

**UPDATED: Treasure Coast, Topsail Island, Surf City Fire Departments**

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March 27, 2012

Why did the Surf City fire stations look familiar to me? Because I had driven by the buildings last summer, then written this blog post about Topsail Island fire departments. Here's a picture of the Topsail Beach Fire Department, on the south end of the island. Do they have more than one station? Guess another trip is in order, to see more of those observation towers, poke around the remains of Camp Davis, and dig into a little more fire department history. Now that's what you call a fun vacation! [See more trip photos](#), and read about those [Topsail towers](#).



July 2, 2011

Heard of Treasure Coast Volunteer Fire Department in Pender County? That was the original municipal fire department in Surf City, and that operated from 1993 to 1994. Their history is part of a story recounted in the [history of the Surf City Volunteer Fire Department](#). Today, the island is protected by two Surf City fire departments, the municipal and the "rural". Back in the day, there was just one. Here's a summary of that history, aided by Google news archive searches and some other online records:

- 1966 - **Topsail Island FD** incorporated on September 15, 1966. Occupies block building at Roland Avenue and North Topsail Drive, the structure built in the 1940s. Such buildings were common on the island, from when the military had a top-secret testing facility there in the early 1940s.
- 1974 - Department renamed **Surf City Volunteer FD**. Effective on June 28, 1974.
- 1992 - Surf City Volunteer FD opens Station 2 on Highway 210 in the fall of that year. Exact address is 100 Deer Run Road.
- 1992 - **Treasure Coast FD** begins organizing as a municipal department for Surf City. They start around October, 1992.<sup>1</sup>
- 1993 - Treasure Coast FD assumes municipal fire protection responsibility. Effective on October 6, 1993.
- 1993 - Surf City Volunteer FD ceases operation at Station 1. Effective on or after October 6, 1993.
- 1994 - Treasure Coast FD incorporated. Effective March 24, 1994.
- 1994 - Treasure Coast FD ceases operation. Town renews contract with Surf City VFD, and the first renewal is a 90-day contract approved in May 1994. Town officials also call for merger of the two departments, citing a savings of over \$40,000. Source is Star-News, May 6, 1994.
- 1994 - Surf City Volunteer FD resumes operations at Station 1. Effective around May 1994.
- 1996 - Surf City Volunteer FD Station 1 destroyed by Hurricane Fran on September 5, 1996. Temporary building, with one bay housing one engine, is later used. Remaining apparatus is housed at Station 2.

- 1999 - **Surf City FD** organized, second attempt at municipal department. Station located at 200 Wilmington Avenue. Town cancels contract with Surf City Volunteer FD.
- 1999 - Surf City Volunteer FD closes Station 1 and begins exclusive operations from second station on Highway 210.
- 2008 - Surf City FD opens Station 2 at 1220 Highway 210 East.

How big is each department?

- Surf City FD - Three engines, one platform, one tanker, one brush truck, one rescue-body utility truck, one light truck, one SUV, one mule. Eleven full-time and 20 volunteer members. [Web site](#).
- Surf City Volunteer FD - Two engines, one tanker, two brush trucks, one QRV/chief's car, three watercraft. Over 30 members, all volunteer. [Web site](#).

How close is Surf City Volunteer FD and Surf City FD Station 2?

About a mile. Thus the double take you'll make, when you ride into town for the first time, and see a pair of "Surf City fire stations" within a mile of each other. They both have Hummers, as Mr. Blogger discovered today while roaming around that end of the county. Didn't stop for pictures, sorry.

<sup>1</sup>Why did the town elect to create its own fire department? The *Star-News* of August 10, 1993, provides some background. In June 1992, Surf City Volunteer FD communicated to the town a need for more money. And without more money, responses into the town might be impacted. This resulted in the town's decision to cancel the contract for fire protection. They gave the fire department a one-year notice of cancellation, with service ending on October 6, 1993. The town commenced organizing their own department, which would assume the responsibility of fire protection on the same day.

