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Clackamas County fire district seeks community input

New strategic plan will be a "living document" that involves stakeholders' viewpoints

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MILWAUKIE -- Clackamas County Fire District No. 1 wants to hear from you.

The district, which serves nearly 200,000 residents in a nearly 200-square-mile area from Milwaukie and Oregon City to Happy Valley and Carver, is developing its first new strategic plan since 2003.

And unlike that plan, which was labeled a "Five-Year Strategic Plan," this one won't focus on a time period.

"This will be a living document," Fire Chief Ed Kirchhofer said. "Most five-year plans sit on a shelf for five years. What we want to do is come up with a document that will change and evolve over time."

Since the spring, Kirchhofer has been meeting with elected officials, citizens who have been assisted by the district, business leaders and others in an effort to take stock of where the district is and where it's going.

"We've been trying to hear from as many stakeholders as possible," Kirchhofer said. "It's important to hear from people what they think works and where they think we need work."

As part of that effort, Kirchhofer has two days of internal meetings coming with district staff members.

"We want to hear from everyone," he said. "We want to hear from the Generation Xers and from the old folks who are sitting around in administration."

The district is conducting an online survey to help it develop its new strategic plan. It can be accessed on the district Web site at clackamasfire.com. Kirchhofer said that one issue facing the department is clear: Money.

"We're basically a one-spoke agency," Kirchhofer said. "We get our money from property taxes, and it limits how we staff and what services we provide. The goal is to make sure that we're doing as much as we can with what we have."

Part of that involves dealing with homeland security, an issue that is still a relatively new one.

"Before September 11, homeland security was not something people really thought about," Kirchhofer said. "Now, it is something that is real, something that we have to think about every day,"

While the district has expanded recently, annexing Oregon City earlier this year, Kirchhofer said there are no further plans to expand.

"We're not looking to get bigger," he said. "We are looking to get better."