

UPDATE #2: Tonight's Major House Fire on Denberg Lane

01/14/14 546 W, 2 I - + 6 - 7

January 14

FireNews.net has [posted a story](#) about the incident, which includes some strong video from Thomas Babb, as edited by FireNews.net. Believe the videographer was behind the arriving Holly Springs engine, which should help with estimating timing:

January 13

[JocoFire.com](#) photographer Jason Thompson has [posted photos](#) and [extended video](#) from the scene. He notes: "Neighbors advise[d] that the homeowners are out of the country in Mexico and that nobody was home. A neighbor told me that she didn't know the house was on fire until she saw the first fire apparatus arrive. She then looked outside and saw the entire back of the house on fire. The large three story home is at the end of cul-de-sac in a nonhydranted area near Cary. The call was initially received as an unknown outside fire. Firefighters arrived to find the back of the three story home on fire. According to firefighters on scene there was initially an interior attack; however, firefighters quickly ran out of water. Initially, the Fairview, Cary, Swift Creek, Apex and Holly Springs fire departments responded."

Other notes, from a discussion on my Facebook page. The fire could be seen from Holly Springs Road, and embers were falling in several neighboring subdivisions. By the time Thompson arrived, the second and third stories had collapsed. All floors of the house had been burned. (That's truly fully-involved!) Updated coverage list below, who's missing? And who remained on scene overnight? Here are media links: [WRAL](#), [WTVD](#), [WNCN](#).

January 12

Ten fire departments have been battling a major house fire in southwestern Wake County. The address is 5445 Denberg Lane in Cary. That's a 5,336 square-foot structure, three stories, built in 1994. And it's located far off the road, and far from any hydrants. Three dump tanks were utilized, and supplied defensive operations including deck guns and Cary Ladder 6. Hazards included collapse zones from chimneys. Exposures included a grass fire reported by a resident whose home backed up to this one. Additional tankers were requested, including a Northern Wake County tanker strike team. Fire reported about 9:00 p.m. Originally reported as an outside fire, and arriving units discovered that a home was burning. The home was unoccupied at the time of the blaze. Here's a great photo from Thomas Babb, which he submitted to WRAL. [See that story](#). The image was also distributed on Twitter by FireNews.net. And why isn't Legeros down there? School night, baby! Click to enlarge:



Thomas Babb photo

Here's a Google aerial view of the property:



These are the fire units on scene, as determined so far:

- Fairview E1, E8, Tanker 6, Tanker 7, Car 1, Car 2
- Swift Creek E3, Tanker 6, Tanker 2, Brush 4
- Cary E6, E3, L6, B1
- Holly Springs E1, E2, E3, Bat 1, Car 1
- Apex Tanker 1, E1
- Fuquay-Varina Tanker 4
- Durham Highway Pumper 4 (NWTST)
- Bay Leaf Tanker 366, Tanker 257, Tanker 127 (NWTST)
- Wake Forest Tanker 2 (NWTST)
- Stony Hill Tanker 268 (NWTST).

Coverage includes:

- Cary E10 (pumper with L1 crew) moved to Cary Station 6 as Engine 60
- Garner E2 to Fairview
- Morrisville covering... somewhere
- Northwest Harnett engine to Holly Springs 2
- Wake Forest E5 to Swift Creek.

Medical units include:

- Apex EMS 42
- Cary EMS District 5
- Wake County EMS 17, EMS 4, District 2, Medic 91, Truck 1.

The NWTTF should read as NWTST (ST for Strike Team) since all the resources are categorically the same. If there were a combination of resources, i.e. 2 engines, a ladder and a rescue, then it would be a task force. So, since all the trucks are considered "tankers", it should be labeled as strike team and referred to as such.

