

History of Wake County EMS

01/04/09 202 W - + 14 - 12

Found some notes on my desk this morning, apparently recording the early history of Wake County EMS. Don't remember when the notes were taken, or for what reason. Recording here, for general interest or group discussion. I also added some incorporate dates, and some pre-1970s information. Add or correct as many details as desired!

1953 - Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad incorporated. Operated/hosted by Raleigh FD. (8/27/53)

1962 - Wendell Rescue Squad incorporated. (7/23/62)

1965 - Wake Forest Rescue incorporated. (1/19/65)

1970 - Funeral homes getting out of patient transport business. (Out of emergency transport, or all patient transport?)

1971 - Cary Area Rescue Squad incorporated. (10/29/71)

1971 - Apex Rescue Squad incorporated. (9/8/71)

1972 or 1973 - Beacon Ambulance forms, answers Raleigh and much of the county.

1974 - Zebulon Area Rescue Squad incorporated. (2/28/74)

1975 - Beacon seeks increasing county subsidy. Other issues related to Beacon also happening.

1976 - Wake County EMS forms. Four ambulances. EMS 1 and EMS 4 are downtown. EMS 2 outside Mayview Convalescent. EMS 3 at current Station 3 location.

1976 - Beacon remains in service a bit longer, doing convalescent transport.

1976 - Six Forks Rescue incorporated. (12/30/76)

1977 - Former Beacon owner starts Medical Transport Services, which operates until 1978 or so.

1977 - Knightdale Area Rescue Squad incorporated. (3/30/77)

1979 - Garner Rescue Squad incorporated (4/13/79)

Added a couple other rescue squads and their incorporation dates.

Legeros - 01/04/09 - 12:13

Prior to Beacon, there was Ambulance Service of Raleigh. I know they were in service as early as 1967. Also, a couple of funeral homes operated ambulances-

1. Gray Funeral Home operated four units during the late 70s-early 80s as a convalescent service.
2. In Wake Forest, Bright FH and Lewis FH operated ambulances. Lewis donated one of theirs to the Wake Forest Rescue Squad.
3. In Zebulons, Screws & Hudson FH operated an ambulance. Also in the Zebulon area, Community Ambulance operated an older Cadillac, I believe it was a 1967 Cadillac/Superior, that was metallic blue, as a convo unit.
4. Apex Funeral Home operated ambulances. There was a late 60s Oldsmobile parked behind their old facility for a while, and I believe they gave Apex Rescue their first ambulance, a 1955-ish Pontiac.
5. Sugg Funeral Home in Fuquay-Varina operated ambulances for some time, including running as a convo service long after FVRS was started.

6. Several Raleigh funeral homes operated ambulances, including Overby (which became Gray) and Mitchell.

7. There were several other convo services that have operated in Raleigh over the years, including Mobile Medical Care (sucessor to MTS around 1978), Capital EMS (which operated out of a building along the RR tracks on Jones St), Triangle Ambulance, SAS Ambulance, Piedmont Ambulance, Southeastern Medevac, Nova Medical Transport, and AMR (took over Nova).

Garner was chartered prior to 1979. They were operating as early as 1974-5. It was originally the Garner- St Marys Rescue Squad. Their first ambulance was 'home-built' on an early 70s Ford Econoline (call sign 881) and they also operated a 1973 Dodge Polara (ex-NC SHP) (call sign 861).

DJ ([Email](#)) - 01/04/09 - 14:26

Great update, DJ! Checking a few other sites finds... Garner-St. Mary's Rescue Squad answered their first call in March 1975. The first ambulance was a converted CP&L truck... Cary Area Rescue Squad formed in the summer of 1971, after a boy struck by a car died after waiting 45 minutes for an ambulance from Raleigh... Six Forks Rescue Squad was organized in 1976. Was only rescue squad in Wake County not affiliated with a municipality. For the first ten years, members were required to be a member or a spouse of member of Six Forks FD.

Legeros - 01/04/09 - 14:31

From the Wake EMS history page, <http://www.wakegov.com/ems/about/history..>

Original staff consists of 26 employees, including Director J. Russell Capps, a Chief Supervisor, three Shift Supervisors, and 21 field EMTs.

1976-1980

Wake EMS provides Basic Life Support (BLS) level of care.

