

## Wake Forest, Falls Fire Departments Begin Merger

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[As this Wake Forest Gazette story reports](#), the Wake Forest Fire Department and Falls Fire Department signed an operational consolidation contract on Monday, July 25. The signing, held at Station 1 on Monday night, is the first legal step toward the merger of Falls with the Wake Forest fire department.

Questions and details about the merger will be worked out by an eight-person steering committee, with five subcommittees working on training, operations, services, health and safety, and fire prevention. Paid and volunteer members from both departments will participate in the committees.

The merger was first proposed in 2009, and those plans involved closing the Falls fire station. The current merger plan will keep the Falls fire station open, and the combined department will provide protection for three fire districts: Wake Forest municipal, Wake Forest rural, and Falls.

Wake Forest FD has 51 paid firefighters and about 25 volunteer firefighters. Falls FD has 35 volunteer firefighters and nine paid part-time firefighters. The Falls fleet consists of two engines, one tanker, one brush truck, one boat, one small truck, and one car.

[Read the entire story.](#)

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So Falls is not going to close now. I am confused. It is like a roller coaster.

**confused** - 07/28/11 - 23:07

What about the above is confusing. It seems pretty clear and concise to me. "But I was told...." You were told wrong.

**Jake** - 07/29/11 - 02:58

Jake, to be fair to the confused reader, the prior years have seen alternating futures for the Falls fire station. The Wake County Fire Commission placed the station on a list of facilities to be evaluated for closure in 2006 (or was that earlier?). The commission then voted to suspend all station closure evaluations in 2010. Meanwhile, the original Wake Forest Fire Department / Falls Fire Department merger proposal in 2009 included plans to close the fire station. The merger plans at present in 2011 have the station staying open.

This back-and-forth is a reality of fire service planning. Things change. The people and parties involved. The scope of projects and plans. The fluctuations in budgets, resources, populations, area sizes. Etcetera.

**Legeros** - 07/29/11 - 08:00

I just thought this was another case of "Bedford resident" aka trolling or trying to stir things up. As has been the case SOO many times in the past. More open stations = faster response times = better outcomes for patients and property. Of all the possible outcomes this is absolutely the best one for area residents.

**Jake** - 07/29/11 - 10:36

I am excited to see the endeavor moving forward positively for both departments! There has been so much uncertainty in the past few years, so this is very encouraging. Kudos to Falls FD and Wake Forest FD for taking charge of their futures and it not at the hands of another entity!

**A.C. Rich** - 07/29/11 - 11:17

Jake, i dont get on this side of conversations often because of intense arguments on both sides. The real Bedford Resident and others who wonder why the county hasnt closed some of the stations have a point. I have friends and know some very good firefighters at Falls and other departments but taxpayers have a right to question duplication of services. This is just one of the small reasons why the whole country is struggling. Wake county has grown so fast over the years. While it is nice to have 3 fire stations 3-5 miles away is it really justified? There are other counties and rural areas where its 15 mins before the first fire truck gets there let alone the first 3 fire trucks. While that is on the other side of the spectrum middle ground is what is needed. Wake is growing and changing. Everyone, including myself, has gotten greedier and

want more, more and more and want it given to them. Whether it be better retirement, more pay, nicer equipment, nicer station furniture separate rooms etc, etc while many others are losing jobs, homes and more. This money comes from taxpayers who fund our services. Now you have multiple jurisdiction resources on top of each other wanting the same new stuff, fighting for grants and more taxpayer money or donations and trying to justify their existence. Our local governments, State governments and Federal Government has not been fiscally responsible. But my OPINION is that alot of the blame is on us the people also. I have been very guilty of wanting more while doing less, but my eyes have opened on what its doing to this country as a whole and the fire service is just one very small part. So yes, as much as i would love to see a fire house on every corner for all the "what ifs" its just not fiscally responsible. Thats also why I try my best to teach my family and friends and all others I can how to take care of themselves in an emergency and not to just rely on who might show up and when. Just a funny example of meeting in the middle on ANYTHING in todays world: I remember when i first got on the department that meals were always a compromise and discussion but WE ALL counted in. You dont see that very often any more and I have found myself following suit. I miss and want to get back to compromising and ALL being counted in.