The *Star-News* of March 30, 1993, notes that a retired Fire Marshal from Fairfax County, VA, was hired as the new chief and town fire marshal. Bob Fioramonti, 53, had retired to Topsail Island four years prior. Also during that period, the town took legal action against Surf City Volunteer FD in May, 1993. The town disputed the ownership of apparatus and equipment, and cited their purchase with town funds. The *Star-News* of October 10, 1993, notes that a court-appointed mediator was overseeing the dispute and the distribution of apparatus and equipment. As ironically noted above, town officials were soon calling for the two departments to merge, and for reasons including cost savings.

Such ownership and control issues had reared their head before, such as during the planning for Surf City Volunteer FD's Station 2. Notes the *Star-News* on April 4, 1994, some town officials voiced the opinion that equipment owned by the town should remain on the island, versus the planned off-island location of the second fire station.

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The station on the island on the corner of North Topsail and Roland was destroyed from a tornado during a hurricane in the 90s, for a while a temporary building (small small building with 1 roll up door) was occupied by a Ford Gruman Pumper that the city has now (last time I was there) while trucks still responded from the station on 210. I guess everything changed when the new station was built by the city.

**car3550** - 07/02/11 - 22:20

Thanks for that tip. The *Star-News* of September 7, 1996, tells that the Surf City VFD Station 1 was destroyed during Hurricane Fran. That would have been September 5, 1996. Only one wall was left standing. Damage was severe in that area, the article notes. About 95 percent of oceanfront homes had substantial damage, and between 50 and 100 were beyond repair.

**Legeros** - 07/02/11 - 22:33

Notes the *Star-News* on February 5, 1998, the federal government allotted Pender County \$3.6 million as part of recovery from Hurricane Fran. The town requested a portion of same to fund construction of the municipal fire station, and were given \$200,000 toward the estimated \$550,000 cost.

**Legeros** - 07/02/11 - 22:35

As for Topsail Island, I know that North Topsail Beach FD has stations on the island, one of which is near the northernmost tip. Are there others?

**Chris** - 07/03/11 - 18:05

North Topsail FD has a St 2 on Island Drive at Gray St and is also occupied by a EMS unit and the North Topsail Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad. The station was once a seperate department that I believe was called Southwest Onslow Fire Department or South Onslow Fire Department I remember it in the same station during the 1980s along with a siren on a pole that rotated around when it sounded.

**car3550** - 07/03/11 - 19:02

I think N Topsail was West Onslow Beach at one time. Seems like they had a rear mount platform, amongst other apparatus.

**DJ** - 07/03/11 - 21:25

State records confirm that name change. North Topsail FD was renamed from West Onslow Beach FD in 1991. WOBFD was incorporated in 1985.

**Legeros** - 07/03/11 - 22:26

You can find all sorts of interesting information in state records. Sunset Beach Volunteer FD existed from 1972 to 1997. Found their name searching dissolved corporations. Viewing the filed documents, the corporate authorized dissolution on May 28, 1997. The documents were filed July 31, 1997. They were ratified by the state (right word?) on September 3, 1997. The documents noted that all assets were to be transferred to the town of Sunset Beach, for use in a town fire department.

**Legeros** - 07/03/11 - 23:50

The Surf City VFD will be ceasing all operations effective at 12:01am October 1 2013. There is supposedly a merger taking place between Pender EMS & Fire, but the fire responses will go to the Town of Surf City. Pender EMS & Fire will assume the debt and the building, and the building will remain vacant for about a year. After that, the Town of Surf City will close their Station 2 (On Hwy 210) and turn that over to the Surf City Police Dept, and the Town of Surf City FD will occupy the building of the Surf City VFD. It was overheard at a fire commission meeting that the Surf City VFD was actually in more debt than originally thought. If anyone would like more in depth info, feel free to e-mail me....

**Retired1202** ([Email](#)) - 09/25/13 - 00:11

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