

# Wilmington and New Hanover County Ambulance Service and Rescue Squad History

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## 1940 to 1949

1947, Mar – By this time, **Yopp's Ambulance Service** was operating, run by Yopp's Funeral Home. Advertised as only service in city exclusively for sick or injured. [\_\_\_\_, 3/23/47] They had two ambulances and advertised service "to any part of the United States." They were located at 1207 Market Street. [SN, 11/23/47]

1949, Sep – By this time, **James Walker Memorial Hospital** was operating an ambulance service. They discontinued the service at midnight on September 30, 1949. Yopp Funeral Home bought the hospital's fleet. [\_\_\_\_, 9/29/46]

## 1950 to 1959

1957, Feb – **Cape Fear Ambulance Service** was operating by this time. Advertised as under new management. [SN, 2/17/57]

1958, Oct – CFAS had threatened to suspend emergency ambulance services, due to the company losing money. They wanted the city or county to provide a stipend or pay for the equipment and its maintenance. [SN, 10/6/58] Through an agreement with the company and the county, CFAS would provide emergency ambulance service to the county until midnight, October 20. County officials agreed to pay ambulance fees where needed. After that time, CFAS would answer "house calls only in Wilmington." [SN, 10/7/58]

1958, Oct 6 – **Wilmington Police Department** started an emergency ambulance service at midnight using two WPD station wagons. [SN, 10/6/58] They answered the first auto accident call on October 13. [SN, 10/13/58]

1958, Oct 10 – **Wrightsville Beach Police Department** and **Civil Air Patrol** started emergency ambulance service using a fully-equipped Civil Air Patrol ambulance housed/parked at the police station, with qualified CAP volunteers enlisted as drivers. [SN, 10/10/58]

1958, Oct 20 – County officials announced a 90-day agreement with CFAS to provide emergency ambulance service in unincorporated areas of the county, the county paying for runs under certain conditions. [SN, 10/20/58]

1958, Oct 20 – Civil Air Patrol ambulances were now operating in Wrightsville Beach and Carolina Beach, and a third was being obtained for Fort Fisher. [SN, 10/20/58]

1959 – **Ambulance Service Company** started operating, after CFAS ceased operating. They were located at 3105 Wrightsville Avenue by August 1963. [SN, 6/25/63, 8/23/63]

### **1960 to 1969**

1962, Jul – **New Hanover County Volunteer Rescue Squad** organized in the Ogden community. It was a long-held idea by Ogden VFD members. They held their first organizational meeting on July 3. [SN, 12/16/62] Was operational by mid-August. [SN, 8/17/62] By December 1962, had responded to eight calls, including a truck-train crash in Brunswick County, a Navy jet crash in New Hanover-Pender area, and a search for a “nude girl” in the Brunswick woods. They had 68 members, either active or inactive. They were incorporated on September 4. They received a donated ambulance from Crumpler Funeral Home. They also operated a 1957 panel van (or “carry all”), a “small line truck,” and a generator trailer, all at a nominal cost through the Civil Defense office. [SN, 12/16/62]

1963, Jun – New local law banned the use of sirens on ambulances and restricted their speeds. ASC owner Harold Jackson started a petition and gained some 250 supporters, protesting the law. [SN, 6/25/63]

1963, Aug – Ambulance Service Company planned to cease operating at midnight on Saturday. The owner had announced several weeks ago that he was considering ending the service. He cited the reason as his inability to effectively operate both his service station and the ambulance service. The latter was located at 3105 Wrightsville Avenue. [SN, 8/23/63]

1963, Aug 24 – NHCRS began providing emergency ambulance service at midnight Saturday, until their funds were depleted. Since the organization was non-profit, they would not charge for the services. [SN, 8/24/63] The squad later announced the service would be provided at night and on weekends. They had one ambulance and a second one that would be ready within a few days. [SN, 2/6/64]

1964, Feb 8 – News reported that NHCRS was ordered on Friday to immediately cease operating, as their free ambulance service was a violation of “proper utilization of Civil Defense equipment” they had been supplied. The squad announced a two-week cessation of operations, where all CD equipment would be removed. Though the squad originally offered to cease only the ambulance service, the deactivation order had already been forwarded to the state CD office. [SN, 2/8/64]

1964, Feb 8 – **Smith Funeral Home** ambulance collided with a school bus, with minor damage to both. No injuries. [SN, 2/8/64]

1964, Apr 22 – **Ogden Rescue Squad** organized, renamed and re-organized from New Hanover County Rescue Squad. Date cited from a seven-year anniversary article. First ambulance was a used station wagon. [SN, 4/24/71]

1967, Jun – **Tate's Ambulance Service** in Wilmington and **Fort Fisher Rescue Squad** operating by this time. [SN, 6/14/67]