Marcus - 01/13/14 - 00:38

Why does it seem that most fires in Cary and Raleigh seem to be damaged to the point of destruction following a fire? It seems that tactics should be reviewed. I realize that this incident occurred where hydrants were scarce, however; this was an issue prior to the fire right? It was not like the hydrants were removed just prior to the fire starting. Maybe it's just coincidental but from my standpoint it seems when compared to other municipalities, these two always seem to save the foundation. Are their incidental priorities skewed? Other than a few incidents, I don't recall seeing Charlotte, Greensboro, or Durham burning buildings to the ground so frequently.

Mike - 01/13/14 - 09:48

Mike, firefighters are now instructed to "risk a life to save a life". The homeowners were in Mexico so there is no reason to go inside. Besides, "it's not our stuff burning up". I don't agree with it but that's the direction the fire service has turned. And what I posted doesn't pertain to just this fire but every fire. The fire service used to save lives and property. Now it's just lives. Plain and simple.

Rescue Ranger - 01/13/14 - 10:04

Seeing as this fire was not in a municipality I don't see your basis Mike. This fire took place in an unincorporated area of Wake County that just happened to have Cary responding in automatic aid as a "closest" unit, it was Fairview's fire. I can think of many fires in both of the above listed cities that had fantastic stops put to them, some just within the past couple of weeks. Although they typically aren't all over the news as fires like last nights are. Not to mention how many fires are stopped in the incipient phase and nobody ever hears about.

notincary - 01/13/14 - 10:21

I understand regional areas for tanker responses but by doing so you miss closer tankers. With the north side responding, 5 tankers drove past Western Wake and Morrisville from as far a wake forest because the west was not called for since swift creek and apex were already in use. Same for the south side, with Fairview Fuquay and holly springs already on scene it eliminated the use of garners tankers. just a thought on getting water faster when needed.

Strike Team Flaw - 01/13/14 - 10:49

Rescue Ranger, Cary Eng 6 did make an interior attack and initially stated that they had fire on both the 3rd floor and in the attic. They were pulled out when they ran out of water. From there the fire sounded like it increased in size greatly prior to getting water again.

Mike Bishop - 01/13/14 - 11:45

Would love to hear the initial dispatch and working fire ground tac channel audio.

I bet we could all learn something here.

The Chiefs made their decisions based on factors we cant see or hear.

Audio would be great to give us some type of idea of what kind of position they were put in.

Buckwheat - 01/13/14 - 12:43

I'm not sure about the Morrisville to CFD coverage. Cary Engine 10 (Ladder 1's company riding a pumper) moved to CFD6 as Engine 60.

Also Cary Battalion 1 was on scene

shevais - 01/13/14 - 12:49

On arrival, heavy fire on the C and D side burning the 1st story to the 3rd, already vented out the attic. The incident commander did a great job calling for more resources early. The manpower and water were on scene, the problem occurred with two engines having unforeseen mechanical issues which caused fire attack to lose water. Had fire attack had a constant supply water it's hard to say if it would have made a

difference. A huge house nearly 75% involved on arrival.

FF - 01/13/14 - 16:09

If it is my house, let it burn if it is this involved. First, it is not worth a FF's life or possible injury to try to save it. Second, the house would never be the same if repaired vs. just starting over with the dirt. That is why we carry insurance. If it is heavily involved, let it go.

2 cents worth - 01/13/14 - 18:57

Engines had unforeseen mechanical issues? Such as what? I know from experience, that if an engineer is not experienced (regardless of the years of the job) they may loose prime easier on Engine 6. I'm curious what mechanical issues would have hindered fire attack. No argument that it was probably a fully involved total loss anyway...

Engineer6 - 01/13/14 - 19:48

...as the white shirts reading begin to groan, great, somebody's going to get sued with admissions of mechanical problems.

Legeros - 01/13/14 - 19:58

Fairview engine 8 would not pull a draft at all. Swift creek engine 3 would only pull a draft on the front intake, causing the pump to only be able to flow half the capacity of the pump.

