

## MCAS Edenton Fire Department During World War II

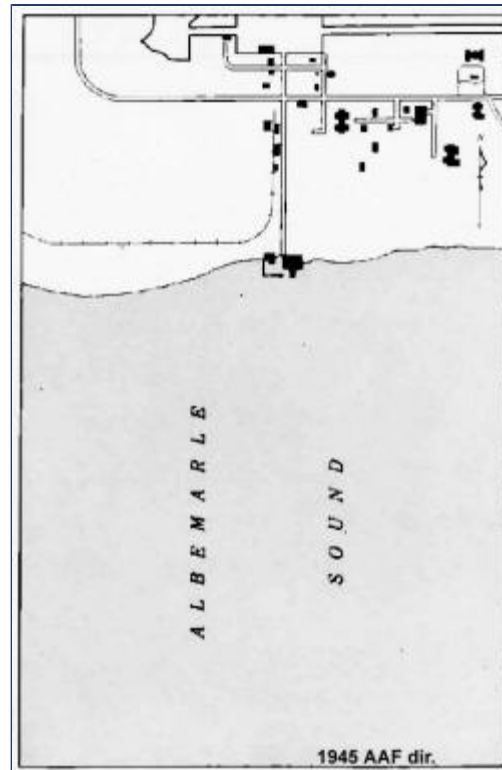
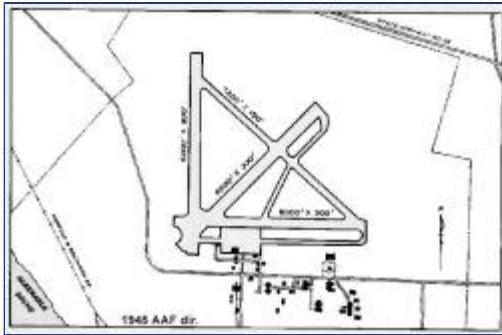
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For your weekend historical enjoyment, here's a summary of Marine Corps Air Station Edenton fire department during World War II. The source is a six-page historical document on the subject, recently declassified and shared by military firefighting historian Ted Heinbuch. See his work at [Fire Trucks at War](#), as well as the [Facebook group](#) of the same name. He provided a pair of images and information about the cited Chrysler and Seagrave apparatus.

### Air Station

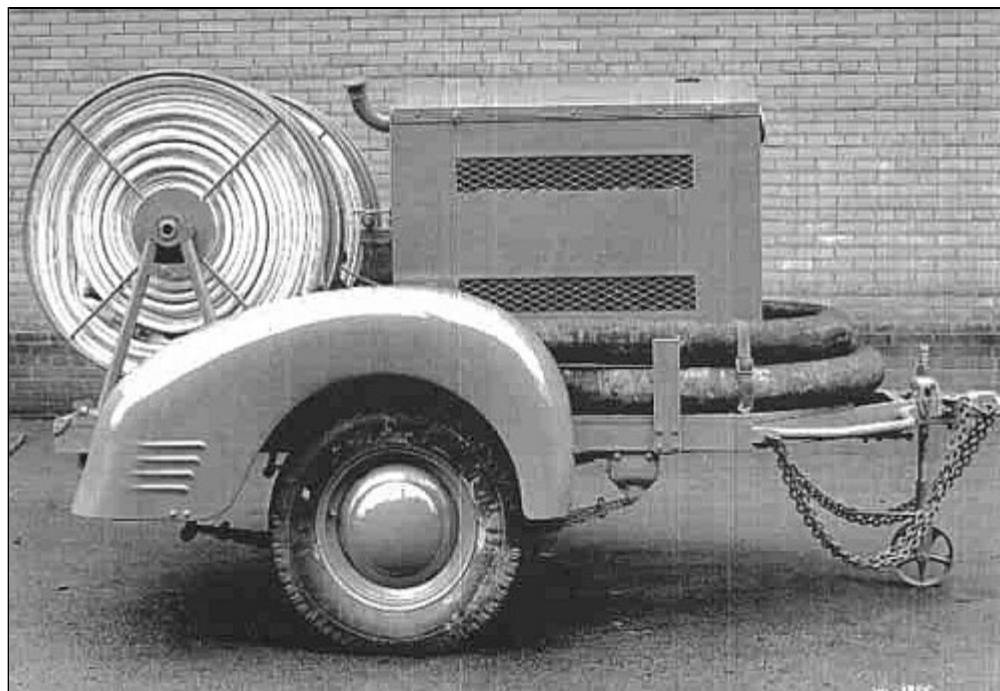
Currently called Northeast Regional Airport, the site was originally constructed during World War II. The site included a seaplane base on the Albemarle Sound. See this [Wikipedia page](#) for a brief history. Here are some [photos of the airport](#) today, shot by myself last year. There are a couple of original buildings still standing, notably the main building. Note the three-bay garage, which could've housed the crash trucks. The tower was removed decades earlier, however.

As noted on David W. Brooks' excellent [Airfields Database web site](#) (source for the below maps), MCAS Edenton was one of forty-one (!) military airfields operating in North Carolina during World War II. Click to enlarge:



### Fire Department

During construction of the base, a temporary firehouse was provided to house fire equipment. The base was allocated a Chrysler "fire engine" with a 500 GPM pump for that purpose. The Chrysler was a trailer pump equipped with 500 GPM pump, two 15-foot sections of hard suction hose, and 200 feet of 2 1/2-inch supply line.



*Ted Heinbuch collection*

By the time of its delivery, two more fire trucks had arrived. They were purchased through the Bureau of Aeronautics. One of the trucks was assigned to the "fire prevention program of the contractor." The contractor was also authorized to employ a Fire Marshal, to execute a fire prevention program.

