

GRASSY POND FIRE DEPARTMENT

Master Plan

This document is a guide for the planning, development and implementation of those specific policies, objectives, and capital improvements required for the Fire Department to be adequately prepared to provide the level of operational service necessary to meet its' continually evolving mission requirements.



Gladden Smoke
Chief



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GRASSY POND FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Introduction & Purpose

The Chief and Assistant Chief together with the Board of Directors (of the Grassy Pond Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.) have prepared this document so that it might guide the Department and the Board of Fire Commissioners (of the Grassy Pond Fire District) as they endeavor to provide for the continued protection of life and property within their jurisdiction. This plan was originally developed as the Long range Plan in 2008, then revised and updated in 2015 and revamped as the Master Plan in 2020. It is the recommendation of the authors that it be reviewed by the Chief Officers, Board of Directors, and Commissioners annually, and revised or updated as necessary but generally at least every 5 years. This plan is intended to forecast the needed action for a period of 20 years, and at each 5 year revision should be extended by the same.

In developing this plan, the authors considered many factors, including the purpose of the Fire Department as defined in Article II, Section 1 of the original corporate bylaws:

“The aims of the corporation shall be to provide fire protection for life and property within the general area served by the corporation and more specifically to procure all necessary fire fighting equipment and accessories and to train personnel in the use of such equipment so as to provide fire protection within the rural area of Cherokee County, South Carolina; the corporation may also purchase life saving equipment and train personnel in life saving and/or rescue operations.”

As well as an Ordinance by Cherokee County Council dated June 23, 1992 creating the Grassy Pond Fire District and empowering a Board of Fire Commissioners; which among other duties was authorized:

“To negotiate and recommend annual service contracts, agreements, grants and the like for the provision and/or improvement of fire protection and emergency services within the District and to enter into said agreements and/or carry out related acts necessary and incidental to accomplish the intended purposes, the foregoing being subject to the consent and approval of County Council.”

As additional guidance and in preparation of the specific objectives of the plan, the authors considered numerous operational and other goals, as discussed in the subsequent section.

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Part I: Strategic Goals

The Board of Directors together with the Chief and Asst. Chief have identified a number of departmental goals, covering a range of topics including operational readiness, capital improvements, administrative, financial, and other issues. This section outlines these and other goals which the plan must specifically address. The goals are generally based on the purpose and duties of the Fire Department as discussed in the Introduction & Purpose. Goals are identified by category as follows:

1. FACILITY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

- A. Provide secure and comfortable facilities for the equipment, training, and operations of the Fire Department.
- B. Improve the public perception of the department by making the facility comfortable and accessible to all members of the community.
- C. Maintain, repair, and improve the existing facilities so as to preserve the shared community history and character of the facility.
- D. Construct and/or renovate facilities to allow for a more effective and efficient response and adequate for expected apparatus and equipment needs so as to improve service to the entire Fire District.

2. FINANCIAL STABILITY

- A. Improve management of day to day operations through continuous maintenance and process institutionalization of the purchasing and accounting system.
- B. Secure the financial resources necessary for sustainable operation of the Corporation.
- C. Develop funding options to support expanded operational capabilities to include new mission areas under an “all hazards” strategy.

3. APPARATUS & EQUIPMENT

- A. Maintain and/or extend the life cycle of existing equipment through diligent maintenance policies, programs, and practices.
- B. Replace substandard, worn, used, or unsafe equipment as soon as possible and on a continuous basis to bring the department into compliance with NFPA, OSHA, ANSI, and any other recognized standard or code.
- C. Expand operational capabilities (including but not limited to fire suppression, communication, technical rescue, and hazardous materials resources) while maximizing the use of new and emerging technologies to enhance firefighter safety and efficiency.

4. TRAINING & STAFFING

- A. Establish minimum training and experience requirements.
- B. Expand training to include courses related to community risk reduction.
- C. Expand department membership and reduce losses through an aggressive recruiting and retention program.
- D. Ensure appropriate response times and crews.
- E. Continue to promote a culture of safety.

5. ORGANIZATION & ADMINISTRATION

- A. Improve safety, efficiency, pride, public perception, and unit cohesion for all operations both emergency and non-emergency.
- B. Review corporate bylaws on a regular basis and revise as necessary to meet organizational needs.
- C. Streamline and institutionalize the indoctrination of new members.

