

Ambulances Collide in Raleigh, October 1939

04/03/14 380 W - + 11 - 3

Back in the day, ambulances that were "running lights and siren" in Raleigh had to request clearance from RESCOM. The reason for this requirement, as the story was told, was the collision of two funeral home ambulances at the intersection of Martin and Dawson streets, back before the days of Beacon or Raleigh ambulance. What really happened? [Google News Archive Search](#) provides some answers.

The Afro-American

October 21, 1939

Death, Wreck, Injuries Result from Fatal Cutting

RALEIGH, N.C. - As the result of a fatal cutting here Sunday evening, an ambulance driver is seriously injured, another driver died Monday from his injuries, a station attendant has a broken leg and a one-legged man has his good leg in bandages.

The Cause

Shortly after 10 p.m., the police summoned the ambulance of Lightner's Funeral Home and the Raleigh Funeral Home. With sirens open so loud one deafened the other, they crashed at the intersection of Cabarrus and Blount Streets.

The Results

The careening cars broke the leg of a filling station attendant, injured the one-legged bench sitter and wrecked a nearby car. The results are: dead of knife wounds, Thomas Fletcher; died in the crash, Nathan Burt; injured, Joseph Wilder, a broken leg; a bandaged leg, Manual Williams.

That accident happened at Cabarrus and Blount streets. Where did the Dawson and Martin street memory come from? That was another, later accident.

News and Courier

December 7, 1952

5 Hurt at Raleigh In Collision Involving Ambulance

RALEIGH - Dec. 6 (AP) - Five persons were hurt in a collision involving an ambulance near the heart of Raleigh tonight.

The ambulance, which was answering an emergency call, collided with a car in front of Warren's Restaurant at Martin and Dawson Sts. and bowled the car into the doorway of the establishment, where about 60 persons were eating.

The driver of the car, Herbert Gupton, 44, Raleigh music store operator, was critically injured with a fractured skull and severe cuts and bruises. Gupton's son and daughter were badly cut and two men in the ambulance were injured.

Next question, when did RESCOM start and stop requiring such radio clearance? Was that in place prior to RESCOM? We'll look to readers for that information, as well as any anecdotes on the subject of ambulance collisions.

I remember the 'cleared through Raleigh' thing going on when I got my first scanner (a Regency 8 channel) in 1973 or so. Anytime an ambulance or fire truck was responding to a call and was traveling through Raleigh, it would be announced on 'Raleigh 1' (RPD) that "10-52 Beacon, clearing 10-39 to _____" or "10-70 Raleigh clearing to _____". Occasionally, they would do the same thing for the volunteer fire departments that bordered the city limits (I heard it more for Fairgrounds, Durham Highway, Six Forks, and New Hope that I did for Swift

Creek...or course, Swift Creek did not run as many calls back then.)

Ambulances transporting to UNC or Duke from points east would call on RESCOM (155.280) and "request clearance". Many times it would be Lenoir Memorial Hospital coming up on US70 through Garner (you could hear their strobe power pack interference coming over the radio). Occasionally there would be someone like Stoney Creek, Momeyer, or Coopers coming up from Nash County, as they rotated as to who would handle transfers out of Nash County Hospital. IF they were going to UNC, they would come through Raleigh, but if they were going to Duke, they would take the 'northern route' along NC98 through Wake Forest.

The last time I heard it broadcast over the radio was around 1980, give or take.

DJ - 04/03/14 - 13:01

Did they ever say "NO"?

Olson - 04/03/14 - 15:48

It was still in place when I started and if I'm not mistaken it ended about the same time County RESCOM switched off of 155.280 which was early 1990's. @Olson - yes, they did deny clearance - there is a TERRIBLY funny story involving that when Lee Gupton was 861 (late 70's) - they denied his clearance and in a few minutes after he had gone across Raleigh and back into Garner's EMS area he said, "I'm in my GD district now!" over the radio! It's one of the most famous radio stories of Wake County history for sure. Ralph Stephenson used to tell it really well. I'll contact George Lyman on facebook, I bet he remembers about when it stopped.

Jason Thompson ([Email](#)) ([Web Site](#)) - 04/03/14 - 21:53

@Olson- Chief, JT is right about the one time they said no: Garner 861 requested "10-39 clearance" from somewhere in Raleigh to a call in the Garner area, probably a 10-50. RESCOM denied it and there was a memorable exchange over the radio when 861 reached the city limits. As I remember there was just a little more to the exchange than JT mentioned and I almost wet myself I was laughing so hard.

DJ - 04/03/14 - 23:41

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

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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.