

Brunswick County Ambulance and Rescue Squad History

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1950 to 1959

1955 – **Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point** opened. Had both a fire department and an ambulance on site, operated by joint Fire and Emergency Services department. [OH]

1958 - **Southport Rescue Squad** organized. It was chartered and accredited by the North Carolina Rescue Squad Association. [SPP, 5/6/92]

1959, Feb - Advertisements for ambulance services: Kilpatrick's Funeral Service (Southport), Gilbert's Funeral Service (Southport), Peacock Funeral Home (Shallotte). [SPP, 2/4/59, 2/25/59]

1960 to 1969

1962, Dec 19 – News report of unusual incident, three people killed by carbon monoxide poisoning on Monday night, from unvented gas heater. Killed were a husband (age 52), wife (age 38), and granddaughter (age 5). The grandson (age 13) was revived by Southport RS and transported to the hospital. [SN, 12/19/62]

1967, Nov – News reported that owners of three funeral homes (Gilbert's, Kilpatrick's, Powell's) met with county officials and said that they would cease ambulance services without financial assistance. This was a result of regulations announced on October 28 that required equipping and providing 24-hour-service. Providers were required to comply with the new state regulations by January 10, 1968. [SPP, 11/22/67]

1967, Nov 18 - Long Beach Fire Department renamed **Long Beach Fire Department & Rescue Squad**. The department had one ambulance that they acquired that year. [MJL]

1968, Jan - **Leland Rescue Squad** organized. The first chief was George Reed, the first captain was Jessie Hayes, and the first lieutenant was Clarence Jacobs. Their annual meeting was scheduled in late September, to "correspond with the state association's annual convention." By October 1968, they had 22 members. [SN, 10/2/68; SPP, 10/2/68]

1968, Jan 10 – News reported that ambulance service for Southport and nearby residential areas of Yaupon Beach, Long Beach, and Boiling Spring Lakes was resumed Tuesday by Gilbert's Funeral Service, after a meeting with county members and the board of trustees at Doshier Memorial Hospital. Agreements were reached that the town governments would

assist the ambulance operator in collections of their operation. The ambulance provider agreed to enter a 60-day trial period to restore ambulance service. [SPP, 1/10/68]

1968, July - **Shallotte Rescue Squad** organized, reported the State Port Pilot on July 17. One of their "principal services" was providing ambulance service. One vehicle for that purpose was donated by Russ Motors and they hoped to acquire a second. Their headquarters was the Town Hall. Officers were Dickie Powell, chairman; Merle Hawes, captain; Bill Tripp, lieutenant; Thurston Mintz, secretary; Wilson Arnold, treasurer; and a four man board of directors. [SPP, 7/17/68] The squad was raising money to buy two vehicles and "necessary equipment." By July 24, they had responded to six emergencies in the last ten days. [SPP, 7/24/68]

1968, Mar - **Town Creek Rescue Squad** organized. Legal name Town Creek Township Rescue Squad Inc. Started operating in July. In December, they had 45 members with 27 qualified for ambulance duty, both a 1963 Pontiac ambulance and a Ford step van used as crash truck, and a building that was 75 percent finished. The squad still needed equipment for the crash truck, such as "a cutting outfit, generator, portable, lights" and rope. The chief was Homer King and the lieutenant was C. C. Robbins. Land for the building was donated by Robbins. [SPP, 8/28/68, 12/11/68] They answered their first call on Friday, August 16, 1968, for an injured person at Elmore Motor Company, when a tractor slipped on a worker and caused a broken leg and possibly back injury. He was transported to New Hanover Memorial Hospital. [SPP, 8/21/68]

1968, Oct 30 – By this time, Town Creek RS had 25 members who were state-certified as ambulance attendants and were answering calls 24 hours a day. [SPP, 10/30/68] By December 11, the squad had 45 members, with 27 certified for ambulance duty, having taken 33 hours of instruction. They still needed required equipment before the squad would "come under the guidelines of the state organization." The squad did not charge for their services. They served all of the county in conjunction with the Southport and Leland squads. [SPP, 12/11/68]

1970 to 1979

1970, Aug – Gilbert's Funeral Service in Southport was still operating ambulance service. [SPP, 8/26/70]