Training department created, Training Officer hired, work begins on ALS program.

1981-1984

Wake EMS advances to EMT-Intermediate level of care.

1984

Wake EMS implements EMT-Paramedic level of care.

Legeros - 01/04/09 - 14:37

Wake Forest Rescue Squad, incorporated in 1965, was renamed Northern Wake Rescue & EMS in 1981, and renamed Wake Forest EMS in 1995. They dissolved in 1998.

In the 1990s, Fuquay-Varina and Rolesville formed EMS agencies. Fuquay-Varina Area Rescue Squad was incorporated in 1991, and renamed Fuquay-Varina Area EMS in 1997. Rolesville EMS was incorporated in 1995 and merged with Eastern Wake EMS in 2008.

Legeros - 01/04/09 - 14:42

FVRS first started around 1974, in initial form. Their first ambulance ws a 1975 Chevrolet Suburban with a Modular Ambulance Corporation ZEPHYR 54 conversion. Apex, Wake Forest, and Wendell also had ZEPHYRS.

DJ - 01/04/09 - 17:40

Wasn't Rolesville part of Northern Wake Rescue & EMS when it was active?

Is Fuquay-Varina Area EMS still active or did they disolve again?

Steven ([Email](#)) - 01/04/09 - 18:30

Let's see if my historical recall is correct. Rolesville EMS was proudly formed as a new non-profit corporation by the citizens of Rolesville and many of Rolesville EMS's charter members were past members of Northern Wake Rescue and EMS (who lived in or close to Rolesville). Northern Wake's organization was in turmoil and the community action to form another EMS service in Rolesville was necessary to provide coverage to Rolesville. Also, EMS-10 was implemented in that same 1994-1995 time frame to provide coverage to Wake Forest (housed in WFFD #1).

In its heyday, Northern Wake Rescue and EMS operated two stations: one in Wake Forest and one in Rolesville; and basically served the entire northern area of Wake County from Falls Lake in the west, to Buffaloe Road in the east. So yes, Rolesville was VERY much a part of Northern Wake in the past. Also, Rolesville EMS obtained and occupied the old Northern Wake Station #2 facility after their formation. Northern Wake Rescue is missed by many and like other volunteer Rescue and EMS organizations of that era, catapulted many of the EMS leaders you now see

in Wake today.

A.Rich - 01/05/09 - 11:23

Mike,
Have a few comments about the history in Wake County.
1- When Pennington-Smith Funeral went out of business, Gene Clark from Wendell started Raleigh Ambulance Service. Date unknown. Around 1967 two men from Washington, DC purchased Raleigh Ambulance and changed the name to Beacon Ambulance Service. These men were Ted Bacon and Chuck Daughtry. I started work with Beacon in 1968. At that time the only rescue that was transporting was Wendell—Norman Dean and crew (Great department) They had the first SWAB in the county. I had joined the Clayton Rescue Squad back in 1964.
There are a lot of stories about ambulances in Wake County, some have merit and some do not tell the whole story.
Cary was formed in 1971 after a boy was struck on a street. Now here is the rest of the story——
Beacon got the call from either Raleigh PD or Cary PD ???

Beacon dispatched Beacon #6, I was driving——
We were dispatched from base on NewBern Ave——
Route of travel was thru town and out the three way to Cary——
We had NO radio with any one other than our base at that time——
No communication with Raleigh or Cary——
Since the area we were dispatched to was not on any map (A new Subdivision) I called to Beacon base to get Cary PD on the phone and meet us along the three way and escort us to where ever the boy was——
As we entered Cary, police officer Padgett met us and took us toward the accident site——
About a mile or two into the escort the Cary Police car ran off the road on the right hand side of the road and down a ravine——
We stopped to get him out of the car and he called for another Police car to escort us——
There was none available so Terry Edmunson (Cary Fire Chief) met us at the next intersection and took us in——
Beacon transported the boy to the hospital——
Did it take 45 minutes——YES——
With no radio communication and no maps of new areas and no street signs it could have taken longer——
NOW- the county has much better radio communication, better maps and at that time Beacon was covering 90% of the county with four units——most of the time three——
There were a few funeral homes still offering ambulance service in some areas when they could——
I knew about the Cary Fire Department because I had just finished teaching a American Red Cross First Aid Class at Cary Fire .
Just after that Beacon put an ambulance in Apex during the day time. Later they started their rescue squad. I served on the board of that squad one year. ANOTHER GREAT SQUAD
In 1968 I had a chance to buy part interest in Beacon and some three years later sold my part to Jim Huffstetler and Albert Brown.
I went to work with Clayton Rescue as one of their first paid employees. The other was M.J. Johnson (now a Raleigh fireman).
Later I was one of the first shift supervisors with Wake EMS.
There is not more than a handful of people who know the true history of EMS in Wake county. Most have passed away.
As I stood at A.J. Johnson's funeral (that's M.J.'s son) I looked at the range of emergency equipment and man power that was there.
I listened to the stories about their training, what new equipment they had and saw how proud they stood.——
I'M VERY PROUD OF EVERY BRANCH OF EMERGENCY SERVICE IN WAKE COUNTY. I AM NOW 65 AND CAN LOOK BACK WITH PRIDE AND SAY "THANK GOD FOR WHAT SEVERAL OF US THAT BELIEVED HELPED TO GET STARTED"
I will be checking in from time to time and might have another story or two to relate to you.
For now——please be safe and take care——GOD BLESS——