FF - 01/13/14 - 20:22

@Mike Many fires occur in both Cary and Raleigh that you never hear about. Very rarely do you see a news headline reading "Firefighters Make A Great Stop". It isn't news worthy unless the word(s) "homeless", "injured", "dead", or "total loss" can be used.

You're quick to trash Cary and Raleigh's tactics (even though this wasn't in either city) while using a generic name as "Mike"...which super agency are you with?

Silver - 01/13/14 - 20:24

@ strike team flaw, I couldnt agree with you more on you statement, there were tankers a lot closer than those on the "task force". Look at all the resources to the south, EX, Johnston, Harnett Co's, google Clayton, Cleveland,50-210, Archer Lodge, Angier, NW Harnett and so on,,,heck of a lot closer than the 40 min run from SHFD,,,,,,just something to ponder

JDH - 01/13/14 - 21:21

@ Mike. If you think our tactics are lacking come ride with us there buddy! I guarantee if you would of been on Twin Oaks, Kristin Ct, or S. Atley in which heavy fire conditions in multi unit structures were present you'd think twice about your non evident statement on our tactics as they are still standing and being rebuilt. I've know silver for years and fought my first fire with him and he would tell you CFD has come along way especially after being a citizen of Cary. "Situational awareness and risk vs. gain are key to going home."

Jay - 01/13/14 - 21:31

Legeros, I can see lawsuits if there was documented problems of mechanical issues that were neglected. If I truck pulls up and the pumps fails with no prior problems, then Murphy has arrived on scene and you start executing plans B & C while formulating Plans D through M. When Murphy shows up, he is there for the long haul!

As far as tactics for this fire and the questions of what if... If the homeowner would have had a monitored fire alarm, we would not be having this discussion. Most alarm systems are free if you get a monitoring contract. Even still, if you are building a \$700,000 house, and you don't spend \$2,500 on a alarm system, you are asking for this to happen.

I will not respond to the grouping and trash talking of departments when facts are not presented.

Donaldson - 01/13/14 - 21:40

Thanks for your perspective Donaldson. Murphy does indeed make appearances on fire scenes and often at the least advantageous situation. I don't recall moderating comments regarding major loss fires and mechanical problems in the past. If these comments disappear, I've exercised extreme caution. Folks are free to mail me with concerns.

There's a grand discussion to be had on the subject of risk and reward, firefighting then versus firefighting now. Maybe we'll go there. As for tactical discussions on this blog, and outright bashing, we know the history there. Everyone gets hot, and even when facts are presented. Mike turns into a wuss, and starts deleting comments. It's a mess.

Blog for sale. Buyer must have thick skin.

Legeros - 01/13/14 - 21:54

What, Mike seems to forgot or ignore, is it is only these large fires that get photo coverage. No one cars about the good room and contents fire that no one has time to get to and photograph. This place is the size of a commercial building in an area with NO hydrants and a longer response time (unincorporated area), a residential sprinkler system would have helped.

GAfireman ([Email](#)) - 01/13/14 - 22:13

Mike under units responding Bay leaf actually sent a tanker from each station please add tanker 127 to the list of responding units , thanks for all you do for Wake County Fire services .

Bay leaf Responder - 01/13/14 - 22:39

This blog has done great things for Wake County Fire Services as a place where different FD's could compare ideas and strategies and have been follower for years. Like most social media discussion boards this is/has become a places for folk to gripe, complain and basically use it as a soap box to push own agendas. My hope is that we can go back to the original concept of discussing a fire without emotion and sticking to the facts and maybe even learning something for the next one. Their is nothing worse than arm chair FF saying what he/she would have done if it was him/her...It's a lot easier to go by the scene the next day and make an opinion or worse look at a picture on a website. The fire service is about teaching/learning...Let's get back to our fundamental objective of continually training, preparing and getting better for the next incident.