The Fire Marshal saw the installation of "barrels, fire extinguishers, and other fire prevention appliances." There were no "regular firemen," however. The temporary fire department instead relied on the guards. The contractor was instructed to train all guards in "fire fighting procedures" and how to operate the extinguishers and "fire fighting apparatus on the truck." In the event of an emergency, they would be "mustered to the fire house" or to the scene of a fire.

Permanent buildings on base were completed before the permanent water supply was finished, so water barrels and fire extinguishes were the principle means for fire prevention. They were located "at convenient points to all construction work." In the event of a fire, the 500 GPM pumper would be connected to the temporary water system. It was thought that "it would have been useless had a fire occurred in the permanent building area." But the other truck, the one "borrowed from the station," would have been useful due to "the extent of the large fire extinguishing equipment it carried."

In May 1944, the fire department was established as an independent department. The base Security Office was designated as Fire Marshal. The department consisted of Fire Marshal, Fire Chief, Fire Inspector, and thirty-five firefighters. Only twenty firemen were available for duty at all times, however, since ten were assigned additional duties.

The enlisted firefighting personnel were quartered in the station, and a continuous twenty four-hour watch was maintained. They operated a Seagrave pumper, a ladder truck, and "two water trucks." The Seagrave pumper was probably a model 66-750, much like this one:



*Ted Heinbuch collection*

Fire and crash alarms were reported using a "Gamewell three-fold positive non-intervening" system. There were sixteen "three-fold fire alarm boxes," two "three-fold master boxes attached to a sprinkler system," two "crash boxes" at the boathouse tower and the main control tower, a "complete switchboard," two "Type D diaphones" (air-powered horns), and a "recording set."

The fire department inspected all firefighting equipment once a week, and a fire drill was held twice each week. Fire watches were maintained in all of the base barracks.

The airfield crash crew was originally part of the fire department. It was placed under the command of the Operations Department on March 13, 1944. Their equipment consisted of two vehicles: an Autocar CO2 crash truck and a GMC pick-up that had been converted to a crash truck with the addition of "six large CO2 bottles, an emergency crash kit and an asbestos suit."

Each truck was manned by a crew of two men. They stood nine hour watches. The crash trucks were manned during all flight operations, normally from 6:00 a.m. to midnight. The trucks were staged on the apron or "at a position on the surface runway" during all operations.

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Just for a little "did you know" WakeMed's Air Mobile-2 is located at this airport. With WakeMed Air Mobile-1 being located at the Rocky Mount-Wilson Airport.

**Greg** - 08/10/14 - 12:23

Sup Greg? You have me curious now with a little I didn't know, why are WakeMed's Helicopters at these two locations and not WakeMed?

**Bill** - 08/10/14 - 17:19

Most of the regional flight volume comes the eastern part of the state. Halifax, Wayne, Wilson, Nash, Franklin, Harnett, Sampson. Air Mobile-1 is 95% hospital with about 5% scene. Air Mobile-2 is 80% scene and 20% hospital. While most of Air Mobile-2 patients go to Norfolk or Vidant. Both aircraft are a joint program between air methods and WakeMed. WakeMed, Duke, UNC work close to make sure the closest aircraft goes.

**Greg** - 08/10/14 - 18:30

Thanks Greg. So what happened to the heliport on 70 in Garner? Is that not used anymore?

**Bill** - 08/12/14 - 23:11

The heliport is not used at Garner. About the time construction was completed it was decided to switch to a community based program with AirMethods. I had someone ask what counties did AirMobile-2 respond to? Their normal service area is: Hertford, Bertie, Gates, Chowan, Perquimans, Pasquotank, Camden, Washington, Tyrrell, Hyde counties. They are a back up to Dare County Medflight. They are also first call to Ocracoke Island (Hyde County). As for the Garner heliport, I have no idea what the plans are for the space.

**Greg** - 08/13/14 - 08:42

Greg, I've got a question or two. Does Eastcare still operate out of Greenville ? Way back when, in the very early 80,s Eastcare was primary to the Rocky Mount/Wilson area but you have not mentioned them. Also what is this AirMethods you mentioned? In Northwestern N.C. And Southwest Va. We are serviced by three Air Ambulance Services. Aircare out of Baptist , Lifeguard out of Roanoke Carilion and the Va State Police Operates one. there doesn't appear to be any cooperation between Aircare and Lifeguard as they seem to compete hard and heavy against each other for folks to use them. ( The State Polce Unit does more wrecks, mountain trauma injuries etc. so they don't compete for business ) So it is interesting that the air services in the triangle seem to work together.

**Galax,Va** ([Email](#)) - 08/13/14 - 10:54

Air Methods is the vendor for Baptist, Duke, UNC, New Hanover and CMC. There they supply the pilot, the air craft, maintenance. With WakeMed they supply the Med crew as well. CMC and Duke own there aircraft, but the pilots are not DukeCMC employees. As for working together, they are trying to do the right thing for the patient. I understand that Vidant isn't to happy about the Edenton aircraft. And Yes there is still a Vidant aircraft in the next hanger over from WakeMed Air Mobile-1. Vidant owns there aircraft with the vendor is Metro.

**Greg** - 08/13/14 - 12:32

So technically Wakemed does not have a flight program anymore. It's completely operated by Airmethods, hence the enhanced coverage area. Also the reason for the Garner facility not being utilized. All part of why Wakemed CEO was replaced.

**Charlie** - 08/19/14 - 21:45

WakeMedAir Methods is a partnership. They both need each other. I would say that WakeMed still has a air program.

**Greg** - 08/26/14 - 20:48

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