

Portland Fire & Rescue 1983-1993

In 1983, the Portland Fire Bureau celebrated its 100th anniversary. Part of that celebration included a yearbook depicting the years 1883 through 1983. Now in 1993, a new year book has been published covering the changes of the past 10 years.

In 1988 the name itself was changed to more accurately reflect the variety of incidents the Fire Bureau responds to and the types of emergency interventions that are provided. The name is now the Portland Bureau of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services.

The population of the protection area has grown from 365,000 to 520,000. Some of the population growth resulted from Multnomah County Fire District 10 merging with the Fire Bureau in July 1984. Other growth has resulted from the City annexing unincorporated land and increasing the square miles from 112 in 1982-83 to 186 square miles in 1992.

The number of stations changed from 27 in 1982-83 to a high of 36 in 1986-87, and back to only 29 in 1993. In 1982-83 there were still 3 fireboats with dedicated staffing of 2 to 3 persons. By 1993, there was only one fireboat, which is cross-staffed with the 4-person crew of Engine 6. A second boat at the new Engine 17 on Hayden Island was assigned, which will also be cross-staffed.

The total number of uniformed Fire Bureau employees varied from 636 in 1982-83, to 827 in 1986-87 and back to 686 in 1992. In 1993 the total number of all Fire Bureau employees is 741.

The total number of responses more than doubled over the last 10 years. In 1982-83, the Fire Bureau answered 20,818 emergency alarms. In 1991-92, there were 46,655 incidents including fires, Emergency Medical Service (EMS) calls, Hazardous Materials (HazMat) calls, good intent calls and false alarms.

The total number of fires increased during this time period from 2,357 in 1982-83 to 3,347 in 1991-92. Demand for EMS increased dramatically over the past decade. Emergency Medical Service calls jumped from 10,430 in 1982-83 to 26,562 in 1991-92.

Throughout the last ten years, 2nd Alarm fires remained double-digit figures, from a low of 13 to a high of 34 in 1989-90. Third Alarm fires varied from 3 in 1982-83 to 10 in 1986-87. In 1987-88, the Fire Bureau responded to five, 4th Alarm fires. There were no 5th Alarm fires in 1982-83, 1987-88 and 1989-90.

Some highlights of this decade were:

1982-83

Ken Owens is the new Fire Chief. Frank Ivancie is the Mayor and Mildred Schwab is the Fire Bureau Commissioner. The Fire Bureau purchases its first computer equipment and will install it during the next year. The new fireboat "George H. Williams" is purchased and will be delivered in 1984. The first talk of relocating Stations 10 and 17 occurs. Ten years later, Station 17's relocation will finally be resolved.

Top firefighter's pay is \$2,358 per month. All truck companies are staffed with 5 persons. Fourteen engine companies have 4 person crews. Ten engine companies have 5 person crews. Logistics moves into its new building located at 1135 SE Powell. Traveling firefighters are used to fill vacation vacancies and reduce overtime replacement costs.

Portland's Fire Alarm Telegraph (later changed to Fire Alarm Dispatch) combines dispatching centers with Multnomah County Fire District 10. This is the first step towards the merging of both departments in July of 1984.

On July 10, 1982, Ziddell's ship repair, on the west end of the Ross Island Bridge, burns in a spectacular 5th Alarm fire. The total loss is \$4.9 million.

1983-84

EMS calls increase by 50%, from a little over 10,000 to 15,092. A weeklong strategic planning session to plot the course of the Bureau for the next decade is held. Fire Basic Life Support (BLS) vans are purchased and put into service to reduce the wear and tear on fire apparatus responding to EMS calls.

Truck 19 (formerly Truck 6) closes and the five-person crew begins riding Squad 19, a manpower vehicle. Engine 5 and Truck 8 combine to become a 6 person Quad Company. Engine 28 at NE 56th and Sandy Boulevard is closed and the crew co-located with Multnomah County Fire District 10 at 5916 NE Going Street as the new Truck 8.

The first minor reorganization occurs, creating three new "Division Chief" positions: one each in Emergency Operations, Prevention, and Operations Support Services. The Bureau is now divided into five battalions instead of four.

All fire company members are now certified in "Crash Injury Management." The Bureau begins to train some personnel as Emergency Medical Technician Level I's. In June of 1983, 56 are certified by the state.

New Engine 28 opens at 4334 NE 148th Avenue (in a mobile home) because of annexations of Columbia River South Shore and Argay Terrace. The old pump test pool (swimming pool) at Station 23 is filled in.

The Fire Bureau's Hazardous Materials Response Team begins service at Station 16. On July 29, 1983, two bombs explode in the Rajneesh Hotel, located at 1115 SW 11th Avenue. One civilian loses his hand as a result of the blast.

1984-85

There is a new mayor, Bud Clark. New Station 10 opens at 451 SW Taylors Ferry Road. Stations 6, 2 and Boat 3 are closed. Station 16 relocates to Station 6 until a new Station 16 is built at 5645 NW Willbridge Avenue. (The new Station 16 is closed in 1991 because of budget cuts).