1971, Nov 21 – News report of a major mutual aid incident, with ten rescue squads and four airplanes used to search for a drowning victim, after a Sunday report about 8:30 p.m. of a capsized boat on the inland waterway at Snow's Cut. Among the responding agencies were Acme-Delco-Rigelwood RS, Onslow County RS, Jacksonville RS, Goldsboro RS, Bass RS,

Swansboro RS, Town Creek RS, Shallotte RS, Whiteville RS, and Long Beach RS. The search ended six days later, when the body was located. [SN, 11/21/71]

1972 - Southport RS added their first rescue boat, a 20-foot model. [SN, 4/4/89]

1972, Dec 31 - Leland RS snapshot. During year, squad answered 99 wrecks, 160 house or transfer calls, 8 pedestrians struck, 15 calls to "plant areas" and other services such as stand-by at football games. Total of 862 man hours. The squad had an annual budget of \$12,000 and was funded primarily by contributions and fundraising drives. Plus \$750 from the county last year and donations from several industries. [SN, 3/28/73]

1973, Mar - Leland RS called a community meeting April 13 to decide if it could continue operating due to lack of citizen support and funding. The squad 16 members, but only about half were active members. "It is just too damn much for eight men to handle, to keep up with equipment, answer calls and have any time at all for your family" said Captain Neil Sullivan. [SN, 3/28/73]

1973, Apr - **Long Beach Rescue Squad** chartered, following town officials in January 1973 approving separating the rescue squad from the fire department. First officers Chief Walt Johnson, Captain Ted Casto, Lieutenant Charlie Leggett, Secretary/Treasurer Nancy Leggett. Equipment consisted of one ambulance, acquired in 1967, and a 17-foot McKee boat with 100 horsepower outboard motor. By August, squad had 30 active members, with 27 certified ambulance attendants. They were located at the intersection of Route 211 and Long Beach Road, on a three-acre tract that was given to the squad in February 1969. [MJL]

1973, Apr - Town Creek RS received money from Governor's Highway Safety Program, matching funds for an ambulance purchase. The squad was currently using a 1963 model with 169,000 miles. The older ambulance would be used as back-up. [SN, 4/6/73]

1974, Apr 18 - Long Beach RS. New ambulance would be delivered in one week. [MJL]

1974, Feb – Leland RS notes. Recently purchased 1973 GMC/____ ambulance. Started two new programs, association membership emergency protection and weekly blood pressure clinics. The former was started last April and they had sold about 227 memberships. [SPP, 2/12/75]

1975, spring – Gilbert's Funeral Home owner Tom Gilbert announced that he intended to "get out of the ambulance business."

1975, June – Brunswick County Association of Volunteer Rescue Squads formed by this time. [SPP, 6/4/75]

1975, June 6 - **Care Ambulance Service** in Southport started operation with two ambulances operating 24/7 and staffed with state-certified EMTs. It also sought a franchise in New Hanover County. The office was located near Southport Communications on Highway 211 outside Southport, and would serve an area “from Orton to Boiling Spring Lakes to the Midway Road and to Yaupon Beach and Southport.” The company also sold memberships, and had sold over 100 memberships as of May 28, and hoped to sell between 1,500 and 1,700 once they started operation. Members received free transport services, both emergency and non-emergency, with conditions. The company was the only full-time private ambulance service in the county. The company was formed after the announcement by Gilbert’s Funeral Home that they were ending their ambulance operations. The new CAS was created, it purchased Gilbert’s “rescue vehicle,” and had a commitment from the Gilbert’s owner that “he will not establish ambulance service here during the next three years.” [SN, 5/14/75, 5/28/75, 8/26/75]

1975, Sep 3 – News reported that Southport RS had acquired a new rescue boat. It would be used for “search and rescue” primarily in the Southport area, but would be available as mutual aid for other squads. [SPP, 9/3/75]

1975, Dec 24 – News reported that Care Ambulance Services suddenly stopped operations at noon on Friday. As a stopgap, Gilbert’s Funeral Service temporarily resumed ambulance service in the Southport Area. [SPP, 12/24/75]