6. PPC CLASSIFICATION REDUCTION

- A. Maintain the Fire Department portion of the ISO Public Protection Classification (PPC™) for the Grassy Pond Fire District.

Part II: Operational Objectives

To meet the strategic goals identified the department has established the following objectives:

1 Facility Capital Improvements

To satisfactorily protect and distribute equipment and apparatus as well as to train members and engage the public it is clearly in the interest of the Fire Department to maintain and make certain improvements and modifications or otherwise expand its' facilities. Since 2020 we have developed preliminary cost estimates and evaluated options for station renovations through internal planning and focus groups as well as 3rd party planning services from architects, engineers, and contractors. Specifically, DP3 Architects was selected through an RFP process and with their select contractors and consulting engineers performed an evaluation of the existing facility and a future needs analysis in order to develop concept renovation plans and estimates. This work was largely based on the stated objectives of the prior versions of this plan as well as their extensive experience in fire station design.

To meet the objectives and with the help of the work by DP3 and others we identified a number of specific needs and actions as follows (not in order of priority):

- 1 Replace the main station roof.
- 2 Replace or renovate the truck bay to accommodate modern fire apparatus to include servicing the units (height to raise the cabs); as well as total bay space adequate for the projected fleet (equivalent to the current fleet with the exception that 1 engine may be replaced by a single rear axle quint or similar aerial apparatus).
- 3 Replace all exterior doors and hardware.
- 4 Replace or upgrade most if not all mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems.
- 5 Replace exterior concrete pad at truck bays.
- 6 Create bunk space for 8 beds (at least 4 double occupancy rooms).
- 7 Renovate kitchen and bath facilities to include shower facilities.
- 8 Create a dedicated decontamination area and separate laundry spaces for PPE and duty clothing/station wear.
- 9 Install exhaust management systems to protect occupied living and office spaces from apparatus.
- 10 Create a dedicated exercise space.

- 11 Upgrade the main station standby generator to a commercial unit and install a standby generator at the substation.
- 12 Create dedicated multifunction hands on training areas.
- 13 Install gutters and exterior drainage as needed to protect foundation and basement from water infiltration and damage.
- 14 Increase office space to provide additional officer workspace.
- 15 Organize, secure, and improve storage areas
- 16 Create/establish a shop/maintenance area.
- 17 Install fire suppression and alarm systems.

In addition to emergency services operational purposes, the Fire Department has historically been a community gathering place. Community events, celebrations, stump meetings, polling, and other public activities have all taken place at the facility over many years but have been discontinued mostly due to safety/access/ and code compliance issues. In concert with the improved operational functionality listed above and in order to provide an adequate level of security and comfort for various events, the capital improvements should also enhance the current facilities for both the members and the public as follows:

- 1 Renovate HVAC system for entire main station.
- 2 Upfit interior finishes.
- 3 Establish a portion of the facility to be used as a shelter during inclement weather.
- 4 Upgrade the auditorium, entrances, and public restrooms for proper building code and ADA compliance to host community and public events.
- 5 Install additional paved parking.

Capital improvements should improve the facilities operationally and define the fire station as a comfortable and accessible community center capable of serving the public in many different capacities.

The capital improvements proposed will improve the facilities operationally and will once again define the fire station as a comfortable and accessible community center capable of serving the people in many different capacities. Furthermore, several of the proposed facility improvements may directly impact the operational capabilities and consequently the ISO PPC Rating.

2 Financial Stability

Financial stability is critical to both the corporate purpose as well as the duties of the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Directors should continue their efforts to improve the management of the day to day financial operations that will improve the ability of the Fire Department to maintain the level of service currently provided. This will be accomplished primarily through quality budgeting and accountable spending. The primary components of which being the continued use of an effective book keeping system and in-house tracking of expenditures as well as continuous maintenance and evaluation of purchasing systems and policies in order to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability. However, to accomplish the ambitious goals in this plan requires aggressive action by both the Board of Directors and the Tax Commission/County Government in order to secure those financial resources necessary to implement the various programs outlined herein.