Frustrated - 01/14/14 - 15:00

Is drafting a lost skill in the fire service? Problems I have seen with big water hauls is when the truck runs out of water the operator forgets to close the tank to pump or the tank fill valve and is trying to prime the booster tank. And yes I have done it myself.

Rob Mitchell - 01/14/14 - 22:38

I think drafting is a list art and since Cary is fortunate enough to have a great hydrant system in most of the coverage area, training rarely focuses on drafting. And then when a progressive captain suggests the idea, it's disregarded or not supported because of a lack of equipment and lack of support for the need to train on drafting.

Russ Wilson - 01/14/14 - 22:59

EMS District 2

EMS 4

Medic 91

All on scene.

Aaron - 01/15/14 - 01:24

I am assigned to Firehouse 6 on C Shift Ladder 6. I was transferred in April. You are right, we don't have the equipment to train on drafting. That has not stopped Capt Wilson on Engine 6 from contacting Fairview and having a dump tank and hose brought to us. We train on this because we know there are areas we will be first in and may have to draft, or may be second in and may have to draft. Lack of equipment is not a valid argument. Out battalion chief also encourages our training and being very hands on with any subject we see as a need.

When you train on drafting, do you train on the "oh crap" stuff? Like failing primers, switching out trucks fast, or even pulling suction tubes around the truck when the front intake just won't get it done? Drafting may very well be a lost art, but it is because we let it. Next time you train, practice the "oh crap" stuff. When Murphy shows up, be ready.

Donaldson - 01/15/14 - 01:50

Any word on cause yet? I know they may be still investigating etc., but I only ask because the local news media sometimes reports the stories but does not follow up on them. I am curious to know what happened as the fire was so intense, and the house is almost completely gone. Condolences to the family in this extremely difficult time.

Julia - 01/15/14 - 12:37

Thanks for the reply. I will continue to check back. Very interesting and informative blog, by the way.

Julia - 01/15/14 - 23:52

"The fire service is about teaching/learning...Let's get back to our fundamental objective of continually training, preparing and getting better for the next incident."

The county didn't even train on the new tanker strike team before they implemented it. Closer tankers were skipped over during that fire to call for tankers 30 to 45 minutes away because of geographic location.

Frustrated Too - 01/16/14 - 11:42

Guys it is up to the IC which area tanker task force he or she calls for. It sounds more like you are upset that your dept got skipped over for a different region. So be it.

Mike Bishop - 01/16/14 - 13:29

I don't think frustrated is upset because they're department got skipped. They're probably frustrated that the Strike Team system is flawed. By creating regional dispatch only for tankers we limit the ability to get the closest tankers to respond. An incident commander should be able to call for a Strike Team, with no regional title. With that request they should get the 5 closest tankers in the Strike Team. Since each department can only have 1 tanker per station tagged this way it won't dispatch a bunch of unstaffed tankers but rather the 5 closest available tankers from 5 different stations. At the time when the IC called for the North, instead of getting stony hill and wake forest along with 3 bay leaf stations, they probably would have received tankers from Morrisville, Garner, Western Wake, Fuquay and Bay Leaf. A tanker is a 1 person truck and staffing would have remained in all these stations while getting water delivered much faster. Something else to look at is that we have all different sized tankers responding in these Strike teams. Some departments 1000g or 1250g pumper tankers, others 1800g or 2000g true tankers. This creates its own issues in calculating number of tankers as well as making a tanker shuttle run efficiently. The Strike Team is a great first step but it needs to be adjusted and tweaked to be the most efficient system it can.

Strike Tam Flaw - 01/16/14 - 14:19

Just some food for thought for those discussing the tanker task force strike team regional hoopla boopla.

I agree there are some flaws, such as distance, but what would probably make more sense is to break things down into smaller regions/areas that tankers are pulled from. I took the explanation of this service agreement between departments to be so that a "region" could be requested and every department in that "region" would send the tanker with enough personnel to run the apparatus 1 or 2.

