

Why New Trucks Are Tight Fits in Old Stations

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Here's a great picture from a [Boston Globe story](#) that illustrates why modern apparatus is often a tight fit in older or very old fire stations. Found the story by way of [Statter911](#), who found the story on [FireTruckBlog](#), who found the story in the *Globe*.

Tell your stories, folks. What are some of the tightest fitting stations around here, and what accommodations have had to be made? Raising doors, lowering rigs, etc.? And anyone want to admit that they ordered a truck they thought would fit, but didn't?

If this sounds familiar, we [posted about tight squeezing](#) in Goldsboro last year.



Jonathan Wiggs/Boston Globe photo

I believe the doors were raised at Garner station 1 for the ladder to fit.

Mike - 12/12/10 - 10:36

I saw the reserve platform in Raleigh backing into Station 1 a few weeks ago, and it looked like it was almost to tall to fit in the bay.

charlie - 12/12/10 - 11:55

The clearance in some of Raleigh station is quite tight. Some of the door raising or bay expansions to come to mind:

Station 5 – Doors raised in 2008. For reserve ladder.

Station 9 – Ceiling raised in 2009. For green roof!

Station 11 – Doors raised in a prior decade. Was that for the 1990 Spartan ladder?

Station 15 – Rear doors added in 1996. For the 1988 Pierce platform, unable to exit through front doors, due to angle of apron. Curbing on road also modified, so apparatus could turn onto Millbrook Exchange Park access road.

Station 16 – Rear door removed, rear bay extended in 1988. For the 1979 Mack/1958 tiller to fit.

Station 17 – Doors raised in 2008. For Ladder 3.

Legeros - 12/12/10 - 12:14

And Station 8 was not modified, but weight restrictions resulted in the moving of Truck 8 to Station 20, when they received the 1999 American LaFrance platform. That station has a basement below the bay.

Legeros - 12/12/10 - 12:18

When YRAC was YRAC, they ordered Rescue 205 to fit. When the county gave WW the new 196 and 299, we had to make sure they fit in St. 2.

The clearance for 299 was close. We only had to deal with the doors when a FF accidentally tried to widen one with the side door of 295.

Duda - 12/12/10 - 13:14

Whooops!!! My finger slipped. Make that 295!

Duda - 12/12/10 - 13:14

When EMS Truck 1 was purchased, we knew that I had to fit in the Public Safety Center (built in the way early 90's when ambulances were still on pick-up chassis and boxes were around a 140" long). Part of the spec document was a clear statement about where this truck had to fit and that the vehicle could not be accepted should it not fit within the space. Rather than us saying how big the opening was, vendors came out and measured the space themselves. The stack on the exhaust clears the opening, but I don't think you can fit your finger safely between it and the opening. Radio antennas had to be moved to avoid the overhead door openers.

The medium duty ambulances will only fit in certain places as the future was not considered years ago when building facilities. We know now that what fits in 2010 may likely not fit in 2020 – and that we have to account for potential changes in the industry to avoid having stations that just may no longer work in a few years. Will ambulances continue to get taller and longer? Who knows. With major changes forthcoming in healthcare in the US, we may see a complete change in the dynamic of what pre-hospital medicine is. Maybe vehicles will evolve into mobile clinics (and be potentially much larger), that, should it be necessary, will be able to transport a patient on a cot. Or will they evolve into very basic vehicles for emergent treatment, designed to transport more often to the closest clinic or urgent care, rather than to a hospital.

Like fire apparatus, safety will be an evolving issue that directly will have an impact on the dimensions of the ambulance. A draft of the NFPA ambulance standard is out now (as woeful as it may be). We have seen the impact on NFPA standards on fire apparatus and how they have trended more towards the fully-enclosed custom cab trucks over the years. Where will this process lead the ambulance industry? Only time will tell.

Olson - 12/12/10 - 14:43

In the ol' days, when Apex Rescue 1 ran out of the downtown firehouse, it took precision to back it in the house (and pull it out too). And talk about height; you couldn't slip a piece of paper in between the roof of the truck and the frame of the bay door.

Ahhhh, the good ol' days.....

Silver - 12/12/10 - 14:47

I remember the "good ole days" when fire trucks were actually a lot smaller, yet just as practically functional. Alas, the evolution of standards. Good points too Jon. How big does an ambulance need to be? Comfort, safety, function... the factors are abundant I suppose.

A.C. Rich - 12/12/10 - 16:02

When I was working in Zebulon I heard stories about the purchase of Ladder 95 and the reason for going with the Grumman was that they were the only manufacturer that could build a truck to fit into the station. Clearance was a small issue then, only a couple of inches. Haven't seen it in house since the refurb. Not sure if it has made a difference. Maybe Zeb101 could share some more info on the topic.

House - 12/12/10 - 16:23

Interesting...I know Seagrave produced a "low-profile" ladder truck to accommodate the smaller bays as well....

Silver - 12/12/10 - 17:50

Height was definitely a factor in Zebulon, especially with the downward angle of the ramp to the street (because back tips up when front goes down ramp). I remember at least one vendor bringing a style of truck to see if it would fit, but it didn't. Ladder 95 was purchased with side stacked ground ladders and low profile cab to fit in the building, but it still looks like it'll hit when it goes in and out. The same chassis with center stacked ground ladders and compartments on the side wouldn't fit. Far as I know, the refurb didn't affect overall height (it still fits anyway).