1967, Jul 23 – ORS dedicated new headquarters on Saturday. The \$16,000 building on Middle Sound Road, just off Highway 17 North, had four buildings, including the main building, a cafeteria for food projects such as fundraisers, a garage for housing equipment, and a community building for use by community organizations. The squad had two ambulances, one truck, one jeep, and three boats. They had 27 men and nine women who provided 24/7 “call service.” [SN, 7/23/67]

1969 – **Wilmington Fire Department** added first rescue truck, no transport capability. [MJL]

## **1970 to 1979**

1971, Dec – Snapshot. ORS fleet included two rescue trucks (#3 and #14), a 1968 Cadillac/\_\_\_\_\_ ambulance, a crash truck with winch, three jeeps “for island and beach searches,” two generator trailers, a dive equipment trailer, four boats include one at a permanent slip at Harrelson Marina on Middle Sound. The squad had over 40 volunteers and was funded by \$400 from the county each month, plus private donations.

1972, Mar – Snapshot. Two private ambulance services operated in the city/county. Tate's Ambulance Service was located at 212 W. South Carolina Avenue and had four ambulances. The owner also operated a wrecker service. **T & M Ambulance Service** was located at 202 Calhoun Avenue and operated out of the owner's home. He had three ambulances. [SN, 3/2/72]

1972, Aug – County commissioners received a 34-page study on city/county ambulance services. The report was compiled over seven months. Among the recommendations was the creation of a franchise for county-wide ambulance service, consideration of assigning ambulance service to a local hospital, or assigning ambulance service to a fire department or law enforcement agency. The report noted that the two private services suffered from poor financial conditions, unlike ORS, which received funding from the county and provided the bulk of emergency transport in the county. [SN, 8/23/72]

1973, Feb/Mar – ORS ambulance collided with another vehicle at Greenfield and South 17<sup>th</sup> streets. [SN, 4/6/73]

1973, Mar – **New Hanover Volunteer Rescue Squad** started operating in the south part of the county. They were located at 5318 Carolina Beach Road. They had 22 members to start. [SN, 3/28/73]

1973, Apr 6 – News reported that on Friday, a Tate's Ambulance Company ambulance collided with a passenger car, as it was arriving at New Hanover Memorial Hospital. [SN, 4/6/73]

1973, May – Snapshot. ORS was facing financial struggles, due to increased operating costs and the need to replace vehicles. The squad did not charge for their services, but patients could make donations. Members responded to an average of 275 calls per month in 1972. They answered an average of 10 to 15 calls in a typical day, with as many as 25 in a 24-hour period. Members donated an average of 250 total hours a week to rescue work. [SN, 5/5/73]

1973, May – **New Hanover Ambulance Service** now operating, renamed from T&M Ambulance Service. They were located at 202 Calhoun Drive, the home of their owner. [SN, 5/8/73]

1973, Jun 5 – Both TAS and NHAS announced they would cease operations after 4:00 p.m. on Monday, unless they were granted exclusive rights to all non-emergency calls in the county. However, state law prevented the commissioners from granting franchises. Both companies said they were losing money. [SN, 6/5/73]

1973, Jun 6 – NHAS resumed service at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, after consulting with attorneys in Raleigh. [SN, 6/9/73]

1974 – Wilmington FD added first ambulance. [MJL]

1976, Aug – Snapshot. Rescue and ambulance services operating:

- Ogden RS.
- New Hanover RS. The two squads with eight units.
- New Hanover Ambulance Service. Emergency and non-emergency transport. Also, performed some rescue work.
- Wilmington FD, with single ambulance/rescue vehicle. Transported only for life-threatening.
- Carolina Beach FD, with single ambulance/rescue vehicle. Transported only for life-threatening.

- Burke-Yopp Ambulance Service. Non-emergency transport.
- **CB's Search and Rescue Assistance Group** of North Carolina. Respond to searches, drownings, and stranded boat owners. [SN, 8/25/76]

1977, Dec 15 – CB Search and Rescue Squad dissolved. Larry Chesnutt was the chief. [SN, 2/2/77]

1977, Jan 15 – **Coastal Ambulance Service** created. Located in an office at A & G Outlet, with ambulances parked behind the store. Non-emergency service, plus emergency air transport through contract with Air Wilmington. [SN, 4/10/77]

1977, Feb 2 – **Castle Hayne Volunteer Rescue Squad** now operating. They were not affiliated with Castle Hayne VFD. Most of their equipment was donated by the now defunct CB Search and Rescue Squad. The former CB squad chief, Larry Chesnutt, was the Castle Hayne rescue squad chief. [SN, 2/2/77]