There were supposed to be stipulations that departments would use the newer tankers or tankers with above 1,500 gallons due to smaller ones messing up the delivery/fill rate equations. i.e. a 1,000 gall. engine and 1,200 gall tanker with only rear dumps compared to all the new tankers with 2,000 gall. and side/rear automatic dump chutes. Either way it all sounded to work out fine once it got going and keep in mind it takes a while to bring all those resources together.

Also, consider when you ask why did this "region" get skipped for that "region" the "South Region" was stripped of all resources. If another fire had come out in Fuquay, Garner, Holly Springs, Apex, Fairview, Swift Creek or Cary southside, could you imagine what that blog would look like? Hum... I bet it would go like this "XXXXX department is a bunch of idiots for sending all their manpower to that first fire!" Pretty close don't you think?

If another unit had been requested from Fuquay, our BC would possibly contemplated the notion of advising IC there was no way. For several hours Fuquay/Garner and a few units moved around such as 1 engine from Harnett County covering Holly Springs were it for this "region".

Yes there was a lot of fire, yes there were water issues, but there were almost 80,000 residents of the Fuquay-Varina Fire District that paid a lot of money in taxes to make sure fire trucks come to their emergencies when they call 9-1-1, no matter if the world was on fire. So with that kudos to IC for his request and not depleting this "region".

Josh - 01/17/14 - 11:18

Josh. No one is asking FV to dump the house or houses for someone else's fire. re-read Strike team Flawed's last post. One tanker from the five closest stations not already on scene or en route. Every department has a district that comes first but one tanker with one driver is not going to leave the district high and dry.

Frustrated Too - 01/17/14 - 13:01

Frustrated Too is right. The Strike team is not meant to deplete anyone's stations of coverage. One truck, 1 or 2 people if available. If your tanker that is a part of the Strike Team is already on scene, your station will be skipped over on the next request, another truck will not be dispatched and expected on scene from that station.

I understand your angle on covering your own fire district Josh, but the districts all still had trucks in the area covering. No one was left high and dry. Fairview had a staffed engine from Garner. Swift Creek had a staffed engine from Wake Forest. Holly Springs had staffed trucks from

NW Harnett and Morrisville. Cary had an engine at its St 6 and a Ladder in service at its St 3. The area was covered. Fuquay to my recollection and based on this blog only had 1 tanker in the mix.

That's no different then your station running an EMS call and it being unavailable for another call and if this exhausts your towns resources then you should probably approach your town council about additional staffing. The back filling of stations was done quite well and covered everything efficiently. The citizens of all the municipalities and county areas were still well protected.

Lastly, the tax money that the residents of Fuquay who are in the county pay is a county-wide tax supporting the county fire service. These are county-wide resources, such as county-bought tankers and engines, and are meant to serve all residents of Wake county and not just the Fuquay area. The residents in your town limits who do not come close to 80,000, pay a different rate and tax and they still had plenty of coverage, no worse then a day when a thunderstorm comes through or when every truck is just busy with everyday calls.

Strike Team Flaw - 01/17/14 - 14:46

And thats what Fuquay sent. The only department that didn,t have a tanker on scene from the south side was Garner. Could Fuquay have sent another 2000 gallon tanker? Probably with out messing with our already very limited manpower. The tanker strike team and task force was a great idea when formed but like all things in the fire service you change or add someone wont be happy. Think about the last fire across Penny road from this one. There wasnt a strike team or task force called or even in place at the time and it also burned down. Good job to all responding departments and those who backed filled. Thats what we do!

Dustin - 01/17/14 - 16:00

<http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog..>

Check this one out. Same exact scenario.

Dustin - 01/17/14 - 16:09

Hahaha... You're right! I was a little finger happy typing that up. It's supposed to read 50,000. But hey I will admit when I am wrong and even that number was incorrect. It is around mid 40's. I appologize for the confusion, if we had that many residents I don't think staffing would be an issue in sending 1 extra tanker.

