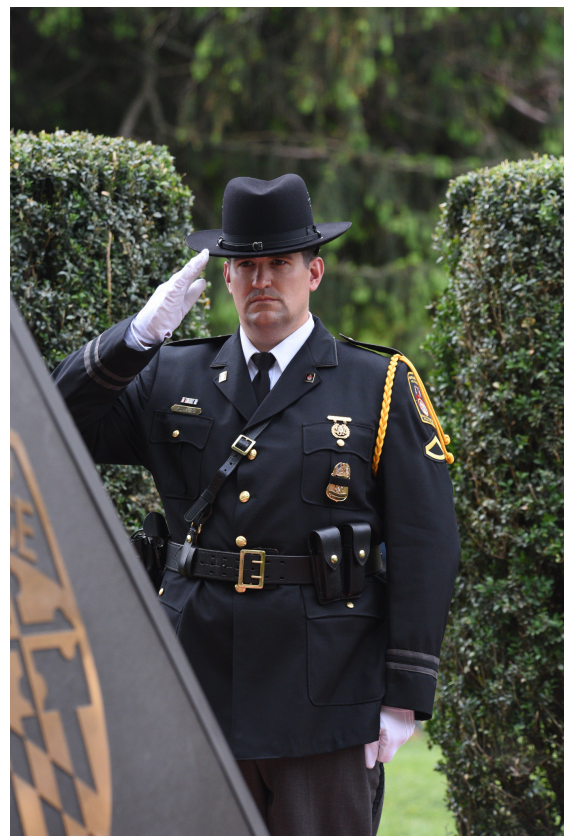
Develop an efficient and effective workforce.

Every member of the agency is responsible for working toward these goals. Every deputy, inspector, engineer, and administrative employee will strive to make a difference in supporting these goals. Every investigation, inspection, plan review, and permit and license issuance will support these goals. The agency will strive to work as one cohesive unit to serve the citizens and visitors of our great State.

A management accountability system has been implemented to measure the progress and efforts in achieving these goals. As part of this process, the State Fire Marshal, Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal, and Chief Fire Protection Engineer meet with Deputy Chief State Fire Marshals and specialty units to evaluate progress and efficiency in a supportive but structured format.







## STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, AND COURSES OF ACTION

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### STRATEGIC GOAL # 1:

Prevent and investigate fire and explosive-related incidents while supporting allied public safety agencies.

### OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION:

The Office of the State Fire Marshal recognizes that it is uniquely positioned to prevent and investigate fire and explosive-related incidents. Having statewide authority allows deputies, inspectors, and engineers to move across jurisdictional boundaries without hampering an inspection or investigation. As such, the Office of the State Fire Marshal focuses on inter-jurisdictional (county-to-county) and cross-border (state-to-state) prevention and investigation. The Agency will use several strategies, units, and technologies to help achieve this goal; they include:

1. Manage and enforce memorandums of understanding with local and federal partners relating to joint investigations for fires and/or explosions involving fatalities, large property losses, or multiple injuries to ensure:
  - 1.1. Comprehensiveness
    - 1.1.1. Purpose of the partnership
    - 1.1.2. Goals of each party
    - 1.1.3. Duties of each party
    - 1.1.4. Timeline
    - 1.1.5. Confidentiality clause
    - 1.1.6. Process for resolving disputes
  - 1.2. Maximum resource sharing and gap analysis
  - 1.3. Annual performance evaluations
  - 1.4. Currency
2. Offer/provide/and sponsor professional and technical training opportunities statewide in:
  - 2.1. Fire investigation
  - 2.2. Arson and criminal investigations
  - 2.3. Explosive recognition, response, and mitigation
  - 2.4. Code enforcement
  - 2.5. Fire prevention and risk reduction



3. Utilizing a regional command structure and professional accountability protocols, direct OSFM personnel in enforcing State laws in the field of fire and explosive investigation, enforcement of the State Fire Prevention Code, and public fire safety education and prevention in every Maryland county.
4. Act as the State's liaison for all federal and state explosive-related special programs to include:
  - 4.1.1. Bomb Squad operations
  - 4.1.2. Underwater Hazardous Device Team
  - 4.1.3. Accelerant and explosive canine teams
  - 4.1.4. Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Program
  - 4.1.5. Statewide illegal firework/explosives collection, mitigation, and disposal Program
5. Oversee, manage, and/or coordinate the Maryland Fire Incident Reporting System, State fire death reporting, and the U.S. Fire Administration National Incident Reporting System.
6. Provide community risk reduction and public fire safety and education programs statewide.
7. Provide professional engineering assistance on the investigation of fires involving loss of life or major property damage.

## **STRATEGIC GOAL # 2:**

Enhance the safety of all Marylanders and visitors to our State by the enforcement of laws, regulations, and requirements pertaining to:

- ❖ The prevention of fire
- ❖ Explosives, combustibles, and other dangerous articles
- ❖ Installation of equipment intended to control, detect, or extinguish fire
- ❖ The suppression of arson

## **OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION:**

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) provides life safety and fire prevention services through code enforcement. This code enforcement is performed by a dedicated staff of civilians, including fire safety inspectors, fire protection engineers, and deputy state fire marshals. The Agency accomplishes these objectives by:

1. Providing updated and required equipment to fire protection engineers to provide code interpretation, consultation, and fire protection engineering assistance to architects,





engineers, and other design professionals throughout the State during design and pre-construction phases.