Fred Loy

Fred Loy ([Email](#)) - 01/05/09 - 18:16

Fred, great info.! Thanks, and keep it coming! Maybe we can draw a family tree, linking all the people and providers.

Legeros - 01/05/09 - 18:44

The first vehicle acquired by the Zebulon Rescue Squad was the 1954 GMC panel van that originally and initially served the Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad. The vehicle was given free of charge, with only 18,000 miles on odometer. It would be used as a utility vehicle, to carry heavy rescue equipment and tow the rescue boat. Source: Zebulon Record, November 21, 1974.

Legeros - 01/05/09 - 19:41

Good heavens! I worked for Beacon for several years back in the early 70's. I remember your name and face quite well, Fred. I hadn't thought of Brownie and Jim for years, but seeing their names has brought back many memories, most of 'em good.

Bill Leaming ([Email](#)) - 02/12/10 - 18:00

How can I get in touch with Fred Loy?

Lane Hobbs ([Email](#)) - 06/20/10 - 16:19

Correction: Under item 2 above, Lewis Funeral Home was in Wendell and did not donate an ambulance. They only had one hearse/ambulance combination and retained it for funeral service. I worked for Lewis and remained associated with them after becoming employed with the Town of Wendell. I was a charter member of the Wendell Rescue Squad. I traveled with Norman Dean and Paul White to Pennsylvania to pick up the first SWAB unit in 1971. Lots of great memories. This compilation of data is good to retain. May be someone will help compile it in more detail for preservation.

Ira C. Fuller ([Email](#)) - 05/25/12 - 04:21

Thanks Ira! These are the details that help history be recorded as accurately as possible. I have some ideas on preserving our local rescue and EMS history, maybe mid-decade when my fire history duties ease a bit.

Legeros - 05/26/12 - 10:45

Mikey: I e-mailed 4 photos of the early years of Wendell rescue Squad and some of the first vehicles and a picture of the charter members in 1962. I hope you got them the way I sent them. Thanks, Ira C. Fuller

Ira C. Fuller ([Email](#)) - 05/03/13 - 00:13

Miss Northern Wake Rescue and EMS, if you were a member please e-mail or facebook at joann.chambers 927

Joann Chambers ([Email](#)) - 07/08/13 - 17:33

I was a student at NCSU (Jul 73 – Mar 78). I lived in the Boylan Apts with my apartment backing up to the now State Credit Union. During that time period, I remember Beacon operating 4 – 6 units from an office next door. There were 2 Cadillac / 2-4 Chev Suburban / 1 Pontiac operating from there at any time. Responses usually left the rear parking area to Hargett Street.

I am also a scale modeler and have a 1/25 scale Cadillac ambulance (hearse style) that I would like to reconfigure like one of the ambulances operating from this Hillsborough Street location. If there is anyone with photos of these vehicles, I would be most appreciative of electronic copies.

Thank you for your consideration and assistance.

Regards,
Steve Payne
IPMS 47035

Steve - 07/19/13 - 19:02

Name: (real name
preferred)
E-mail: (optional)
Web Site: (optional)

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No

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/ [Textile](#)

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To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?