Such action will include multiple funding streams. We should continue to pursue grants to secure that equipment necessary to carry out the various missions of the department, recognizing the evolving role of the fire service into an all-hazards organization. In addition to grant programs, we believe the long-term financial stability of the department and the other objectives of this plan cannot be implemented without an increased annual operating and capital improvements budget. In order to accomplish these objectives in a timely manner, we believe the department should consider all options for funding. This includes careful consideration and evaluation of a bond issue and/or an increase in the millage rate assessed to real property in the district. Further, the department may wish to consider other avenues as well, such as long-term loans.

Over the last several years we have engaged in multiple discussions and meetings with Tax Commissioners, County Administration, Council Members and legal counsel. The primary focus of these discussions has been the financial well-being and sustainability of the current level of service (operational capability) and critical facility needs.

Apparatus and equipment capital project costs (not including any facility repairs or renovations) are projected at \$1,586,845 (Tanker 31 and 1st Out Engine are projected costs at time of purchase, other estimates are today's dollars and do not include likely price escalations).

Tanker 32 Refurbishment	\$ 200,000
1st Out Engine Replacement	\$ 1,000,000
SCBA Replacement	\$ 140,400
Skid Unit Replacement	\$ 33,275
Radio Replacement	\$ 120,000
Hydraulic Ext. Replacement	\$ 93,170
Total	\$ 1,586,845

With a projected 26-27 income of \$273,000 and in consideration of the above as well as the critical facility needs and O&M Budget of \$223,785 it is clear that the funding model has long been insufficient to complete the objectives of this plan to strengthen the operational capabilities, and is in fact no longer sufficient to sustain the current operations indefinitely. Beginning at least as far back as the 2008 Long-range plan the Fire Department leadership has been advising the county via the Tax Commission that the current level of service was not sustainable without an eventual increase in funding, based on our projections that time is close at hand.

We are continuing to pursue grant funding specifically for hydraulic tool replacement and SCBA replacement, as well as long sot applications for funding of apparatus replacement. However, these items alone even if funded once by grants leave us short of the necessary funds for long term sustainability, indeed the prior successful grant funding for SCBA and hydraulic tools between 2006 and 2008 as well as significant other grants for PPE allowed us to provide the current level of service. With regard to facility needs, shower/bathroom and decon facilities as well as bunk space have become critical needs followed closely in priority by kitchen and mechanical improvements, apparatus bay space, and roof replacement. The facility needs have a direct impact on all operations and personnel recruitment and retention, as such these critical projects must be initiated in the next five years even at the expense of other operational capabilities and apparatus.

To avoid major impacts to operational capabilities and maintain the current level of service, in addition to grant programs, we believe the long-term financial stability of the department and the objectives of this plan cannot be achieved without an increase in the millage rate assessed to real property in the district. In order to maximize the utilization of such an increase, the department should request the County consider working with us to issue bonds, as well as other avenues such as long-term loans. Our preliminary estimates to undertake all of the objectives outlined herein indicate a needed increase from 8 to 24 mils. However, we understand the challenges facing property owners and tax payers and believe with careful management the most critical needs can be completed and the level of service maintained with a more moderate increase to 16 mils. This is an 8 mil increase which for a primary residence a property owner will pay an additional \$32 annually per \$100,000 of value (\$96 for a \$300,000 home). Therefore, we recommend an 8 mil increase to a total tax of 16 mils in order to preserve the existing station and level of service while addressing the most critical facilities and equipment needs.

3 Apparatus & Equipment

Under this objective the Fire Department should endeavor to maintain all current equipment through its predicted life cycle while expanding the capability of the department to operationally meet both current and potential mission requirements. This will require the department to replace numerous pieces and types of equipment over the next 20 years while exploring new options to meet the growing challenges of the firefighting profession as well as the shifting characteristics of the Fire District.