July 1984 brings Multnomah County Fire District 10 into the Portland Fire Bureau. With the merger of District 10, there are seven battalions. Truck companies are renumbered to the station in which they are housed.

On August 12, 1984, there is a 4th Alarm fire at Lutz Tire Warehouse at 1032 NW 14th Avenue. The loss is \$720,000. There is also the 4th Alarm fire at the icehouse at 410 NE 3rd Avenue. The walls have sawdust insulation and continue to burn for over 1 week. To "make the best of a bad situation", the Blue Owl tavern on NW 56th and St. Helens Rd. changes its name to the Burnt Owl tavern after a 5,000 gallon fuel truck was involved in an auto collision sending burning gasoline running down the curb into the building igniting it.

1985-86

The Bureau is continuing to train and certify all line personnel at the EMT I level. (Chief officers are later exempt from this requirement). Work continues towards finalizing an intergovernmental agreement with Clackamas County District 1 for fire services.

The Fire Bureau's major reorganization takes place on April 17, 1986, and results in four divisions: Management Services, Planning and Development, Emergency Operations, and Fire Prevention. A Management Services Officer directs management Services. The other three divisions headed by a Division Chief.

The Fire Bureau purchases and installs nine personal computers for the Emergency Operations Administration, the three new Battalion Headquarters, Training, Fire Alarm Dispatch (FAD), Investigations, and Management Services.

There are now three battalions with two districts in each. Foam Turret 12 goes into service at Station 12. This is the short wheelbase, crash/rescue vehicle that was originally aboard a Navy aircraft carrier. It carries 100 gallons of AFFF foam and about 1000 gallons of water and is used for freeway response.

In April 1986, Station 46 at 12 Mile Corner is closed. At Hazardous Materials meetings in Salem, a new statewide response system is being developed. Fireboat Williams is docked at Station 7 and is cross-staffed. Fireboat Campbell is in reserve status and not staffed full time. Fireboat 3 (the Virgil Spencer) is temporarily docked near Station 17 on Hayden Island and cross-staffed.

The first Fire Bureau EMS Task Force is formed to investigate and report the feasibility of transporting ALS patients by Fire Bureau Rescues. The report is presented to the City Council on January 21, 1986.

The Fire Bureau formalizes its Dive-Rescue Unit and headquarters it at Station 1. On February 2, 1985, Van Duyns Candy Factory at 739 NE Broadway is totally destroyed by a 4th Alarm fire. The loss is \$1.3 million and the cause is arson.

1986-87

The new Fire Commissioner is Dick Bogle. Clackamas County Fire District 1 is now part of the Portland Fire Bureau. Top firefighter pay is now \$2,862 per month. Lieutenant/Paramedics are assigned to the ALS rescue located at the EMS office at Station 21 (on Fuller Road in Clackamas).

New Station 16 opens at 5645 NW Willbridge Avenue.

The Fire Boat is back at Station 6, staffed by a swing crew from Engine 6. Hazmat 16 at Station 16 responds to 115 incidents, 25 being drug labs. In January 1986, the Fire Bureau initiates a new program called the Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program to educate youth identified as having fire behavior problems.

In early 1986, the Fire Bureau forms a Quality Assurance Committee to review and evaluate the performance and charting of the EMT IV/paramedics. During this time, the Fire Bureau leaves Providence/Portland Adventist Hospitals, which had provided Physician Supervisor services since the mid 1970's Oregon Health Sciences University became the Physician Supervisor for all EMT's.

On July 27, 1986, a 4th Alarm fire with a loss of \$1.4 million destroys Kienows Grocery Store at 5544 E Burnside Street.

1987-88

Fire Chief is George Monogue is appointed. The bureau name changes to the "Bureau of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services" to reflect a wider range of service. The Bureau responds to 31,695 EMS calls and extinguishes 3,904 fires.

An innovative pre-employment training program for minorities and women begins, which results in the best representation ever on a firefighter's examination list.

The Bureau begins a successful residential smoke alarm installation program. The Juvenile Firesetting Intervention Program receives the League of Oregon Cities First Place Award for Excellence.

Rescue 1 sets a record with 5,489 runs. Engine 11 is the first engine ever to exceed 2,000 runs (2,153) in one year.

The previous three Emergency Response Battalions, consisting of six Administrative districts, are reorganized into four Emergency Response Districts combined into two Administrative Battalions.

The Fire Bureau assumes responsibility for emergency management for the City, bringing the Portland Office of Emergency Management and the City's Emergency Operations Center at Kelly Butte under Bureau administration.

The Fire Bureau participates in a field study for Physio Control's new heart monitor/defibrillator. Portland is one of only a few Fire Departments in the country asked to participate. In late 1987, the Fire Bureau expands its Quality Assurance Committee format to the BLS level.