1976 - **Coastline Rescue Squad** organized. The organized was proposed to the communities in the “Secession precinct area” which included Boone’s Neck, Cedar Grove, Varnam, and Holden Beach. In August 1976, a steering committee met to determine if there were enough interested residents. At the meeting, the formation of a squad was decided upon. Daniel Carlisle was the first chief, Henry Stone was the first captain, and Ed. Saddington was the first lieutenant. [SPP, 8/25/76] An organizational meeting would be held Friday at Tri-Beach VFD. [SPP, 9/1/76] Members voted at a meeting Friday to incorporate as a non-profit. The county Civil Preparedness department provided the papers to allow the squad to acquire a surplus four-wheel drive ambulance at Fort Bragg. They would also apply to the Lower Cape Fear Council of Governments, which was allocating 45 new ambulances statewide. One-time solicitation letters were distributed to residents and property owners in the area, to raise money to acquire the ambulance and build a garage to house it. [SPP, 9/15/76]

1976, Mar 30 – Gilbert Ambulance Service, Inc. ceased providing temporary ambulance service, with Southport RS ready to take over. [SPP, 5/6/92]

1976, Apr 1 - Southport RS started ambulance service, after local private service ended operations. The squad had issued a public appeal for volunteers and 17 people responded, 14 who were trained as EMTs. The new service was free. The squad asked the town in return to provide two modular ambulances. They also wanted to build a basic building to house the ambulances. [SPP, 3/17/76]

1978, Dec 11 - **Boiling Spring Lakes Rescue Squad** started operation. They had 14 certified EMTs. They answered their first call to a vehicle collision on December 24, 1978. [SPP, 2/21/96]

1978, Sep - Town Creek RS organizing a junior squad for teens ages 14 to 17. [SN, 9/28/78]

1979, circa - **Waccamaw Rescue Squad** organized.

1979, Jan 17 - Long Beach RS. Bid awarded for new ambulance, Grumman Emergency Products, \$28,100 plus \$120 in tax. Was a 1979 Grumman on Ford chassis. Certified to carry two patients. Squad paid \$2,000 for equipment and \$14,500 for vehicle. Town paid the rest. [MJL]

1979, Mar - Long Beach RS snapshot. Squad had 22 volunteers and operated three ambulances on a 24-hour basis. It covered the Oak Island communities of Caswell Beach, Yaupon Beach, and Long Island. [SN, 3/30/79]

1979, Mar 30 – News reported that Long Beach RS “desperately needs more members” for daytime operations. They had 22 volunteers, but only four people available to respond during the day. Already that week, the squad had responded to four daytime emergencies. [SN, 3/30/79]

1979, July 1 - Town of Long Beach started Public Safety Officer Program, to train police officers in first aid, since they were often the first to arrive at the scene of an accident. [MJL]

1979, Aug – Snapshot of Coastline RS. The squad answered an average of four to six calls a week, including the occasional rescues “at sea” using donated boats. Almost half of the squad’s 43 members were EMTs, along with six ambulance attendants, and other support personnel including “dispatchers and maintenance workers.” The annual budget was over \$13,000. The county gave an \$7,000 annual appropriation. The town of Holden Beach also donates \$1,000 annually. [SN, 8/29/79]

1979, Dec - County granted franchises to several squads: Coastline, Leland, Long Beach, Shallotte, Southport, Town Creek, and Waccamaw. [SN/12/4/79]

1980 to 1989

1980, Apr - Southport RS new building on East Nash Street was dedicated. The building was funded by an \$87,000 bond issue and \$4,000 contributed by squad members. It was located beside the fire station, with a small garden separating the two buildings. The garden was dedicated to the memory of long-time volunteer Ormond Leggett. [SN, 4/18/80]

1980, Apr - Southport RS snapshot. Squad had three ambulances, a crash truck, a three-quarter ton truck, and a 20-foot rescue boat, as well as a new squad building on East Nash Street. [SN, 4/18/80]

1980, Sep - Efforts ended to hold a countywide referendum on November 4, 1980, for a special tax to fund the county's 25 volunteer fire and rescue agencies. [SN, 9/3/80]

1980, Oct 1 - News reported that Coastline RS had been assigned primary rescue services responsibility for the "middle coastal area" of the county, including Shell Point-Monogram, Cross Roads, Civietown, Oak Grove, Cedar Grove, Mt. Pisgah, Supply, and others. The squad's telephone number was "8420-2222." [SN, 10/1/80]

1981, Dec or earlier – Project to organize the **Calabash Rescue Squad** started. [SN, 7/2/83] Articles of incorporation were filed on March 16, 1982, for the Calabash Volunteer Rescue Squad, Inc. The incorporator was Mason Anderson of Shallotte and the corporation had 11 directors. [NCSOS]

