

**Charlotte Fire Department Response to Plane Crash, 1974**

04/08/10 725 W, 2 I - + 6 - 9

Speaking of Charlotte, the state's [second-deadliest plane crash](#) occurred at Douglas Municipal Airport on the morning of September 11, 1974. The Eastern Air Lines Douglas DC-9-31 was carrying 78 passengers and 4 crew members. It crashed just short of the runway on instrument approach in dense fog. The fatalities totaled 71, including four who died later. [Read the Wikipedia entry](#) on the crash. The January-February 1975 issue of *Hose & Nozzle* magazine provided a summary of Charlotte Fire Department activities that day.

At 7:32 a.m, the plane suddenly disappeared from radar. FAA personnel in the control tower determined the craft had crashed, and notified the airport fire station that a plane was down about a mile off Runway 36. Three crash trucks were dispatched. Capt. D. B. Webb, the Airport Station Commander on Blaze 5, radioed that he was headed in the direction of a dense black smoke that could be seen above the crash site. He requested Engine 10 be moved to Station 17, and for police to assist gathering information on the exact crash location. However, he could not advise the type of plane.

BOX NO. 9999		LOCATION: Douglas Municipal Airport						
	ENGINE CO.	ENGINE CO.	ENGINE CO.	ENGINE CO.	ENGINE CO.	LADDER CO.	LADDER CO.	CAR TRUCK
CODE 1	10	13		Notify Chief Dowdy Standby	at Airport Station			5
CODE 2	5	2	S - 1	Report to Scene	Directly		10	C-2 C-3
CODE 3	21	1		Report to Scene	Directly		1	
CODE 4	4	12					2	
REMARKS: Code 2, 3, & 4 Char. Life Saving								
Training Division, Asst. Chief Operations,								
Chief of Fire Dept., Red Cross & all hospitals.								
Code 2 - E 4 to Sta. 10								
Code 3 - E 11 to Sta. 10								
Code 4 - E 6 to Sta. 1								

Blaze 5 and other equipment traveled down Wilmount Road to Beam Road, and turned right. At Shopton Road, a member of the Airport Manager's office was there. He informed firefighters that the crash was not on Shopton Road. He also informed them that the plane was a DC-9. The information on plane type had not been available to them. Blaze 5 continued down Beam Road, and also notified Communications of the plane type. The crash site was spotted through the fog after Blaze 5 turned right on York Road. They reported on scene at 7:40 a.m.

Across the yard of a farmhouse, Blaze 5 found the aircraft split apart and with pieces scattered in woods among "broken trees, large gullies, honeysuckle thicket and burning with the exception of the tail section and cockpit." The Commander exited the apparatus, and began walking ahead, to ensure that the ground was level, and they were clear of bodies or debris. Further details are contained in a report of CFD activities reprinted in the article:

To: W. O. Dowdy, Asst. Chief (Operations)  
 Subject: Communication Center Actions During Aircraft Crash

Number of dispatchers on duty at time of crash: 2  
 Dispatcher II J. B. Noggle

Dispatcher I E. E. Landis

07:35 - Blaze 5 reported via the radio, that a jet was down off Runway 36, crashed and burning. Blaze units 1, 2, 5, and 8 responded.

07:36 - Car 5, Engine 10 and Engine 13 were dispatched to the airport.

07:38 - County police were contacted for specific directions to the crash scene.

07:49 - Asst. Chief W. O. Dowdy was notified via telephone at his home. Chief Dowdy ordered a Code 2 [which was the Douglas Municipal Airport Emergency Plan].

07:49 - Car 2, Car 3, Engine 5, Engine 2, Squad 1, and Ladder 10 were dispatched to the crash scene. Engine 4, dispatched to stand-by at Station 10. Training Division notified.

07:50 - Charlotte Life Saving Crew [Rescue Squad], Charlotte Ambulance Service, Red Cross, Memorial Hospital, Presbyterian Hospital and Mercy Hospital, were notified.

07:56 - Tankers 19 and 20 were dispatched to the crash scene.

08:05 - Fire department STRAP team was notified.

08:12 - Engine 21, Engine 1 and Platform 1 were dispatched to the crash scene. Chief Dowdy ordered a Code 3.

08:16 - Line crew, with chain saws [and extrication equipment] were dispatched to the crash scene.

08:17-10:59 - Supporting units and equipment were dispatched to the crash scene as needed.

Additional details provided in the article:

At 7:45 a.m., District Chief W. G. Stewart as Car 5 was approaching the scene, and could see dense black smoke from the wreckage. He found two badly burned victims, and they informed him that other victims were within the wreckage.

By 7:48 a.m., the first victims were transported by a Steele Creek Fire Department rescue unit. The second set of victims were transported by an Air National Guard ambulance manned by CFD personnel.

The Code 2 notifications also included city and county police departments.

At 8:20 a.m., the Chief of Operations arrived and assumed command, and used Car 5 as command post.

By 10:30 a.m., "rescue and fire emergency efforts" were completed. City personnel and units were returned to quarters. Command was turned over to Chief Knoxie Hoover of Steele Creek FD. Blaze 1 remained on scene.

Finally, here's a Google Maps view of the present-day crash site, located at 35°09'14"N 80°55'34"W:



And a pic of the crash site today, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/15698194@N0..>

**Legeros** - 04/08/10 - 07:19

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

Remember personal info?

Yes  
No

Comment:

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Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

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

[\(Register your username / Log in\)](#)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

**Small print:** All html tags except <b> and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.