**gen3fire** - 07/29/11 - 12:09

BTW, let me clarify that I am happy for Falls and WF. My above comment is more for the attacks on why questions are raised by some people and taxpayers on the site.

**gen3fire** - 07/29/11 - 12:17

Jake,

I disagree with your label of Bedford Resident's comments as trolling. As defined by Wikipedia, trolling is the "[posting] inflammatory, extraneous, or off -topic messages in an online community." What do other readers think? I would summarize the recent comments by Bedford as follows: expression of opinion, and discussion of opinion, as posted in reaction to an announcement. Because Bedford posted his opinions, and started a discussion of them, in response to the announcement of a Falls fundraiser, does that make them off-topic? Are they really on-topic, because they relate to the announcement? Your thoughts? Of course, I am going off-topic in a way, from discussions of the merger. Maybe I will make a new thread for this particular navel gazing. Not to be confused with ship watching!

**Legeros** - 07/29/11 - 13:07

Consolidation? More like a hostile take-over.... To the victors go the spoils. 25 more volies that will be without a home. Has WF re-numbered the Falls rigs yet?

**RIP Falls** - 07/29/11 - 14:20

While rural counties have the problem of long responses, Wake is not a rural county and therefore there is a far greater need for public safety services. People are going to realize sooner or later that they cannot get everything that they want for free. Certain departments in this county are horribly understaffed and in that the question needs to be asked as to whether or not it really is smart to cut off the number of stations and departments. Trucks have 6 seats for a reason, not that we need 6 on a truck but that we definitely need more than what is on them now. The hit will come eventually and when it does the citizens are who will be suffering. The people in the air conditioned offices that make the decisions need to do some serious soul searching to decide what is the best for the people of this county or better yet, take the issue to the citizens so that they know what is really going on because I know plenty of people who have absolutely no clue how things really are in this county.

**Dubs** - 07/29/11 - 14:24

As a member of the primary steering committee for the merger, I would like to hopefully clarify couple of issues with the Falls / Wake Forest merger. This process has been talked about for years. Recently the process has come pgrressed forward with meetings and the primary steering committee members made up of both departments, volunteer and career allowing equal representation from both sides/parties. Nothing was ever done or moved forward without the information going back to the departments and allowing the members to know what was discussed and addressed. Any concerns were brought back to the committee for discussion and resolution. From this there were several primary sub-committees developed again from membership of both parties to address such issues. The primary contract that was signed by both parties begins the process of seaming the two departments together. This now allows for more inter-departmental participation in all aspects. The complete merger is still a work in progress, but Falls FD is operating as Falls FD and same with WF. As for RIP Falls comments, at no time has this ever seemed as a hostile take over. Thier volunteers are welcomed to WF to participate in any of our trainings or calls and have had a great working relationship with each other.

**Swiman** - 07/29/11 - 14:50

Okay you caught me, I am also a fireman! You guys are all totally right, and I am completely wrong. Sorry, **couldn't resist but to stir stuff up I really don't live anywhere near Bedford!**

Bedford Resident – 07/27/11 – 00:15 —————Pretending to be someone you're not, just to "stir stuff up" regardless of the "official

definition" is trolling. **Whoever** posted it was trolling.

And in response to Gen3..someone said it better so I'll just repost what they wrote:

As stated above, **no county taxes that city residents pay go toward fire protection.** That said, the county fire department in question responds to parts of Bedford/Falls River at **zero cost to residents of the City of Raleigh.** And just for clarification, Station 22 and Station 25 cover more areas than just Bedford. Station 22 covers areas on the other side of Capital Blvd from their station. They also cover areas north and south up and down Capital Blvd. So, they may still be on a call that Falls is not on. Happens every day. With that being said, depending on what part of that neighborhood you live in, it takes the closest Raleigh Engine to you approx 3-5 minutes longer to get to your house than the truck from Falls. Now, if 22 is out on a call, the next closest engine is 25. That is close to a 10 minute response time period. I understand you have your opinion and you are entitled to it. But most people want help just as fast as they can get it when they call 911. That is the only reason that the closest, "unprofessional" fire dept responds to certain areas of Bedford/Falls River. Thank you to all firefighters, paid and volunteer, for what you do. I don't care what the fire engine says on the side.

