

Documents Pertaining to the History of the Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad

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Santa brought an early present last week, with the discovery of some old fire department files pertaining to the Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad. The documents include the original 1953 press release about the squad's formation, historical narratives about the formation, the organization's by laws, and vehicle registration cards.



Amazing things uncovered:

- The squad was proposed in 1947, under Fire Chief W. Ralph Butts. There wasn't time to grow the idea, as a change of administration occurred.
- The idea was resurrected upon the hiring of City Manager William "Bill" Carper. He took office in August/September 1950.
- Carper's name isn't Harper, which we've misspelled all along.
- Carper had experience organizing rescue squads in Virginia.
- The fire department visited rescue squads in Winston-Salem, Greensboro, and four Virginia locations.

- The Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad was originally intended to have forty to fifty volunteers, plus a couple assigned firemen.
- The first organization meeting was held in January 1953. The vehicles were delivered in October and November of that year.
- Their Reo Civil Defense rescue truck was a 1955 model, not the long-cited 1954 model year.

Meanwhile, Mr. Blogger will commence adding corrections about Carper's name and the Reo's model year, across multiple documents and web sites. Apologies to future historians who are confused by prior and later citations.

[Read the documents](#) (3.5M) (PDF).

Notes on the Documents

The first members completed Standard and Advanced courses in American Red Cross First Aid.

The first officers were:

- [Asst. Fire Chief] Jack B. Keeter, President
- A. E. Leavitt, Vice President
- [Fireman] H. D. Jones, Secretary
- Roy Critcher, Treasurer
- [Fire department dispatcher] Roy High, Reporter
- [Fireman] C. R. Puryear, Historian

Temporary officers were:

- Bobby Biggs, Captain
- [Fireman] W. R. Mabrey, First Lieutenant
- J. R. Riggan, Second Lieutenant
- G. L. Firth, Equipment Supervisor

Equipment carried on the truck included:

- Resuscitator
- Padded splints set, including spinal fracture boards made by members.
- Two boats, two outboard motors.

The City Manager issued a press release about the rescue squad being organized on January 13, 1953. Four days prior, on January 9, a meeting in the City Court Room was held at the invitation of Asst. Fire Chief Jack Keeter for the purpose of starting a rescue squad. Around thirty firemen, policemen, and civilians, including two "medical doctors" attended.

[Representatives of the fire and police departments met with private emergency groups, Civil Defense authorities, the Red Cross, physicians, and other interested citizens.]

Keeter was appointed temporary Chairmen and the group took the first steps at organization. They appointed an instructor for a thirty-two hour course in American Red Cross First Aid. The course, to start Thursday, January 19, would be the qualifying course for charter members.

Upon completion, they would adopt by-laws, elect officers, and begin the activity of acquiring equipment.

The instructor was American Red Cross First Aid Instructor Russell Cobb Nicholson. The course was conducted for eight weeks, four hours a week.

The organization was intended/expected to have forty to fifty men "superbly trained in all phases of rescue activity."

The basic equipment, notably the squad truck and boats, were authorized in the city budget. Other items of first aid and emergency equipment could be received through business donations. The squad would be stored at Station 1, and brought to accident scenes by "two trained first aid firemen assigned to this duty."

Additional members for first aid help would be requested to the scene through telephone calls.

In 1947, Fire Chief W. R. Butts, Asst. Chief Jack Keeter, and others came to the conclusion that Raleigh needed a rescue squad. Other

communities had them, and they reasoned that Raleigh should. But a change of administration took place, and no actions were taken on the idea.

After William "Bill" Carper [long-misspelled by myself as Harper] was appointed City Manager in August/September 1950, the subject arose again. He had organized similar squads in Culpepper and Fredericksburg, VA. He met with Asst. Chief Keeter and agreed on pursuing the idea. Keeter and Fire Chief A. B. Lloyd were sent on an "exploratory mission" to learn the merits of various "organizational systems" in neighboring communities. They studied the squads in Winston-Salem and Greensboro in North Carolina, and Lynchburg, Danville, Roanoke, and Martinsville, in Virginia.

The Raleigh Emergency Rescue Squad was incorporated on August 27, 1953.

The 1954 GMC panel van rescue squad was purchased on November 14, 1954. (Or perhaps delivered on that date?)

The 1955 Reo Civil Defense rescue truck was procured in October 1954. Note the model year 1955 indicated on the title.

The model year has been long-cited as a 1954.

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

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Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

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