Currently the Fire Department operates 3 engines, 2 tankers, a brush truck, a squad (utility/first responder F250), a 14 foot/20HP aluminum boat, and a special operations/air trailer. The major apparatus contemplated under the current replacement plan below includes the 3 engines and 2 tankers. In addition to maintenance and replacement of existing fleet, the fire department may be required to expand the type and number of apparatus in order to adequately protect all occupancies within the district. To this end, the Board of Directors has enacted an Apparatus Steering Committee to evaluate the near to medium term apparatus needs and make recommendations to the Board (concurrent with the Chiefs). The committee will be an ongoing (standing) committee to make recommendations regarding the scope, budget, and timing of apparatus replacement, fleet expansion, and/or major refurbishment. The committee will consist of at least 1 each of an officer, board member, and member at large. The current apparatus replacement plan (as previously developed) is shown in the following table:

Year Number	Calendar Year	Equipment Age				
		2017	1999	1994	2011	2001
		E33	T32	E31	T31	E32
0	2017	0	18	23	6	16
1	2018	1	19	24	7	17
2	2019	2	20	25	8	18
3	2020	3	21	26	9	19
4	2021	4	22	27	10	20
5	2022	5	23	28	11	21
6	2023	6	24	29	12	22
7	2024	7	25	30	13	23
8	2025	8	26	31	14	24
9	2026	9	27	32	15	25
10	2027	10	28*	33	16	26
11	2028	11	29*	34	17	27
12	2029	12	30*	35	18	28
13	2030	13	31*	36	19	29
14	2031	14	32*	0	20	30
15	2032	15	33*	1	21	31
16	2033	16	34*	2	22	32
17	2034	17	35*	3	23	33
18	2035	18	36*	4	24	34
19	2036	19	37*	5	25	35
20	2037	20	38*	6	26	36
21	2038	21	0	7	0	37
22	2039	22	1	8	1	38
23	2040	23	2	9	2	39
24	2041	24	3	10	3	40
25	2042	25	4	11	4	41
26	2043	26	5	12	5	42
27	2044	27	6	13	6	43
28	2045	28	7	14	7	0
29	2046	29	8	15	8	
30	2047	30	9	16	9	
31	2048	31			10	
					11	

The table outlines a 7 year rotational replacement strategy for the current major fleet out to the year 2048. The plan calls for alternating replacement of Engines and Tankers, with each new Engine serving as “first out” for 14 years before rotating to 2nd out for 14 years, followed by 14 years as 3rd out. Under this plan the current Engine 32 will remain in service at least in a 3rd out role for 43 years. Due to the rising costs of apparatus replacement we anticipate that a new “first out” engine (Engine 31) will cost approximately \$1,000,000 in 2031. The existing condition of Tanker 32 should allow a refurbishment to be adequate (vs replacement) to extend its’ service life and expand its’ capabilities, most notably to include an upgraded pump control module and a booster reel. The Apparatus Steering Committee and the Chiefs recommend a refurbishment process not to exceed \$200,000. Upon completion of the refurbishment an operational rotation of Tanker 31 and Tanker 32 will be implemented to extend the service life of both units by sharing the call volume more efficiently. Also, as the Apparatus Steering Committee completes the evaluation of needs for the next Engine replacement it will simultaneously begin detailed analysis with the officers in determining the next needs with regard to the type and capabilities necessary over the next 20 years, this should include consideration of alternative non-traditional apparatus such as quick response and multipurpose vehicles of all types and scales to include the full spectrum of possible fire apparatus from mini-pumpers to aerials.

As mentioned in the Financial Stability section there are numerous other equipment needs beyond the apparatus fleet. The most significant being the replacement of SCBA. As a critical component to the core mission of fire suppression, the SCBA replacement will be a high priority relative to many other projects; it is (and for several years has been) our primary request in FEMA/AFG applications. So far we have been unsuccessful in the recent grant cycles. In the absence of a successful grant we must allocate budgeted funds within the next 5 years as our current units are multiple NFPA Standards behind and are considered obsolete by the manufacturer, meaning certain parts are no longer available. Of our inventory of 18, we have recently been reduced to 17 due to one becoming unserviceable. We expect these failures to gradually continue, and from a safety standpoint it is generally not recommended to replace units piecemeal due to critical compatibility issues during IDLH operations. Therefore we should plan to replace all of the units in a single upgrade process in the near future, even if the funding must delay some of the apparatus upgrades. Meanwhile, we can continue to operate the serviceable units, (which are annually tested by certified technicians). The minimum number of serviceable units for operations should be considered to be 14.

4 Training & Staffing

Training was identified in the original purpose of the corporation but has changed considerably since the Fire Department began.

