

# South Metro Fire-Rescue Pre-Planning Alignment

## PRE-FIRE PLANNING CASE STUDY

### The Opportunity

Beginning with the merger of two fire departments and continuing with its merger with a third, South Metro Fire Rescue recognized the importance of integrating its preplan process across multiple divisions in the “new” department.

### The Action

A “ground up” approach to innovation led South Metro Fire Rescue to develop a new pre-planning process and work to align the program across the department’s divisions and bureaus.

### The Outcome

In rolling out a new pre-planning template and identifying the opportunity to use an iOS solution to put information into the hands of crews, South Metro Fire Rescue demonstrates a commitment to development, feedback, and integration in its pre-planning process.

### Introduction

When the US Airways website “went dark” at midnight on October 17, 2015, its merger with American Airlines was complete – a moment two years in the making (09/25/2015, Washington Post). The “on paper” merger of assets and debt occurred nearly immediately, while in the ensuing two years policies were changed, frequent flyer programs were combined, and US Airways social media was eliminated.

While the merger of fire departments certainly does not affect the number of people that an airline merger does, the need for seamless integration is similar, because any “hiccups,” challenges, or failures can erode trust, both within the department itself, and within the community it serves. It is notable that South Metro Fire Rescue recognized potential challenges

#### DEPARTMENT INFO

SOUTH METRO FIRE RESCUE

POPULATION SERVED: 561,000

TOTAL UNIFORMED PERSONNEL: 628

TOTAL CIVILIAN PERSONNEL: 187

FIRE STATIONS: 30

ISO CLASS: I

GOVERNANCE: SPECIAL DISTRICT

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EMS SERVICE PROVIDED: ALS  
TRANSPORT

ANNUAL BUDGET: \$176 MILLION

with integrating multiple previously independent programs during its mergers over the past 5 years and worked deliberately at modifying these to align with the expectations of the members of the now-combined agency.

## **The Opportunity**

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In 2018, South Metro Fire Rescue merged with Cunningham Fire, and in 2019 the combined department merged again with Littleton Fire. Each department had multiple stand-alone programs that the new executive leadership team realized might prove challenging to integrate. In some cases, instead of using one of the existing department's programs, South Metro's executive team supported and encouraged its members' desire to create new programs from the "bottom up," one of the most prominent being company-level pre-planning.

Beginning with the decision to develop a new pre-planning process, staff and other resources have been dedicated to ensuring a successful outcome. South Metro saw that this success would be built on consistent feedback during the development and implementation phase and that training members on the new program was important to members' belief and trust in a new process, whose overarching goals were to "implement improvements, leverage new technologies, and build a bridge between the fire marshal's office and operations."

## **The Action**

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After deciding to re-work pre-planning, South Metro Fire Rescue quickly realized that to reach a point of comprehensive integration, the department needed to create a dedicated position, moving beyond a "pre-plan coordinator" who had been performing this work in addition to their regular duties. In 2019, the department hired a pre-plan manager, who then created a research and development (R&D) group to harness other members' interest and expertise.

The first task was to review and provide feedback on:

- fact sheets (occupancy data sheets)
- building layout template
- procedures
- MDC layouts
- general program overview.

R&D was given a list of questions that eventually went to 5 rounds of questions/feedback. The result of that exchange and data gathering was the "unified pre-plan program," which continues to be further refined.

## Unified Preplan Research & Development

### ***Segment 1 - Program Overview & New Template Feedback***

#### **General Comments Overview**

- Processing & Updating Preplan Flow Suggestion; Would like the changes to go back to the Station Captain before going to the Preplan Coordinator for QA. **Valid concern being the Captains are responsible for their station preplans. (Flow Process Step Change Noted)**

#### **General Comments on Template Design Concept**

- Great concept, clean, like the Blue Card format.
- Building Information Symbol has necessary information in clean format.
- Text box is essential, vital and obvious spot for early arriving unit information. Space for pertinent information at the top of the template for first in engine use.
- North Indicator Changes; **See template attached for consensus on location and size determined.**

Members and staff later researched vendor-provided software solutions in:

- AutoCAD
- GIS
- Custom applications
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party/off-the-shelf preplan products

This was focused on those unknown elements, basically asking the question: what else is out there which we can modify, use, or integrate?

Throughout the development process, South Metro Fire Rescue ensured coordination between divisions and bureaus, including operations, the fire marshal's office, technical services and strategic services. The work and the goal are end-user driven, a point the department makes clear: this is a tool for use by company and chief officers as they respond and then operate on scene. Because of this priority, the department has continued work on developing an iOS application, South Metro Emergency Contact and CAD [SPECC], that provides identical pre-plan information in department-assigned mobile devices and is linked from an incident list.