1982, Dec - Calabash RS started 24-hour service, after more than a year of "planning and training." The squad filled a gap between Shallotte and Waccamaw, both of which had long response times. The squad had 21 members and served a 50 square-mile area with 5,000 to 6,000 permanent residents. [SN, 7/2/83]

1982, July 1 - Service districts implemented to fund fire and rescue agencies. Replaced former funding model, which designated a percentage of funds received in property taxes. [SN, 7/5/82]

1982, Apr 1 – News report of an incident offshore. Two sailors received chemical burns aboard a tanker carrying gasoline. The ship was leaving the channel of the Cape Fear River near Southport. The Coast Guard transported members of Long Beach RS to the ship to treat the victims, and they were returned to shore by a second Coast Guard boat. [SN, 4/1/82]

1983, Feb 18 – Reference in minutes of Cape Fear Council of Governments Executive Committee meeting to \$51,000 of USDA funding either applied for or granted to Calabash RS for "purchase of land and erection of building" to house the squad. [SN, 3/16/83]

1984, Jan 21 – Calabash RS has “urgent” need of new members, especially for daytime shifts said short story in newspaper. New class to train EMTs and ambulance attendants would start in February. [SN, 1/21/84]

1984, Mar 11 - Groundbreaking for new Boiling Spring Lakes RS building held. Located next to the fire station. [SN, 3/10/84]

1986 - **Navassa Rescue Squad** organized. Articles of incorporation were filed in April 1986. Legal name was Navassa Volunteer Rescue Squad Department. The registered address was the Navassa fire station. [NCSOS]

1987 - **Bald Head Island Rescue Squad** organized. Articles of incorporation were filed in March 1987. Legal name was Bald Head Island Volunteer Rescue Squad. [NCSO]

1988, July by - Navassa RS ceased operating, after the state revoked its permit on July 26. They had a shortage of volunteers and during an inspection from the state, they found the squad could not answer calls during the daytime on weekdays. By August, four women in the small town studying to become EMTs. And even if they pass, noted the August 30, 1988, news article, the squad would have to demonstrate to the state that they could provide 24-hour emergency service. Leland RS took over answering calls for their district. [SN, 8/16/88] The squad did not resume operations in its current incarnation.

1988, June - Town Creek RS received emergency certification of five people training to be EMTs, so the squad did not have to discontinue daytime service due to staff shortage. [SN, 6/24/88]

1989, Feb 1 – Calabash RS renamed **Calabash EMS**, with the board adopting the new legal name Calabash Volunteer Emergency Medical Service, Inc. [NCSOS]

1990 to 1999

1990, Jan - Southport RS became first squad in the state with a certified water ambulance. It operated a 20-foot McKee craft. [SPP, 5/6/92]

1991, Apr - First full-time county rescue workers started working. They were hired to help with a shortage of daytime rescue squad volunteers. Three teams of two medics would rotate between Shallotte, Boiling Spring Lakes, Southport, Waccamaw, and Town Creek. [SN, 4/17/91]

1992, Jan - County started 911 service. [SPP, 5/31/95]

1992, Jan - **Brunswick County EMS** started service. [SPP, 5/31/95]

1992, May - Southport RS snapshot. Squad had eight EMT-I, eight EMT, two AA, and seven new members awaiting state certification. The fleet consisted of three land ambulances, one water ambulances, a water rescue truck, and new emergency support. They had a 13-member boat crew including four certified divers. They had two boats, a 25-foot C-hawk purchased in 1986 and a small inflatable boat. They responded to more than 30 water calls a year. The squad answered a total of 854 calls in 1990 and 801 calls in 1991. [SPP, 5/6/92]

1992, Aug? - **Navassa Volunteer EMS** started operating. Reorganized from older NRS. Had 28 members and would be housed in the Navassa VFD building. The squad would operate at BLS level, at least initially. [SN, 8/7/92]

1994, circa – Sunny Point EMS unit added as part of the Brunswick County EMS System. [OH]

1994 - **Southport Volunteer Rescue Squad Auxiliary** created, to assist with squad activities outside of emergency response. [SPP/1/18/95]