In late 1987, the Fire Bureau creates a new position of "Occupational Health Coordinator". This position is charged with protecting the health of employees as related to occupational health exposures, specifically in the areas of infectious and communicable diseases.

The summer of 1987 is the year of grass fires. On September 20, a very large grass fire near 257th and Cherry Park Road in Troutdale goes to a 5th Alarm.

1988-89

All sworn personnel are certified as Hazardous Materials Technician I. Line personnel on the 56-hour work schedule receive a "Kelly Day". Every 19th shift is a paid 24-hour shift off, which reduces the workweek to 53 hours.

Beginning in August 1988, Quad 5 becomes the Bureau's first ALS engine. By 1993, 6 more will become paramedic engines companies.

One of the most serious fires to strike Portland occurs at the Portland Tower Apartments on June 30, 1988. Three civilians and four firefighters are injured. One firefighter is found unconscious after his SCBA runs out of air. He is hospitalized and is treated in the hyperbaric unit for smoke inhalation.

1989-90

The Fire Marshal's Office is reorganized to include two Assistant Fire Marshals. Training moves from Emergency Operations Division and combines with Planning and Development to become the Training and Emergency Management Division.

The Bureau acquires the old Parkrose Water District Headquarters and will develop it into the new Station 2 and Training Center.

Selected Fire Bureau Paramedics receive specialized training and become members of the Police Bureau's Special Emergency Response Team (SERT). They also respond with the FBI's SWAT team throughout Oregon.

A 5th Alarm fire occurs on December 6, 1989, aboard the S.S. Bermuda Star on Swan Island. The loss is \$2 million with 5 injuries.

1990-91

During 1990, the Training and Emergency Management Division conducts "Mega Quake 90," which is the largest natural disaster exercise ever conducted in Portland.

Rescue 41 is designated Hazardous Materials Rescue and is assigned as part of the Hazardous Materials Response Team. A field study is done for Physio Control Corporation using their Life Pak 300 automatic external defibrillators to study the effectiveness of EMT I's defibrillating cardiac arrest victims.

The twelve-month period ending in December 1990 set a Fire Alarm Dispatch record with the highest number of emergency dispatches. The total is 62,200 for Portland, Gresham, Corbett, and Sauvie Island.

On January 6, 1991, there is a tragic fire at the Chasselton Apartments located at 101 NE 28th Avenue. The 4th Alarm fire results in three civilian deaths.

1991-92

In July 1992, the Clackamas County District 1 Board will not renew the intergovernmental contract. Portland Fire Bureau keeps the personnel and the Clackamas County Board contracts with Clackamas County Fire district #71).

The Fire Information and Communication Services Section is formed in January 1992. This section consists of Fire Alarm Dispatch, Fire Information Services, and the Computer Aided I Dispatch project. A Deputy Chief who reports directly to the Fire Chief manages this section. .

Fire Alarm Dispatch (FAD) is the fire communications center for all fire departments in Multnomah County. However, after a multi-year battle, FAD is in the process of being civilianized. The, current plan is to use the dispatchers at the Bureau of Emergency Communications to provide dispatch for all Fire Departments in Multnomah County.

The Fire Bureau now has personal computers in each of the stations and within the next year will begin sending and receiving electronic mail throughout the entire Bureau. Also beginning in the fall of 1993 the Fire Bureau will have mobile data terminals (MDT's) in all emergency response vehicles.

A Fire Bureau Arson Investigator attends the Connecticut State Police Academy and returns with Oregon's first Canine Accelerant Detector (Arson Dog). "Charlotte" is trained to detect over ten flammable and combustible liquids at fire scenes. The program is a joint training venture between the Connecticut State Police and The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

The Bureau's Haz-Mat team, now located at Station 23, begins operations as one of Oregon's Regional Response Teams.

In the first week of October, the State Fire Marshal's Office invokes the State Conflagration Act as a result of a large fire in the Columbia Gorge near Multnomah Falls. Two task forces are sent, each consisting of five engine companies. Staging was at Rooster Rock State Park. In addition, Portland sent an air unit, auto mechanic, ALS rescue and the Communications Van. Portland units were on scene for approximately three days. Task Force One staged at the Corbett Fire Station and Task Force Two was charged with protecting Bridal Veil.

Eight people are rescued by firefighters at a 4th Alarm fire at the Carlotta Court apartments located at 1631 NW Everett. There is a \$500,000 loss. Rescue 3 had discovered the fire while returning from an EMS call.

Looking Ahead

This ten year time period saw many changes in the Portland Fire Bureau. As Oregon struggles with diminishing revenues due to property tax limitations, the future will undoubtedly bring increased demands on the Fire Bureau to provide additional services with fewer resources.

The 1970's were called the decade of Emergency Medical Services. The 1980's were the decade of Hazardous Materials. The 1990's are going to be the decade of Community Emergency Services. This concept is a holistic approach to not just providing services for the community, but involving the community.