Zeb101 - 12/12/10 - 18:29

Mike, the FD rating inspection guys at OSFM have some great stories about this topic. One tells a story of a station with a hole cut in the back wall. The new tanker wouldn't fit, so they cut a hole for the rear dump to stick out the back wall.

Zeb101 - 12/12/10 - 18:38

Thanks Chief!!!

House - 12/12/10 - 18:40

The cut-hole approach was done here. Station 6 had a window removed to fit the 1939/1916 American LaFrance tiller, or so I have been told. It was housed there, maybe as Truck 6 for a period or as a reserve truck serving as Truck 6, for a period after or around 1958.

Cary's first ladder truck, a service truck on a commercial chassis, was stored at the public works building. Working from memory, they had to both cut hole in the wall **and** drape a sheet over the front, as both ends stuck out!

Legeros - 12/12/10 - 18:46

As a bit of clarification on the old YRAC/WW#2 building. We had to order the single cab brush truck to allow it to fit in the "hole" in Bay 3 (that and it wasn't listed as our primary first responder vehicle so didn't qualify for the crew cab). R295 was very much measured before, during and after before it was backed into the bay for the first time to make sure it fit. It was ordered with an HME 1871SFO cab as it was the smallest 5 seat custom cab on the market at the time.

Another bit of information about that station and the very steep angle of the ramp in relation to the street was that E191 had to be angled onto the ramp or it would drag the tray for the front bumper line... there's still a reminder on the truck to this day.

As for P196 there was zero consideration given to whether the truck would fit into WW#2, as a matter of fact it took a few adventurous firefighters to attempt it the first time months after it arrived. And for fit you had to remove the deck gun from the mount in order for it to fit! Amazingly as tall as the county spec tankers appear, ours fit into the WW#2 station as well. Making WWE191 the only truck in the fleet that could not back into the bays there. Both length and height wise.

I know that it is a very tight fit for the aerial trucks at Cary FD to fit through the doors, both width and height, at some of the older stations (3, 4) and they cannot house an aerial at #2 whatsoever. I have heard that Truck 7 will fit in the bay at #2, but it has to be in the engine bay, with the engine going into the rescue bay. Talk about a squeeze!

Backing anything into Apex #1 was an adventure, as was pulling onto Salem St. Especially R1 or the old E1 (white E-1). Always a pucker factor.

shevais - 12/12/10 - 20:06

Got pictures of tight squeezes? Send 'em! I will post what we get. And I will dig up a shot of Cary's original ladder, poking out its original station.

Legeros - 12/12/10 - 20:26

Garner Ladder 1 versus Raleigh Station 1, during coverage during Pine Knoll Townes in 2007. Recall that they couldn't quite fit the thing in. <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/2007-0..>

Raleigh Ladder 1 at Raleigh Station 1. Believe it's kinda tight up top: <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/2009-1..>

Legeros - 12/12/10 - 20:33

Thanks for the clarifications, Shev. I figured someone from the olden days would straighten out my info.

Duda - 12/12/10 - 21:37

I've heard stories about Wilson Fire engine 2. That if they come out of the station and hit the brakes real hard the ladder will bump the top of the bay door opening.

Tight fit - 12/12/10 - 21:37

Our Engine 10 at Selma had to be a certain length due to the depth of our fire house. It had to fit in front of Engine 12. Engine 12 also has to be backed all the way into the bay because it can't make the swing out the back doors if there are cars parked along the curb in the rear.

Adam Brown - 12/12/10 - 21:42

Also once we start specs on a new ladder it will be interesting because we currently have no space whatsoever in our bay area

Adam Brown - 12/12/10 - 21:53

Leave the tank and pump off, it'll save you a few feet...hahaha.

Silver - 12/12/10 - 22:39

I was once told that when the old Truck 11 was delivered, they had to put smaller tires on it in order for it to fit in St 11, due to the height. Not sure if this is just rumor or there is any truth to it? Interesting nonetheless!

CJ - 12/12/10 - 22:42

hahahaha I agree completely.

Adam Brown - 12/12/10 - 22:50

Cary's old 1988 Pierce Platform barely fits into the bay at Buies Creek. I remember when we were looking to purchase it there was a lot of concern for the height. You can barely get a finger in between the top of the bucket and the door frame. I agree with you Silver leave the pump and tank off and gets you a ton of room.

PGtruckie ([Email](#)) - 12/13/10 - 03:18

When Apex bought the first ladder truck it was a demo. The sales people brought it out and it wouldn't fit so while they were striping it and preping for delivery we had to raise the bay door to be able to park it. It was a tight squeeze and would only fit out one door. We had an Engine parked in front of it. LTI came to do a yearly service on it and we told him to call someone before he moved it, he didn't listen and tried to back it out so he wouldn't have to move engine. Needless to say he hit bay and ripped rear spotlights off truck.

In addition the side of the truck was damaged pulling out of bay for a call as well as the side of most of our other trucks pulling out. All of this is at station 1 it is a tight fit for most of the trucks.

Apex Batt Chief - 12/13/10 - 09:43

Come to Forsyth County...tight squeeze with the new CFR truck at Smith Reynolds Airport....Winston Salem Rescue (now a part of Forsyth County Emergency Services) has a Spartan rescue with limited width clearance as well (1 1/2" on each side). Mike had pics of these a year or so ago (I think....).

Jeff - 12/13/10 - 11:55

One of the Nags Head stations had an older seagrave which was the only truck that would fit into the bay. If you ever been to Nags Head its the station by the big sand dune. They have since put that station out of service as a fire station and turned it into the ocean rescue station.

OBX - 12/13/10 - 15:08

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