1994, Jun – News reported that Shallotte RS was opening a substation on Ocean Isle Beach. The squad had two ambulances and would move one to a site on Beach Road adjacent to the Ocean Isle Beach airport. The new substation was "the first in western Brunswick County" and was a joint effort of the Town of Ocean Isle Beach and the Ocean Isle Beach Property Owners Association, and the project was started two years ago. The unit would occupy a house that already served as the town's Base during hurricanes and other emergencies" and the building would be renovated and expanded, if the line item passed in the town's upcoming budget. Town workers were adding a parking area and "loop drive" and a security fence. Some years ago, the squad moved one of their ambulances to the Ocean Isle Beach fire station, but later removed it, when "space was no longer available." Also, four years ago, Ocean Isle Beach VFD established a "first responder group" and the VFD responded to about 140 first responder calls last year, about 60 percent of all of their calls. [BB, 6/16/94]

1995, Feb - Bald Head Island RS named **Bald Head Island EMS** by this time. [SPP, 2/8/95]

1995, Feb - Bald Head Island EMS conducted sea trails for water ambulance capable of transporting two patients at once. Was awaiting outfitting and crew training. [SPP, 2/8/95]
The boat was purchased after Southport RS sold their water ambulance, which was used to transport patients when the ferry to the island was unavailable. The Bald Head Island water ambulance was sold soon after, after a "medical doctor convinced" the island's council that the "boat was not needed." [SN, 5/9/97]

1995, Apr - Southport town officials approved selling the water ambulance as surplus, a 25-foot C-Hawk with trailer and 225 hp motor, so the squad could get a smaller boat. The

action changed the squad's mission from being an "at-sea ambulance service" to part of a "regional search-and-rescue network" led by the USCG. The squad intended to purchase a 25-foot Sea Cat, a smaller, lighter, and more maneuverable craft. Currently, only two squad members were certified to operate the water ambulance. The larger boat also required more equipment. The services of a water ambulance was no longer need, with too few calls to justify its operation.[SPP, 3/29/95, 4/19/95]

1995, Jun - BCEMS placed first paramedics in service. The agency had 19 field personnel, with 17 medics certified as EMT-P, previously certified as EMT-I. They operated one [?] ambulance and a Chevy Blazer shift supervisor unit from a single base in Bolivia. [SPP, 5/31/95]

1995, Dec - BCEMS snapshot. County had two ambulances and a "car." [SN, 12/9/95]

1996, Jan - County commissioners approved funding for a new ambulance for Shallotte RS and a "telescopic light and GPS system" for Leland RS. [SPP, 1/6/96]

1996, Jan - News report that Town Creek RS had become the first county squad authorized to bill patients for emergency transport. The squad was considering the action to address lack of funding and fewer volunteers. The squad had added paid personnel, recruiting "industrial EMTs" from local companies and industries. [SPP, 1/10/96]

1996, Feb - Boiling Spring Lakes RS snapshot. Squad had two ALS ambulances, 11 volunteer members, and in January ran 27 calls and put in over 400 man-hours of service. They were also planning to expand their building to add dormitory and meeting space plus bays for water rescue equipment. They also had a Chevy Suburban used to pull a recently acquired boat. They were also starting EMT training for people they hoped would augment their roster. [SPP, 2/21/96]

1997 - **Oak Island Water Rescue Team Inc.** organized. The group initially sought to be a department in the Town of Long Beach and then sought to be sanctioned by the Town of Yaupon Beach. [The towns merged to create the Town of Oak Island in 1997.] [SPP, 11/12/97]

1997, Jun - Southport officials voted to start charging people who are treated and transported by SRS. [???, 6/18/97]

1997, Sep - News coverage of Long Breach RS unavailable to answer some calls to Yaupon Beach, which resulted in the town seeking a refund of some of the money that it pay to the town of Long Beach last year for rescue services. Of the 73 calls to Yaupon Beach in the last fiscal year, only 59 received a response with sufficient personnel to perform a patient transport. [SPP, 9/10/97]

1997, Nov - County commissioners voted to seek bids for three new EMS substations in Leland, Ocean Isle Beach, and Southport. BCEMS currently had four paramedic vehicles at a single station in Bolivia. [SN, 11/18/97]

1997, Dec - Expected timeframe for BCEMS activated their fourth ambulance, to be stationed in the Southport. Two new ambulances had been recently purchased and six new EMS employees were being trained. The new unit would also help with calls that the squads could not answer, due to unavailability of volunteers. [SPP, 9/17/97]