It is imperative that we continue to require high standards for performance regardless of the type of duty and that we continue to foster a culture of safety that effectively utilizes the talents and capabilities of those willing to serve the community in various roles that can improve the operations and services of the department. All while ensuring the proper minimum level of training, knowledge, skills, and abilities for interior operations in order to safely perform the core mission of fire suppression and associated search and rescue functions; as well as to meet the minimum standards imposed by FEMA to qualify for major grant assistance. Beyond suppression personnel, the fire department also relies on significant amounts of service by support personnel that perform highly technical, skilled operations as medical first responders, apparatus driver/operators (Engineers) as well as general operations support and auxiliary support services. All Emergency Responders must be trained in a broad range of rescue techniques, hazardous materials, apparatus operation, incident command, etc. A number of years ago the department implemented a set of core skills that every emergency responder must be proficient in in order to participate on the scene of an emergency. Furthermore, specific standards were established for various positions and continue to be updated periodically through the Manual of Operations and the Human Resource Manual based on the latest standards and best practices. Furthermore, recent updates to the Human Resources Manual have reinforced minimum participation requirements in order to maintain a common operating picture among all personnel.

Staffing has become a major concern nationwide as the number of volunteers decrease. Staffing levels can be improved by use of an aggressive volunteer recruiting and retention campaign and consideration of additional paid personnel. GPVDFD currently staffs the station with a single paid position Monday through Friday from 0800 to 1600 hours. The position is part-time and is filled by at least 3 different Engineers on rotating slots. If the budget allows we should consider expansion of the daily hours to 1700 or 1730 hours in the near term due to limited availability from volunteer staff during those hours. Call volumes and volunteer recruitment and retention will influence the need for additional paid staff over the next 5 years and should be constantly evaluated. However we are hopeful that our recruitment and retention strategies will be successful in expanding our volunteers. One of the key components of the staffing plan is the upgrade to the facilities as discussed in Part II, Section 1. Recruitment and retention of staff (paid or volunteer) in any organization is closely tied to the quality and functionality of the facilities. Regardless if the staff is paid or volunteer, it is important that the spaces in which they operate are comfortable, safe, and functional. This includes the necessity of shower and kitchen facilities and improved HVAC and decontamination systems. Furthermore, as future call

volumes will likely increase, there may be a time where 24 hour staffing is a necessity in order to ensure adequate first out turnout times, which necessitates bunk rooms. These facilities could also be leveraged as a recruitment tool in the future to develop a live-in program that would strengthen the volunteer ranks. It may also be possible for such a program to be a recurring partnership with area higher education institutions such as SCC and Gardner-Webb University. These programs should be studied carefully in conjunction with other recruitment tools such as increase media and social media presence along with recruiting outreach in local businesses, churches, and schools.

5 Organization & Administration

Comprehensive Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG's) and policy and procedure documents should be actively trained on and adopted, upgraded, developed, and implemented. The necessity of these standards should be reinforced at all levels of department leadership. These guidelines should be continuously updated and should cover all aspects of day to day operations as well as generalized procedures for all known emergency scenarios.

The policies and procedures should not only encompass emergency operations but should also include the routine business functions of the fire department. There are currently robust purchasing procedures, human resources policies/procedures, as well as other "routine" systems in place. All of these are documented however we should further institutionalize these documents and provide at least annual review of most major policies. We should also improve the utilization of technology to ensure that every member has ample exposure to the various documents in order to function as one organization with clear standards and expectations.

