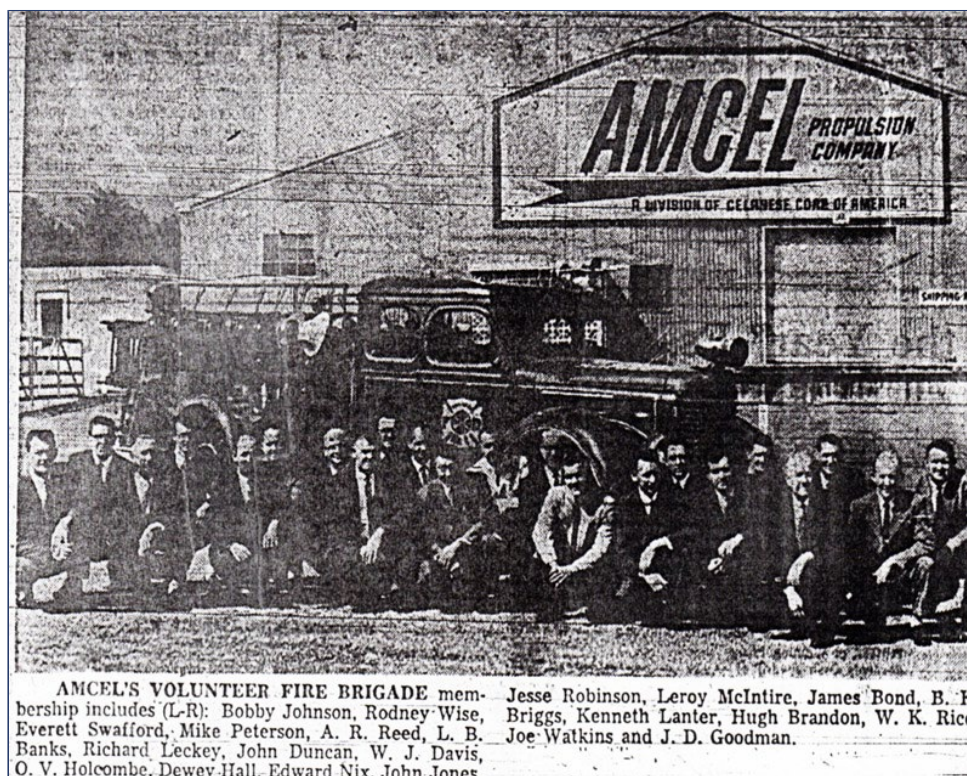


Amcel Propulsion Company Fire Brigade, 1965

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Here's a vintage newspaper clipping from the *Asheville Citizen Times* dated April 22, 1965. That's the Amcel Propulsion Company Fire Brigade, which was organized in 1960 with a "nucleus of day shift maintenance." The plant was located in Swannanoa and manufactured rocket fuel. The brigade's duties consisted of "fire fighting, rendering first aid, and personnel rescue work." By the time of the article, they had thirty-five members from several departments in the plant and from all three shifts.

The Fire Chief was Everette Swafford. There were three assistant chiefs, one on each shift. They operated a 1942 International/American LaFrance 500/150, painted green (!), which originally served Scottsdale, PA. From the John Peckham American LaFrance, database, the registration number was B-1403 and the truck was shipped August 14, 1942. Click to enlarge:



The plant was located on ten acres on Old Bee Tree Road in Swannanoa. Industrial operations, including explosives manufacturing, began in 1952. The site appears to have been owned by Amcel Propulsion from 1959 to 1965. It was later owned/operated by Chemtronics. Waste disposal practices saw the site placed on the EPA's National Priorities List in 1983, because of contaminated ground water and soil. Manufacturing activities at the site ended in 1994. [Read more EPA information](#) about the site. Here's a Bing Bird's Eye view of the property today:



