

## Two Apparatus Accidents in Durham County at Same Fire - April 1975

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Next in our historical review of apparatus accidents in an unusual story from Durham County in 1975. This AP photo and story appeared in the Herald-Journal on April 30, 1975. The incident probably occurred on April 29. Two Durham County fire trucks were involved in accidents while responding to the same fire. The first resulted in the death of the other vehicle's driver.

Wrote the Associated Press: "Shirley Brown of Durham was killed when her station wagon ran into the path of a Durham County fire truck Tuesday. Four firemen were injured, but not seriously. The station wagon was wedged between the truck and a tree, and workmen had to use torches to cut it up before it could be moved."

"Later, a second fire truck was dispatched to the same house fire and it collided with a car at an intersection, a few blocks from the scene of the fatal accident. Police said in each case, the automobile had pulled into the path of the fire truck from a side street. A third fire truck arrived at the scene without mishap and firemen found a smoking hot water heater."

What specific Durham County units were these? The pictured American LaFrance engine was one that ran out of Durham city Station 1. It was staffed by city firefighters whose salaries were paid by the county. But who sent the second and third units, do you suppose?



*AP photo*

### Historical Perspective

Now the expected question, how many fatal apparatus accidents involving civilians have happened in our state? ([See my fallen firefighters database](#) for those with firefighter fatalities.)

On November 7, 1923, a ten year-old boy was killed in Raleigh, when Engine 1 crashed into a group of spectators. They were standing on West Martin Street. The apparatus was operating at Southern School Supply. Another man was seriously injured. A dozen people total were struck. Recalling the November 8 story in the News & Observer, the crowd immediately set upon the driver of the fire engine. Believe police had to be called to protect the fireman.

A warehouse and small garage were burning, with three lines of hose in operation. The fire was nearly under control when the Fire Chief ordered the operator of Engine 1 to lay another line across the railroad tracks. The apparatus was travelling at a reported 25 MPH when it struck the spectators. As witnesses voiced their anger at what happened, police took the firefighter into protective custody and transported him

to police headquarters.

He was held on manslaughter charges, and released on \$2,000 bond. The charges were apparently dropped. City Council later awarded a nominal payment to the family of the deceased boy.

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

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