2. Providing supplemental staffing, workload analysis, and re-distribution/re-prioritization plans to support the fire protection engineers in reviewing and approving designs for new construction and existing building modifications for compliance with Maryland law and the State Fire Prevention Code statewide.
3. Providing updated and required equipment and technology to fire protection engineers to review and approve designs for new and modified fire and life safety systems, including fire alarms, fire suppression systems, and smoke management systems for compliance with Maryland law and the State Fire Prevention Code statewide.
4. Developing a reliable methodology and system that identifies, prioritizes, and tracks all facilities/structures in Maryland that are required to be inspected by OSFM fire safety inspectors and deputies.
5. Providing supplemental staffing, workload analysis, and re-distribution/re-prioritization plans to support fire safety inspectors and deputies to ensure public safety through:
  - 5.1. conducting fire safety inspections of
    - 5.1.1. new and existing structures,
    - 5.1.2. properties owned by the State, county, or municipal corporation,
    - 5.1.3. places of public assembly, such as bars and restaurants, exhibition halls, commercial and mercantile buildings, hotels and motels, schools, theaters, and churches.
    - 5.1.4. complaints from concerned citizens and patrons of public buildings.
    - 5.1.5. random spot inspections of existing locations to ensure long-term compliance.
  - 5.2. building construction materials and techniques.
  - 5.3. acceptance testing of fire protection and life safety designs, systems, and features.

### **Strategic Goal # 3**

Support citizens and the communities in which they live by implementing fire safety programs and assistance in fire prevention matters.

#### **OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION:**

1. Establish a Public Education and Risk Reduction Officer position. This position reports to the Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal and represents the State Fire Marshal on national



and State fire prevention associations and is responsible for providing community risk reduction and public fire safety and education programs statewide.

2. Adopt the U. S. Fire Administration's Public Fire Education Planning process and develop a statewide plan that supports communities in implementing an organized and structured approach to designing, implementing, and evaluating community safety education programs.
3. Utilize the regional command structure, and direct OSFM personnel to work in coordination with the OSFM Public Education and Risk Reduction Officer to implement the OSFM's Public Fire and Life Safety Education Plan of Action.
4. Establish and implement a statewide youth fire setter intervention program.

#### **Strategic Goal # 4**

Enhance the safety of all who work and visit Maryland's State property by:

1. Developing fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures for State property.
2. Providing fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures to State employees.
3. Requiring records of fire drills or other exercises related to fire safety and emergency evacuation procedures conducted on the property.

#### **OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION:**

1. Evaluate the existing OSFM program to ensure compliance with Public Safety Article 6-305(d)(1) to ensure adequacy and appropriate assignment within the agency.
2. Develop, implement, and monitor open and transparent procedures and lines of communication with State government partners relating to program compliance.
3. Develop and implement a line inspection program that audits statewide compliance with Public Safety Article 6-305(d)(1)

#### **Strategic Goal # 5**

Ensure the safety and quality of fire and explosive-related industry professionals through the issuance of permits and licenses.

#### **OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION:**

1. Complete the Agency's staffing study and workload distribution analysis, which includes reviewing each of the 7 licensing and permitting programs to determine adequacy,



- competency, compliance with State laws and regulations, service gaps, and/or opportunities for improvement.
2. Ensure each license and permit program is utilizing the State's portal properly and to its fullest capability.
  3. Implement the recommendations from the workload analysis and staffing study to ensure the competent delivery of OSFM services relating to the testing, licensing, and regulation of:
    - 3.1. non-governmental electrical inspectors,
    - 3.2. fire extinguisher sales and service,
    - 3.3. non-water-based fire extinguisher systems,
    - 3.4. fire sprinkler contractors,
    - 3.5. testing laboratories,
    - 3.6. firework discharge, manufacturing, distribution & wholesale, and display shooters.
    - 3.7. explosive licenses to manufacture, deal, and possess.

## **Strategic Goal # 6**

Develop an efficient and effective workforce.

### **OBJECTIVES AND COURSES OF ACTION:**

1. Continue to work with the Department of State Police to adopt and implement the recommendations made in the Maryland Office of the State Fire Marshal Staffing Adequacy Study & Workload Distribution Assessment submitted in April 2024.
2. Continue with Senior Workshops in CY2025 to develop trust, competency, and a collaborative work environment capable of meeting challenges and resolving problems with sustainable solutions.
  - 2.1. Complete Report Management System software procurement.
  - 2.2. Work more closely with the MSP Planning & Research Division to adopt a reliable and updated set of agency policies and procedures.
  - 2.3. Implement all recommendations outlined in the OSFM Fleet Sustainability and Replenishment Plan.
  - 2.4. Complete and implement all recommendations outlined in the OSFM Specialty Response Vehicle plan of action.
  - 2.5. Use the OSFM's Assistant and Special Assistant State Fire Marshal Delegation Program more effectively.



## CONCLUSION

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Members of the Office of the State Fire Marshal have been serving the citizens of Maryland for the past 130 years. Fire prevention, investigations, and technology have changed dramatically during this time. In order to be effective, the agency must adjust to these changes. A strategic plan is only successful when it is relevant. This is a living and breathing document. The OSFM acknowledges this plan is a living document and must be periodically reviewed. We will review this plan annually to ensure our agency remains on track with the stated objectives and goals.

To learn more about the Office of the State Fire Marshal, please visit us on social media:

<https://mdsp.maryland.gov/firemarshal>

<https://facebook.com/MarylandStateFireMarshal>

<https://x.com/MarylandOSFM>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/maryland-osfm>

