Program Title: Building Community Risk Reduction Programs Statewide – Intentional & Strategic

I. Formative Evaluation – Planning

South Carolina prioritizes community risk reduction (CRR) by developing this uniquely intentional and strategic program. Departments meet particular goals to receive statewide recognition. The state's historically high ranking in the number of fire-related deaths per state led to the creation of this program. S.C. State Fire's CRR team is diverse with professional backgrounds in and outside the fire service. Unified efforts in support of the mission statement by the S.C. Fire Fighters' Association, S.C. State Association of Fire Chiefs, and S.C. Fire Marshal Association, together with S.C. State Fire, are supported and delivered by representatives. Using local, state, and national level engagement of community stakeholders, utilization of established CRR national training programs, county-level meetings, and statewide award recognition, the desired result of assisting in creating CRR plans for their jurisdictions has helped develop the framework.

II. Process Evaluation – Implementation

The program launched in 2017 when 46 counties held meetings with local fire service leaders and community stakeholders discussing the historic fire problem. Initially, we established this as our Phase One meeting. As we began implementing the program, we learned several valuable lessons. For example, the established goals were too complex, and reporting the goals was more difficult than anticipated. While having success with departments statewide participating and departments completing the goal requirements for designation in 2019, coaching and counseling took much of our time. This unanticipated method limited the ability to conduct more outreach statewide. The goals established needed a clear path of understanding to make implementation and year-end reporting more straightforward.

It was also a priority to find goals that all fire departments could accomplish – from paid to volunteer and from quiet to the busiest city. This need prompted our decision to recreate Phase one of the program. In 2020, we started this by providing a 30-minute orientation briefing. This free virtual meeting did not require registration and provided a clear program overview. This same briefing is mandatory; we distribute any State alarm resources, providing necessary information on alarm accountability, documentation, and education during a home safety visit. The briefing includes: history, mission, organizational partners, messaging, established goals, and timeline to become a designated Fire Safe Community. This informational session ends with a tour of the program-specific webpage (firesafe.sc.gov), providing a "one-stop-shop" to mission statement, goals, web-based dashboard tools, educational messaging, and offerings needed to become designated.

Phase Two is the next step; we set intentional goals to develop the local CRR program by putting our words into action. We use Community Goals, itemized on a single document, to provide a clear path to a better understanding of building community risk reduction programs in communities across the state. Departments must meet their goals within the calendar year. Goals can change each year, but they are strategically designed to build the local CRR program, which includes: promoting consistent messaging at events and on media platforms, how and why we need to engage community partners, tracking goal progress, attending specific classes in CRR (including national partner coursework on conducting risk assessments), and consistent NFIRS reporting. In addition, we have created specific tools to aid departments, including a GIS dashboard to identify community risk priorities and a State data dashboard for

regular NFIRS quality checks. These tools allow departments to see a snapshot of high-risk areas and the quality of their data.

Finally, departments enter Phase Three, the award cycle. Using GIS Survey 123, departments report on their goal accomplishments. It is notable that while currently, we use this method for reporting, we are developing our plans, including using this GIS technology, to integrate data for better tracking and accountability. We have created this survey to follow the same order as the goals for easier reporting and allow 30 days to make the final submission. Evaluations determine satisfaction of completion to receive the Community Designation. Customized signs, paid by the founding fire service organization, are created to denote the success of these departments at the annual Fire-Rescue summer conference. This well-attended conference allows fire leadership, from the original partners to present recipients, to be recognized and celebrated in front of their peers.

III. **Impact Evaluation – Short-Term Results**

In the first year of designation (2019), 57 departments met goals and received awards. In addition, these departments reported 344 engaged community partners, more than 250,000 educated citizens, and CRR-related education went to more than 600 fire department staff members.

The 2020 records report 38 of the state's 46 counties had at least one department participating in the program, a 40 percent increase in Fire Safe Designated Communities. Fire departments reported their community partners donated more than 9,000 smoke alarms in a pandemic year. Additionally, CRR education provided on a state level nearly tripled. State NFIRS compliance in 2020 continued to increase, with a historic 90% of departments reporting some data in the year. The most recent census reports show that the state's population grows while fire-related fatalities average around 100 deaths annually. Residential fire-related deaths specifically have seen a decline. Over the last decade, we have seen our state go from the top 5 to the top 15 deadliest states in the country.

IV. **Outcome Evaluation – Long-Term Results**

The momentum for the Fire Safe S.C. program continues to show responsive data. Although in a year of a pandemic, fire trends have increased nationally, making overall positive statistics difficult to measure in fire injury/fatality data. This program proves successful in the development of local Community Risk Reduction. Evidence of positive results is department participation, CRR specific coursework attendance, alarm resource installations and documentation, partnership engagement, and NFIRS data quality improvement. Using our state model accompanied by national models, we continue to implement these adaptive measures proven to reduce fire and other life safety risks.