But dont worry, you've gotten your wish. Falls wont be responding to the code right behind the station because of your invisible political boundaries. Congratulations. Politics in the way of saving lives. Again. Those of you that put the money spin on it **read above** and **remember** that Falls operated on a budget that was **LESS** than 1% of the countys budget for fire protection.

RIP Falls: Another troll. Whether by definition or not.

**Jake** - 07/29/11 - 14:57

I wrote this at least five years ago but I'll leave it here. A poem for all you fine arts lovers.

For ten years now they've tried to shut us down but we're still around and damn proud. Hated and underrated, yet united and dedicated. We're the old white house, cracked and worn on the surface, but our pride still shines bright for our men and our purpose. Pride is our pay.

**Jake** - 07/29/11 - 15:03

I dont live in the city, I live in the county. So my tax dollars duplicate services rendered in the city. I am a supporter of closest Unit response no matter the district especially when 1st due companies are out. Jake, Im sorry but it seems your just thin-skinned because its your volunteer department. So you are saying its fair to me as a county tax payer that I should be grateful and happy that a small area of the city in north Raleigh can have all this extra help there with my county resources that i pay taxes for yet not the same coverage at my house. Things have changed so much as far as response times **LESS** and resources in the past 20 years which leads me to believe you havent been around very long. Maybe 5-6 years tops but thats just a pure guess. Let me be like you and **WHAT IF**; the first out department gets a House fire and a moment later I call in a medical emergency do you think I will get help in 3-5 minutes or even 7 minutes. Just a normal 1st in response to my house will be around 5 min. maybe alittle more. Seems like my money would be better spent to even up things, just my opinion.

**gen3fire** - 07/29/11 - 17:35

Wrong on all accounts. And since contracts have been cancelled, your county units will be responding to solely county. So whats the issue? Anthing can be what if'd, the exmples given above are what **HAS** happened.

**Jake** - 07/29/11 - 17:53

Yeah, ok, I was fishing just alittle on the last comment. I have been out of the loop however and didn't realize all contracts were cancelled. More than likely i just forgot. I would like to see services in the county more even which I feel like they are striving for.

**gen3fire** - 07/29/11 - 18:16

(Mike) Swiman, thank you for posting the facts regarding the process. Again, my hat's off to you guys for collectively working together.

As for response, I am stationed at #22A on Ladder 5 and Falls FD is still responding closest station in some areas. I am unsure of the exact CAD determined boundaries, but I for one am glad to see these guys on incidents. No matter what anyone feels or states, I **KNOW** these guys are a very "professional" group of responders. Many fail to recognize history... I am aware of Falls' history as I have lived it as a neighbor from Stony Hill all my life – and yes, I actually know what the original River Rats are (ask Billy!). Emotionally, I am saddened that closure of that facility will eventually come, **HOWEVER** the old and new traditions of Falls FD will forever live in its members and in some of us old farts that are still around, regardless of the "name on the door."

**A.C. Rich** - 07/29/11 - 18:19

Agreed on the distribution of county units. Id personally like to see a county wide department but thats a dead horse if ever there was one.

And from what I remember, the original "River rats" were a group of guys from the Falls community (when Falls was its own community like Bayleaf or Stony hill) that used to play baseball together and gave themselves the name of the "River rats". Didn't Stony Hill have a similar team at one point? Something about hurricanes I think.

**Jake** - 07/29/11 - 18:28

"Hurricanes" actually... Well, baseball and other things too! Many of the folks were related by marriage (no forked tree jokes guys) and associated on various social levels. Baseball was played at Juddie Ray's field which is actually across from the now SHFD Stat. #1. There was also a field just West of Falls of Neuse Rd. on Durant Rd. Both are now grown over with trees or developed. The element of community in all of these areas is now so very decentralized... indeed paradise lost. Never forget where you came from – our traditions are rooted in our history!