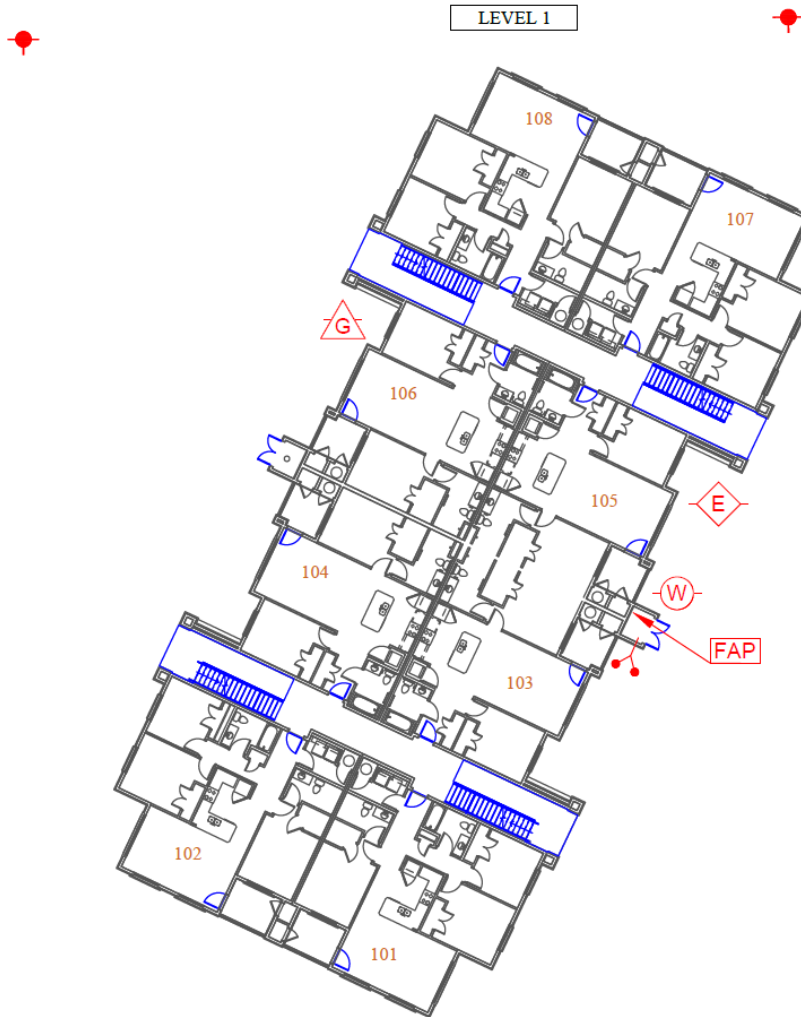
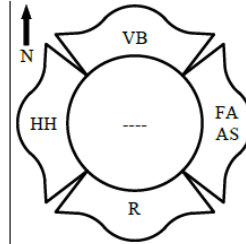
## **The Outcome**

Months of work in 2019 resulted in a January 2020 roll-out of an integrated pre-plan program, made available on South Metro's mobile computers.

# SOUTH METRO FIRE-RESCUE - PRE-PLANNING ALIGNMENT

## PRE-FIRE PLANNING CASE STUDY

ADDRESS: ADDRESS  
 SIZE: **LARGE** STORIES: 3 OCCUPANCY: **MULTI-FAMILY**  
 BASEMENT: **NO** FLOORS: **CONCRETE /** WALLS: **WOOD**  
 ROOF: **WOOD** WOOD  
 QUICK RESPONSE INFO/TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:



STATION: 46	PREPLAN ID: 34503	MAP NUMBER: AA35D	DATE LAST UPDATED: 2/7/2022
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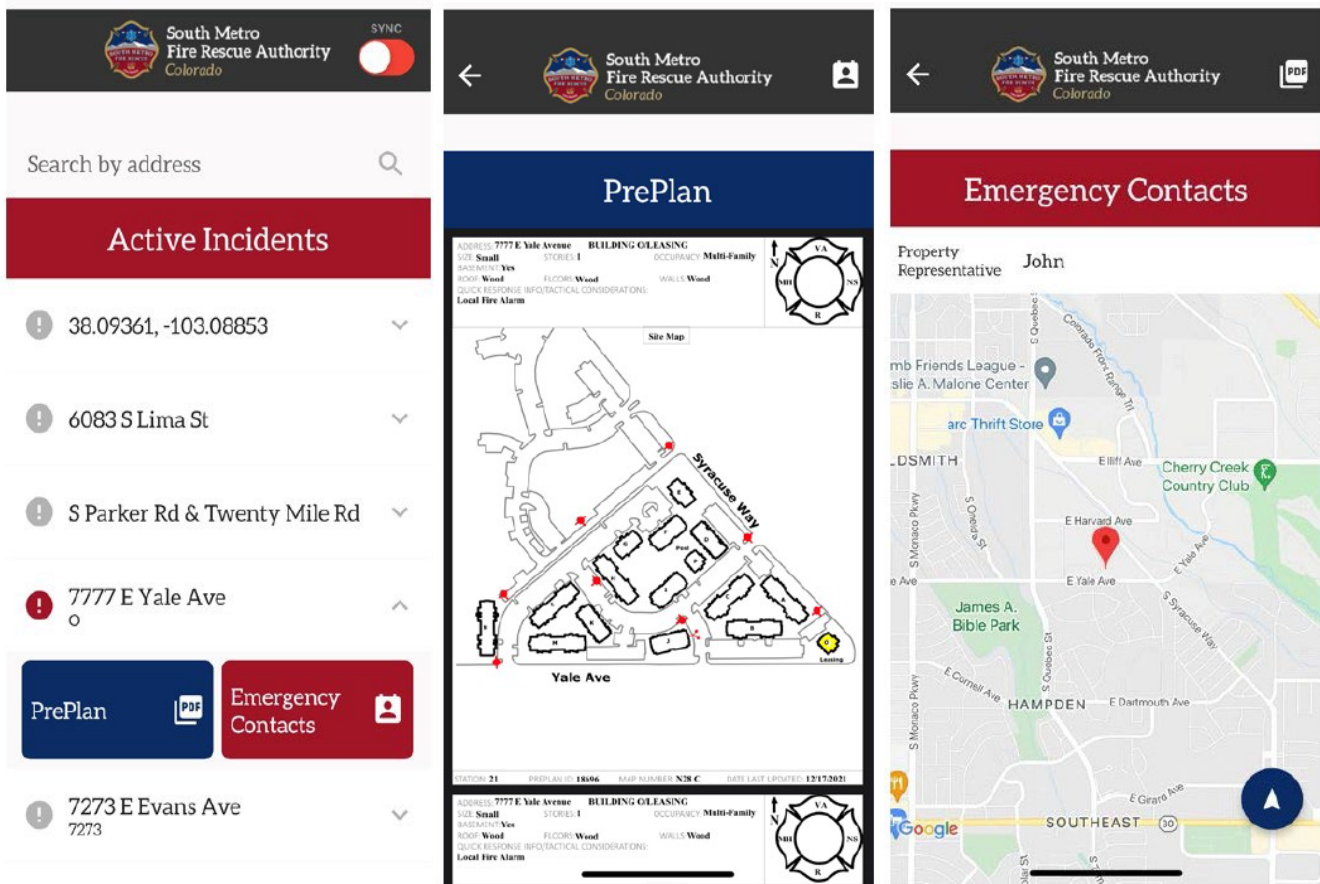
Of note in the example is the integration of the building layout and a previously used “fact sheet” of department-determined information. The template for building layouts:

- Follows Blue Card Incident Command System (ICS) format
- Follows NFPA symbol standards
- Uses input from pre-plan staff and operations to determine building construction, based on “anticipated building structural components reaction to fire,” *rather than from a fire code perspective.*

# SOUTH METRO FIRE-RESCUE - PRE-PLANNING ALIGNMENT

## PRE-FIRE PLANNING CASE STUDY

South Metro Fire didn't stop there, instead choosing to harness momentum and integrate additional data and information streams into its iOS SPECC application, which allows users to populate critical information gathered when crews conduct pre-plans during the year. Within the application, which provides "better" access to pre-plans and emergency contacts, users can search by address, or by selecting the address of an active incident. By doing so pre-plan and emergency contact boxes/buttons appear, which link to any information available.



With iOS integration working well, the department will soon shift to scheduling pre-plan visits via a GIS-based application system as well. Stations will be assigned pre-plans depending on a building's hazard classification and upon completion will link back to the crew's approval of the existing plan or will show changes on a copy of the existing pre-plan.

While certainly not the last improvement to the pre-planning process, with its phased approach linked to an overall strategy, South Metro Fire Rescue demonstrates that merging three fire departments over the course of three years can be a driver for change and true innovation.



## Tips for Replication

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- *Allow consistent feedback.* As much as possible provide time and space for constructive feedback that leads to improvement.
- *Hire and/or implement staff changes as soon as possible.* While many departments have members and staff with varying areas of interest, a ground-up innovation may require personnel with the right expertise, additional software, outside consultants and training. Any existing gaps should be identified and corrected, as these challenges might impact success.
- *Work through any potentially costly changes using a cost/benefit analysis.* Regardless of existing and/or ongoing support from a department's leadership, a phased approach to implementation allows for cost/benefits to be determined and decided on independent of a long-term strategy.
- *Remain open and embrace change.* Continue to identify additional technology solutions that align with the overall strategy. Have short and long-term outlooks for your program and process.

## About CPSE and Metro

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[www.cpse.org](http://www.cpse.org)



The Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association brings fire service professionals together to address the challenges of large-jurisdiction departments across the globe serving as an educational resource and promoting best practices for members to follow.

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CPSE and Metro have partnered to develop this series highlighting proven practices of Metro departments accredited by CPSE's Commission on Fire Accreditation International.