1998, July – **Leland Fire/Rescue** created as a merger of the private fire and rescue departments. The organizations merged to help with reduced availability of volunteers, through shared staffing. The move would also reduce overall operating expenses. [SPP, 4/22/98]

1998, July 1 - Long Beach RS activated Squad 24, an ambulance staffed with four full-time town employees, to provide day-time coverage in shifts of two, seven days of the week. The units were added to supplement the squad's volunteer staffing and ensure the availability of a unit during daytime. The members would be trained to EMT-I by December and start paramedic training in the spring. The unit answered an average just over two calls per day, during its first week. [SPP, 7/15/98]

1998, Nov - Dispute ended between the towns of Yaupon Beach and Long Beach, over funding for LBRS, which was contracted by Long Beach, and contributed to by Yaupon Beach. The latter agreed to provide a portion of the contract funding. [SPP, 11/16/98]

1998, Dec 31 – BCEMS snapshot. Agency answered 6,800 emergency calls during calendar year. [Sun News, 5/3/99]

1999, Feb – Snapshot of response rates. Reported the Sun News on May 3, 1999:

Bald Head Island – 3 / 3 (requested / responded)

Boiling Spring Lakes – 19 / 6

Calabash – 64 / 50

Coastline – 74 / 36

Long Beach – 4 / 1

Navassa – 5 / 1

Shallotte – 89 / 33

Southport – 14 / 3

Town Creek – 74 / 10

Waccamaw – 23 / 4

1999, Jun - By this time, Boiling Spring Lakes RS had ceased operating, after most of its volunteers moved away or ran out of time to answer calls. [SN, 6/17/99, 6/20/99]

1999, Jun 30 - County funding ended for Town Creek, Boiling Spring Lake, and Navassa squads. The cited reason was the squads providing inadequate levels of response. By that time, Boiling Spring Lake had already stopped operating, noted a newspaper report. [SPP, 6/19/99]

1999, Jun - Newspaper profile of three new county EMS substations that were finishing construction and opening soon. The current BCEMS units each returned to their Bolivia base at night to sleep [SN, 6/17/99]

1999, Jun 17 – By this time, Boiling Spring Lakes VRS had ceased operating and the rescue unit at Marine Ocean Terminal Sunny Point was answering calls. The county next week decided to buy the old BSLVRS building and a two-year-old ambulance. [SN, 6/17/99, 6/22/99, 6/28/99, 8/18/99] During some months of the past year, the squad responded to less than 15 percent of its calls. [Sun-News, 8/18/99]

1999, Jun 28 – Boiling Spring Lakes VRS corporation dissolved. [SN/6/30/99]

1999, Aug 16 - BCEMS substation opened in Leland. [Sun News, 8/18/99]

1999, July 1 - Towns of Yaupon Beach and Long Beach merged and formed the town of Oak Island. Long Island Rescue Squad renamed **Oak Island Rescue Squad**.

1999, Aug - BCEMS substation opened in Southport. [Sun News, 8/18/99]

1999, Sep – BCEMS substation opened in Sunset Beach area. [Sun News, 8/18/99]

1999, Fall ? - BCEMS opened fourth substation in old Boiling Lakes Spring VRS building. [SPP, 8/18/99] The building was renovated to add sleeping quarters. [Sun News, 8/18/99]

2000 to 2009

2001, Mar – **Sunny Point EMS** was operating by this time. [SN, 3/2/01]

2001, May – **St. James Fire Department** advertised for bids for an EMS QRV for the “fire department first responder squad.” [SPP, 5/1/01]

2002 – County started incentive program to fund to fund the volunteer squads based on the number of calls they answered. To receive full funding, they were required to respond to at least 60 percent of their calls during the third quarter of this fiscal year, which ended March

31. Four squads failed, and received reduced funding: Town Creek, Navassa, Southport, and Calabash. [SN, 6/23/03]

2002, Apr - BCEMS increased their fees, including adding \$25 for basic transport and adding \$50 for treating patients at the scene. [SN, 4/16/02]

2003 - By this time, Oak Island RS had merged with Oak Island FD to create **Oak Island Fire & EMS**.