Josh - 01/17/14 - 20:10

Yes sir Mike, We have around that in the rural area.

Just a little weekend fire memory, are any of you guys that look at the blog old enough or been around long enough to remember the night Lafayette School burned down in Harnett County? It was about 5 minutes south of Wake County on Hwy 401. On that night back in 1991, units from Southern Wake County responded to assist all of Harnett County with manpower, tankers, & engines. Units were moved into Harnett County, some coming from other eastern and western counties, to back fill the stations. By our standards today this would have been a 4th or 5th alarm card assignment.

As this call was winding down and units were trying to clear, a fire was reported in a district about 10-15 miles away. The district with the fire had sent most of its manpower & apparatus to the school fire with Northwest Harnett, as did most departments back then (you call for help and we send it until you tell us to stop). The only units still available were a ?1967? tanker with front mount pump & the brush truck, along with 3 members out of about 25. There was a neighboring department that had moved up for coverage with a 4/5 person crew.

As this call was dispatched and advised of caller reporting fire showing, units scrambled to get trucks together for a response from the fire at Lafayette School. A second large commercial building burned down that night. I do not think that if units had been in place that the outcome would have been much different. Maybe a few more walls left standing and some roof rafters, that would probably be about it.

To those that want to knock the tanker task force/strike team concept or say everything about it is wrong, it was from previous experiences such as those & many more that transpired through 15-25 year careers that our Chiefs came up with this concept. Do you really think the chiefs of this county are so stupid they didn't agree that the tankers needed to come from a few districts over? Do you think that they just said "Hell fire boys, we need to get some more water to our fires out in the sticks! I don't give a crap who it is but, we just need 'em!" No I am pretty sure that they made a decision at the um..um...um....oh yeah CHIEF'S MEETINGS on what would be an initial step towards the right direction.

I really think some people are pissed that they didn't get to go fight a pile of ashes. What would help the situation more? Me blowing whistles with my town commissioners or my fire chief over needing more staffing, which with his 20 plus years of experience he is pretty capable of

recognizing that need, or for us as firefighters to look at our chiefs and ask questions about why it's this way or that, and tell them "Chief, I listened to that fire or better yet actually attended that fire the other night and do you think this could have worked better with the tanker deal?"

Give them feedback such as dispatch the tankers anytime there is a working fire in a building over 2,000 sq feet in non-hydranted areas. Chief, what could the firefighters of this county do to increase hydrants and water points for our taxpayers property? These men and women who get to the rank of Chief did not just have it given to them in today's Wake County fire service. They had to prove to others they could handle the job, show they could make decisions. They will probably make some corrections in time to come with this need, and people will still gripe because that is our human nature to want more, more, more, more, more, more, more. I think that other than some mechanical issues with a few trucks, and initial water supply issues things went fairly good. That fire had a big jump on those first due units and not to mention it was initially dispatched as an outside fire so there is another delay.

Oh well we may have to agree to disagree on this one, but no matter what you guys/gals be safe out there.

Josh - 01/17/14 - 21:52

Nothing says you have request the strike team and that's it. If the IC wants a tanker closer, he or she needs to have enough sense to request one closer. Nothing says you will request a strike team and nothing else. The one fire I was on where a strike team was called for, several other tankers were special requested right off the bat. All these ICs are aware of the policies and that it may take 30 minutes to get all tankers on scene for the strike team. It wasn't designed to be an offensive fire weapon. If you need tankers on scene quickly, call for them. It seems like some of you think its strike team or nothing.

Common Sense - 01/18/14 - 15:01

Anymore updates on this fire?

Julia - 01/24/14 - 13:26

I know this is old news, but was a cause ever determined for this fire?

Julia - 02/15/14 - 00:09

Name: (real name preferred)
E-mail: (optional)
Web Site: (optional)

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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'?

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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.