

Fallen Firefighter Research Part 2 - Details and Statistics

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As a follow-up to my recent posting about [North Carolina fallen firefighter research records](#), let's look at some data and details from my database therein. The spreadsheet was created in 2006, the year the memorial was dedicated in Nash Square with 164 names. That roster has expanded with some ninety names, both those who've died in the years since, and the legacy members from prior decades. Here's a recap and expansion of some data and details from an [essay written in 2006](#):

Multi-Fatality Fires

Three times in the state's history have four firefighters died in the line of duty at the same incident. On May 25, 1979, four members of the **Shelby Fire Department** were killed when a building exploded during an apparently routine fire in a clothing store. On September 7, 1982, four members of the **National Spinning Company** textile plant fire brigade in Washington were overcome by smoke and died in an early morning fire. On July 1, 2012, four members of the **North Carolina Air National Guard** 145th Airlift Wing from Charlotte were killed when tanker crashed in South Dakota on the White Draw fire near Edgemont.

Winston-Salem's Fire Chiefs

Three Chiefs of Department and one Assistant Chief in Winston-Salem have died in the line of duty. Fire Chief **Harry Nissen** in 1932, in an automobile accident; Fire Chief **William Hobson** in 1938, of a heart attack; Fire Chief **Arnold Bullard** in 1980, of a heart attack; Asst. Chief **John Goforth** in 1956, of a heart attack.

Father and Son

North Carolina Division of Forest Resources pilot **Marshall Newman** and mechanic Larry Moody died after a midair collision near Kinston on November 19, 1973. Twenty-seven years later, his son also died in an aircraft accident involving the Forest Service. On September 7, 2000, forestry pilot **Tim Newman** and crew chief Mike Fossett were killed when their Huey UH-1H helicopter crashed near the Blue Ridge Parkway, near Waynesville in Haywood County.

Fire Alarm Systems

Three fatalities have involved personnel working with electric-telegraph fire alarm systems, which utilized low-voltage electrical wires typically strung from telephone and other poles: **W. Graham Cathey** in Charlotte in 1928; **Oscar Hayworth** in High Point in 1936; **William Capps** in Fayetteville in 1956.

Unusual Circumstances

In 1929, **Luther Horne** of Fayetteville was killed by a collapse at the ancestral home of legendary Fire Chief James McNeill. In 1931, **Edgar Elliott** of New Bern fell into the Neuse River and drowned while battling a riverfront fire. In 1934, **Pruitt Black** of Charlotte died when he tripped on his bunker pants and fell down the pole hole. In 1976, **McDaniel Narron** of Antioch died after suffering a heart attack while operating the pump at a fire at his own home. In 1989, **Roy Bailey** died when he was shot and killed while directing traffic.

Read more about these incidents in [this essay from 2006](#).

Statistics

By **county**, 74 of North Carolina's 100 counties have lost firefighters in the line of duty. The highest counts are:

- Mecklenburg - 17
- Forsyth - 13
- Cumberland - 10
- Wake - 10

By **agency**, 163 fire departments and fire protection agencies have lost firefighters in the line of duty. The highest counts are:

- Charlotte Fire Department - 12
- North Carolina Department of Forest Resources - 11
- Winston-Salem Fire Department - 8
- Wilmington Fire Department - 7

Note: Five agencies have lost four members, twelve agencies have lost three members, and eighteen agencies have lost two members.

By **status**, where known for 239 people, volunteer firefighter fatalities (57.7%) outnumber volunteer firefighter fatalities (42.3%).

By **age**, where known, the youngest firefighter died at 18 and the oldest firefighter died at 76. The average age is 42.8 years. The average age of career firefighter fatalities is 42.7. The average age of volunteer firefighter fatalities is 42.9.

By **cause**, where known, the highest counts are:

- heart attack/heart condition/cardiac/collapsed - 98 (40%)
- vehicle accidents on road - 55 (22%)
- burns or asphyxiation - 22 (9%)
- aircraft accidents - 13 (5%)
- struck by objects or vehicles - 13 (5%)
- structural collapse - 13 (5%)

For ages 35 and under, the highest counts for cause are:

- vehicle accidents on road - 28 (36%)
- burns or asphyxiation - 11 (14%)
- heart attack/heart condition/cardiac/collapsed - 8 (10%)
- structural collapse - 7 (9%)
- struck by objects or vehicles - 6 (8%)

For ages 50 and above, the highest counts for cause are:

- heart attack/heart condition/cardiac/collapsed - 60 (71%)
- vehicle accidents on roads - 9 (11%)
- struck by objects or vehicles - 5 (6%)

Note: Those labels for causes were created and assigned by myself, based on the records or interpretations therein.

By **day**, the deadliest days of the year were:

- July 1 - 6
- September 7 - 6
- November 6 - 5
- January 1 - 4
- March 21 - 4
- May 25 - 4
- August 21 - 4
- November 30 - 4

By **year**, the deadliest single years were:

- 2006 - 11 deaths
- 2008 - 11
- 2012 - 10
- 2007 - 9
- 2003 - 8

By **decade**, the deadliest decades have been:

- 2000s - 68 deaths
- 1970s - 44
- 1980s - 39
- 1990s - 20
- 2010s - 19

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