2003, Feb - BCEMS approved to contract with a billing agency to collect unpaid ambulance fees. During a three-year period from 1998 to 2001, they had \$1.3M in unpaid bills, about 37 percent of their billing. Officials decided to write that off, to balance their books. [SN, 2/27/03]

2003, Jun - By this time, Oak Island VRS was named **Oak Island Volunteer EMS**. [SPP, 6/16/03]

2004, Apr – By this time, BCEMS had a substation on NC 211 near St. James, and the unit responded to their calls on Oak Island. Noted a news report, the average response time was 14:23, and well above the 12:00 national standard. During daytime, Oak Island FD had an ALS ambulance staffed with EMTs for emergency service. At night, a volunteer rescue squad answered calls. The county proposed providing a paramedic unit in Oak Land, to improve response times. The unit would be housed at the fire station. [SN, 4/9/04]

2004, Apr – BCEMS snapshot. Stations were located in Bolivia (HQ) and substations in Boiling Spring Lake, Leland, the Holden Beach area, the Ocean Isle Beach area, Calabash (12-hour unit), and NC 211 near St. James. [SN, 4/9/04]

2004, July 1 – BCEMS added a unit on Oak Island and based at the fire station. The action would reduce response times from 12 to 15 minutes to about five minutes. Oak Island VEMS would provide non-emergency service and provide back-up for the BCEMS unit. [SPP, 6/12/04]

2005, Mar - Oak Island Water Rescue Team moved into new quarters on 49th Street. The team had 14 volunteers and several rescue vehicles and two boats. They averaged about 35 rescue calls each summer. They had relocated several times over the decades, from responding from their own homes to occupying a storefront in a strip mall. [SN, 7/6/05]

2005, Aug – **Lifestar Medical Transport** started operations in Calabash, at a temporary site. They provided paramedic-level transport between health care facilities. They started with two ambulances and two-man crews, and added two-more vehicles and crews in October. The company was also authorized to respond to mutual aid emergency requests.

Three other private firms also served Brunswick County, and were based in Wilmington, Whiteville, and Southport. [SN, 10/19/05]

2006, Jan - Town Creek RS snapshot. Squad responded to about 1,500 calls per year. [SN, 1/22/06]

2006, Nov 16 – Tornado struck Columbus County. Mutual aid from Brunswick County included BCEMS (one ambulance) and volunteer squads Coastline (four ambulances), Leland (one), Shallotte (two), and Southport (two), and one unit from Oak Island Water Rescue [Sun-News, 11/17/06]

2007, Mar 29 – Town Creek RS property transferred to the county. [BCRER]

2007, Aug – County officials voted Monday to take over financial and operational control of Shallotte RS. The squad would resume operation in a couple days, but under county supervision. [e.g., a BCEMS unit from the squad building.] The organization was about \$800,000 in debt, including two liens on their new building which was under construction on Naber Drive. The squad stopped responding to rescue calls since the county declined to renew its franchise two weeks ago. Though each squad had to make an annual application for franchise renewal, Shallotte RS did not file an application. But residents were not impacted because BCEMS also responded to all emergencies in the district. [SN, 8/19/07, 8/22/07]

2007, Oct – News citation that **St. James Fire Department**, which started operating in 1999, recently added an ambulance. Department later renamed **St. James Fire & EMS**. [SPP, 12/15/04, 10/7/07]

2008, Jan 8 – News reported that county official on Monday night approved a contract to complete the new rescue/EMS building in Shallotte, to be used by the county Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), formerly Shallotte RS. [SN, 1/8/08]

2009 – Bald Head Island EMS merged with fire into **Bald Head Island Public Safety**.

2010 to 2019

2011, Aug – Oak Island town council approved spending \$278,000 for two ambulances, that were “at least four years overdue.” [SN, 8/9/11]

2012 – Southport RS crash truck transferred to fire department, during consideration of merging the fire and rescue departments. [SN, 10/9/15]

2014 - Oak Island Fire & EMS started providing paramedic-level service. [SPP, 9/7/22]

2015 – Calabash EMS merged with the county.