How many fire brigades have protected industrial properties around our state, you ask? They've have been a ton and some dating from decades earlier. Past 'n' present include Beacon (Buncombe), Drexel (Burke), Cannon Mills (Cabarrus), Clairant (Gaston), Corning (New Hanover), CP&L Harris Plant (Wake), Collins & Aikman (Person), Corriher Mill (Rowan), Champion (Haywood), Cross Cotton Mills (McDowell), DSM (Pitt), Duke Energy McGuire Plant (Mecklenburg), DuPont (Cumberland), Enka (Buncombe), Fieldcrest-Cannon, later Pillowtex-Cannon (Cabarraus), Goodyear (Cumberland), GE (New Hanover), GSK (Wake), IBM (Durham), International Paper (Columbus), Kapstone Paper (Halifax), Linn Mill (Rowan), Michelen (Stanly), North Carolina Finishing Company (Rowan), PCS (Beaufort), Progress Energy Brunswick Plant (Brunswick), Rowan Mills (Rowan), Spencer Shops (Rowan), and Weyerhaeuser (Craven, Surry).

But how many of those had apparatus??

See this [FDmaps.com page](#) on current fire brigades. See also this essay [Early Raleigh Fire Brigades](#) (PDF).

Transcript of the story:

Amcel's Volunteer Firemen Offer Plant Protection From Disaster

Amcel Propulsion Company at Swannanona has been increasing its volunteer fire fighting abilities during the past five years.

Amcel's volunteer firemen were organized in 1960 with a nucleus of day shift maintenance men.

This original fire-fighting group provided emergency services consisting of fire fighting, rendering fire said, and personnel rescue work.

This group has expanded until there are now 35 members from several [plant] departments.

Made up of men from all three plant shifts, the group is headed by Fire Chief Everette Swafford and one assistant chief from each shift.

"The effectiveness of these dedicated men is continually being enlarged through training and provision of additional equipment," Chief Swafford said.

"In the day-to-day rush of our jobs, few of us have taken the time to realize the extensive training and equipment needed for an efficient fire brigade. It's worth a few moments to consider the protection provided us and our jobs by our employee firemen and plant equipment," Chief Swafford said.

Amcel recent purchased the now familiar green International fire truck from Scottsdale, Penn.

Modified by American LaFrance Co., the vehicle is equipped with a large line 500-gallon-per-minute high pressure pumper and a 150-gallon booster tank and hose for small line use.

Amcel's 350-gallon tank from the old tank trailer is being mounted on the Dodge fire truck to provide a back-up unit.

Small lines are used with a four-horsepower pump and the 350-gallon tank for remote areas or small fires and the truck carries large hose for direct connection to our plant hydrant system.

Other features include a five-passenger cab, ladder rack with a 12-foot ladder and 24-foot extension ladder, fire extinguishers, nozzles for two and one-half and one and one-half inch hose, 1,800 feet of 2 ½ inch hose, and 1,000 feet of 1 ½ inch hose, and a hose of auxiliary racks, holders, and fire tools.

The new truck increases the ability to direct a stream of water to much greater distances and in larger quantities, thus providing a means for more remote action and quicker quenching in fire-fighting.

Each year, during four days in October, a retraining course is given by a North Carolina-licensed fire fighting instructor from the Asheville Fire Department.

The intensive plant training program consists of field and classroom instruction.

Men are taught the latest techniques in using fire fighting equipment, ventilation and roof entry, and use of portable extinguishers.

In addition, there are demonstrations in the use and operation of breathing apparatus, use of ladders, care of equipment, and selection and proper equipment for different classes of fire.

Classroom training includes discussion of fire causes and hazards, the fire alarm system and actions required, and first aid instruction.

The purpose of this training program is to provide a more capable, efficient fire brigade for the protection and security of the plant from fire and to assist in the elimination of hazards which may cause a fire or accident.

"The fire brigade assumes an important role in protective our lives and our jobs and we owe them our thanks and respect for undertaking the training required and the demands on them when called to action," Chief Swafford said.

From a reader, here's a vintage photo of the Scottsdale Fire Department, including the later Amcel engine. It's a picture of a picture and with a bit of digital perspective correction. Don't know the date. Also posted on the new blog: <http://legeros.com/blog/vintage-photo-of..>



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To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

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

[\(Register your username / Log in\)](#)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.