**A.C. Rich** - 07/29/11 - 18:41

And such contracts exist for a couple reasons: when a city expands, but lacks the infrastructure to protect the annexed area, they can (or are required?) to contract with another department, to provide (or supplement) that protection. Also, isn't there a state law that says if a "rural" fire department loses territory due to municipal expansion, the city/town is required to pay the fire department for a number of years?

**Legeros** - 07/30/11 - 09:21

Actually y'all might want to research your facts. Falls goes as closest unit not contract to Bedford and the contract they had for Wakefield was terminated. Wonder how the citizens of Wakefield would feel if they knew how far away a second city engine is compared to where Falls is located. Doesn't seem like the citizens well being was thought of.

**Fact** - 07/30/11 - 10:26

Contract response, versus closest response. Mutual aid, auto aid. First in, second in. A person could make a pretty informative FAQ, and maybe map this stuff out!

**Legeros** - 07/30/11 - 10:36

Ok, here are some facts in regards to several threads lately on Falls, hold on to your pants! 1st of all, as was stated above, Bedford is closest unit and Wakefield WAS contracted. We lost the contract for Wakefield as of July 1st. Just a side note, with the new bridge set to open up in the next month or so, we will be about 1 mile from Wakefield!

The Falls station closure (actually all station closures) were put on hold indefinitely in 2010 after the numbers were released for what it would cost the city to contract fire protection into these unincorporated areas. As it relates to Falls, the county's plan was to break the area up into thirds. The south end would be covered by Bayleaf, the middle area would be covered by Raleigh, and the north end would be covered by Wake Forest. Raleigh came to the table originally with a number over 1 million (I believe it was \$1.2) to cover just that middle area!! Remember, Falls' budget at the time was about \$340,000! Obviously, we can assume that Bayleaf and Wake Forest were not going to take over their 1/3 of the pie for free. So we can probably say it would be somewhere around \$1.5 to 2 mil to cover an area Falls was covering for \$340,000! I feel as do my counter parts, that if you can provide a BETTER service to our citizens for a cheaper price then DO IT! We do not believe that can happen however.

That brings us to the next point. The MERGER!! 1st let me say that whoever posted about the hostile takeover couldn't be more WRONG! We are working together on this merger and it is being carried out not by two chiefs, not by two B.O.D.'s, but by a steering committee comprised of 4 members from each department and 5 sub-committees comprised of members from each department. The whole premise of the merger is to show a COST SAVINGS to the citizens while providing what we believe will be a BETTER service! That was the responsible thing for us to do. The county didn't make us do it, we had the foresight and asked the county for their blessing. We have already showed a 5% reduction in our budget as per the county's request prior to signing the Operational Consolidation Contract!

You have to realize that even though Falls is surrounded by the city (due to bad annexation practices by the CITY, NOT RFD) we still have areas that are unincorporated and non-hydranted. These citizens deserve the same fire protection than anyone else in the county. Also, realize that this is not a FFD vs. RFD battle. This is a City and County government created problem. We the fire service are just the ones that have to adapt and overcome. We have to do our best to provide the best service at the best price. I assure you that is what Falls and Wake Forest are trying to do.

**Rhodes** - 07/30/11 - 12:16

Nick – Thanks for even more facts! Also, (for all) in regards to annexation, developers typically petition for annexation as the development is planned (examples – Wakefield, Bedford). Municipalities may develop/tailor their individual annexation procedures and none are exactly the same.

So, as with any annexation petition, there comes an expectation of infrastructure and services; and unfortunately citizens thoughts of public safety service does not generally evolve around fire services as our system is rarely used (in the eyes of the user/citizen). Water, sewer, sanitation and law enforcement services are greater expectations. We are naturally more focused on "our" side of the issue cuz we're up to our necks in the FD game! Raleigh's policy on annexation is (in my opinion) fairly administered and info is at:

<http://www.raleighnc.gov/business/content..>

A.C. Rich - 07/30/11 - 13:57

Name: (real name preferred)

E-mail: (optional)

Web Site: (optional)

Remember personal info?

Yes

No

Comment:

/ [Textile](#)

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.