2015 - Oak Island Fire & EMS sold one of two ambulances, BCEMS took over as primary EMS transport service on island. OIFEMS provides back-up service. [MJL]

2015, Nov 1- **Southport Fire & EMS** created after squad merged with fire department. [SN, 10/9/15]

2016, Nov 24 – News reported that Coastline RS received a pink ambulance that formerly served Calabash VFD, but was acquired by the county in 2015. One stipulation of the gift was that the pink wrap remain. The squad placed to use the unit as a reserve truck. [SN, 11/24/16]

2017 - Oak Island Fire & EMS ceased EMS services, sold second ambulance. [MJL]

2017 – Sunny Point EMS ambulance staffed at paramedic level starting that year. [OH]

2017, July 1 – Leland Fire/Rescue merged with the town. [SN, 7/20/17]

2017, July – BCEMS snapshot. Seven 24-hour ambulances and three peak-call ambulances operated daily. The fleet also included six reserve ambulances. The department had ten stations. [SN, 7/16/17].

2019, July 1 - Leland Fire & EMS ambulance service absorbed by county. Agreement included three ambulances to be purchased by the county from the town, provided they are stationed at two locations, Industrial Park and the River Road station. The Village Road fire station would no longer house an EMS unit. The agreement allowed eight paid paramedics to remain employed, now working for the county, pending a background check. Dozens of volunteers were no longer needed. In 2017, the private Leland fire and EMS agency began the transition to a town department. [WWAY, 5/23/19]

2019, June 30 – BCEMS held a truck dedication ceremony to celebrate the new paint scheme of the ambulances. [BCEMS FB, 7/6/19]

2019, July 8 - Coastline RS filed a complaint with the county, seeking a preliminary injunction to prevent termination of their franchise. It was denied. [BCBOC, 6/15/20]

2019, July 19 - Coastline RS applied for a new franchise. [BCBOC, 6/15/20]

2019, July 22 - Coastline RS franchise cancelled by county. [BCBOC, 6/15/20]

2019, Sep 19 - Coastline RS franchise application denied by county EMS peer review committee. [BCBOC, 6/15/20]

2020 to Present

2020, June 15 - Coastline RS hearing held by Brunswick County commissioners about a new franchise application submitted by the squad on July 19, 2019, and which was reviewed by the EMS peer review committee, and which was denied by the committee in a vote on September 26, 2019. Officials cited the committee's reason as (a.) the ability of the squad to meet the obligation based on the requested standard of service they were requesting--the squad was previously not meeting that obligation, responding to less than 20%-25% of calls, and (b) duplication of services, since BCEMS was serving the area with a paramedic-level ambulance stationed at Tri-Beach VFD. [BCBOC, 6/15/20]

2021, Sep 29 – BCEMS received a temporary ambulance and paramedic crew that week from FEMA, due to increased calls for service during the COVID pandemic. The unit would serve for at least ten days. [BCGOV FB, 9/9/21]

2022, Aug - Oak Island Fire & EMS ceased providing paramedic responders. [SPP, 9/7/22]

2024, Sep 16 – Hurricane Helene landed. Among the emergency responses was BCEMS special operations swift water rescue team, and evacuating a flooded nursing home using their mass evacuation bus. [Brent Guy/FB, 9/19/24]

2024, Sep 28 – BCEMS deployed to western North Carolina with their mass evacuation bus, with additional team members to increase support personnel to 12 that were assisting the victims of Hurricane Helene. [BCEMS FB, 9/28/24]

2025, Nov – News reports that seven new ambulances were added to the fleet, Ford F-550/Frazer Type I trucks, equipped with the Stryker Power-LOAD system, built-in GPS tracking, power and climate control systems, and improved air conditioning. They replaced four “aging ambulances”. They were purchased in FY24 for \$2,669,895, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the county’s general funds. [WECT, 11/3/25]

2025, Nov – BCEMS fleet snapshot: 23 ambulances, 16 quick response vehicles (QRV), two all-terrain vehicles (ATV), one high water vehicle, and one mass evacuation bus. [WECT, 11/3/25]

2026, Jul – BCEMS recently received four Ford F-550/Frazier Type I ambulances. [ETS FB, 7/13/26]

Sources – Abbreviations

- BB – Brunswick Beacon, via web site and digitalnc.org
- BCBOC – Brunswick County Board of Commissioners meeting minutes
- BCRER – Brunswick County Real Estate Records
- FB – Facebook

- MJL – Mike Legeros research
- OH – Oral history
- SN – Wilmington Star-News, includes both Wilmington Morning Star and Wilmington Evening News, via web site and Google Newspaper Archives
- SOS – Secretary of State corporation records, North Carolina
- SSP – State Port Pilot issues via digitalnc.org
- WECT – WECT web site
- WWAY – WWAY web site