6 ISO Classification (PPC) Improvement

ISO evaluates the fire suppression delivery systems of jurisdictions around the country. The result of those reviews is a classification number known as the Public Protection Classification (PPC™) that ISO distributes to insurers. Insurance companies use the classification (often referred to as an 'ISO Rating') to help establish premiums for fire insurance – generally offering lower premiums in communities with better fire protection. The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) is used to define the criteria used in the evaluation of a community's fire defenses. In reality, a favorable ISO Rating does not mean that a fire department is excellent, or even good; however the rating is an indicator of the risk posed to the underwriter, and can have a profound impact on the community's perception of the department. This in turn can greatly improve the ability of the department to accomplish the long term objectives critical to the issues identified in above. In addition, it provides a financial service to the property owners of the community by presenting the possibility of lower insurance premiums. While many aspects of the rating are beyond the control of the Fire Department (a significant percentage of the rating is based on the water and dispatch systems) we should endeavor to maintain the current fire department portion of the PPC. There is a broad range of items included in the FSRS, many of which overlap into other objectives of this plan such as apparatus, equipment, staffing, training, and maintenance; therefore this section of the plan is generally a summary of the impact of other objectives. It is a core belief of the operational leadership team that we should make every effort to document and capture all available points within the framework of the other best practices for the mission and objectives of the department but not to customize those missions and objectives based on the FSRS or the PPC. Rather, we believe those items will mostly take care of themselves if we are successful in the operations and services necessary to provide a high level of performance in fire protection services. It is unlikely that the fire department portion of the ranking can be significantly improved without additional manned station staffing. It is further likely that any reduction in our apparatus fleet will lose points that are significant enough to negatively impact the overall rating. The summary of the most recent (2023) PPC:

Emergency Communications		
414. Credit for Emergency Reporting	3.00	3
422. Credit for Telecommunicators	3.89	4
432. Credit for Dispatch Circuits	3.00	3
440. Credit for Emergency Communications	9.89	10
Fire Department		
513. Credit for Engine Companies	6.00	6
523. Credit for Reserve Pumpers	0.00	0.50
532. Credit for Pump Capacity	3.00	3
549. Credit for Ladder Service	1.84	4
553. Credit for Reserve Ladder and Service Trucks	0.00	0.50
561. Credit for Deployment Analysis	2.28	10
571. Credit for Company Personnel	3.80	15
581. Credit for Training	4.12	9
730. Credit for Operational Considerations	2.00	2
590. Credit for Fire Department	23.04	50
Water Supply		
616. Credit for Supply System	16.02	30
621. Credit for Hydrants	3.00	3
631. Credit for Inspection and Flow Testing	7.00	7
640. Credit for Water Supply	26.02	40
Divergence	-3.79	--
1050. Community Risk Reduction	5.00	5.50
Total Credit	60.16	105.50

Part III: Operational Plan

Achievement of the goals identified in this plan requires specific plans related to each objective. The Operational Plan is divided into 4 segments, Long Rang, Mid-Range, Short Range, and Action Plans.

1 Long Range Plan

Long Range Plan items are tasks or needs projected to take place more than 10 years from the current planning period.

- 1 Install additional paved parking.
- 2 Create/establish a shop/maintenance area.
- 3 Increase office space to provide additional officer workspace. Sand and refinish all hardwood floors, refinish interior walls, refinish exterior wood surfaces, trim, stairs, and handrails.
- 4 Establish a portion of the facility to be used as a shelter during inclement weather.

2 Mid-Range Plan

Mid-Range Plan items are tasks or needs projected to take place 5 to 10 years from the current planning period.

- 1 Replace exterior concrete pad in front of main station truck bays.
- 2 Organize, secure, and improve storage areas
- 3 Create multifunction hands on training areas.
- 4 Create apparatus bay space to accommodate and service the projected modern fire apparatus.

3 Short Range Plan

Short Range Plan items are tasks or needs projected to take place 1 to 5 years from the current planning period and should be included in current budget planning.

A. Facilities Needs

- 1 Renovate kitchen and bath facilities to include shower facilities.
- 2 Renovate existing spaces to add minimum bunk room space for 4 people.
- 3 Install gutters and exterior drainage as needed to protect foundation and basement from water infiltration and damage.
- 4 Install and/or replace HVAC system for entire main station.

- 5 Renovate and upgrade the electrical and plumbing systems of the station.
 - 6 Relocate the existing small backup generator to the substation and install full standby power at the main station.
 - 7 Insulate the main station.
- B. Apparatus & Equipment Needs
- 1 Replace Engine 31
 - 2 Replace the skid unit

4 Action Plan

Action Plan items are tasks to be performed or initiated during the current or next fiscal year for which funds are already approved and available.

- A. Apparatus Needs
- 1 Refurbish Tanker 32
 - 2 Submit grant requests for SCBA replacement
 - 3 Begin partial replacement process for hydraulic rescue tools