1977, Apr – Wilmington FD dive team operating by this time. [SN/ 4/8/77]

1977, Jun – Snapshot of ambulance services:

- Coastal Ambulance Service, Inc. Non-emergency, fee based. Two ambulances, staff of about seven, available 24/7.
- New Hanover Ambulance Service. Emergency and non-emergency, fee based. Four ambulances, two boats, and dragging equipment. Six employees, available 24/7.
- Ogden Rescue Squad. Covered northern New Hanover County and also parts of Pender County. Emergency and non-emergency transport, free. Four ambulances, three boats, one crash truck, and 40 to 50 members.
- Carolina Beach Fire Department. Covered southern New Hanover County. Emergency only, free. One ambulance.
- New Hanover Volunteer Rescue Squad. Emergency transport, free. Two ambulances, one boat, and 40 members.
- Wilmington Fire Department. No transport unless absolutely necessary. One ambulance, one rescue truck, two boats.

## **1980 to 1989**

1981 – Pleasure Island Rescue Squad started operating by end of the year. Organizational meetings were held in the fall. Jeff Thompson was the first chief. The squad took over the EMS duties performed by Carolina Beach FD. [SN, 10/10/81]

1985, Aug - Ogden RS and New Hanover RS merged and created Odgen-New Hanover Rescue Squad. The combined unit operated from two stations on Carolina Beach Road and

Military Cutoff Road. Alan Tiller, chief of Ogden, became the chief of the combined organization. The new squad would merge paid, part-time, and volunteer members of both squads. They had nine ambulances, two crash trucks, five four-wheel-drive vehicles, and four boats. All would be painted yellow and white, the current colors of Ogden RS. [SN, 7/4/85]

1985, Oct 10 – News reported that the county hoped to take over “rescue operations” in Wilmington by December 1. The county paid the city about \$175,000 for rescue services inside the city limits. The county was scheduled to take over that responsibility August 1986. But officials wanted to take over sooner, because the city was having problems providing two EMT-I medics on duty 24/7. The WFD ambulance was housed at the Empie Park station, and the county hired volunteers from other rescue squads to staff the unit. By not having two EMT-I medics on duty, WFD was violating the county contract. The fire chief and the county were working to reach an agreement, with three options: hire temporary rescue works until next August, approve the December 1 takeover by the county and transfer two ambulances, or create an EMS division in WFD that would handle city services. The county was planning to cover the city with two ambulances, one temporarily based at the Greenfield Park fire station and the Schaeffer Buick building at 216 N. Second Street, after the car dealership vacated and moved to a new site. [SN, 10/23/85]

1986 – New Hanover County EMS created. The new agency absorbed Ogden-New Hanover RS, Pleasure Island RS, and the Wilmington FD medical rescue unit. [SN, 6/21/86] The first director was Larry E. Ray. [SN, 4/10/86] The service started March 1, with ONHRS and PIRS consolidated. [SN, 3/29/86]

1987, Oct 31 – **Trans Med** ceased operation. They were providing non-emergency transport. [SN, 12/16/87]

1987, Nov 16 – **Medical Transportation Specialists** granted a franchise for non-emergency transport. [SH, 12/16/87] They had not yet started operating as of December 16, as their ambulances were still on order. [SN, 12/16/87]

## **1990 to 1999**

1993, Jun 10 – ONHRS received a 30-day suspension of their ALS privileges due to not having enough paramedics. [SN, 6/10/93]

1997, May 16 – County commissioners sought to have New Hanover Regional Medical Center take over EMS services. It would save nearly \$2M from the budget and reduce county staff by 54 people. [SN, 5/16/97] The idea was raised in January, during budget meetings. [SN, 1/24/97]

1998 – **New Hanover Regional Medical Center** started EMS service. Took over operation (and assets?) from NHCEMS. By June they had 52 employees, six stations with paramedic ambulances, and a \$2.7M budget. [SN, 6/18/98]

1998, Jun 6 – James E. Woodard J. named as head of New Hanover Regional Medical Center's EMS program, starting in August. [SN, 6/18/98]

1998, Nov 21 – News reported that ONHRS wanted to become part of the county/hospital EMS system. [SN, 11/21/98]

1999, Apr 15 – News reported that a new rescue truck was stationed at Myrtle Grove VFD and equipped with “jaws of life” and staffed with a paramedic drive. The county EMS program was attempting to expand its services. [SN, 4/15/99]

### **2000 to Present**

2001, Aug – County filed lawsuit against Cape Medical Transport, for operating without a county franchise. The county currently had only two, for NHRMC and Medical Transport Specialists. [SN, 12/12/01]

2004, Feb 2 – County commissioners approve ambulance franchise for Coastline Care, non-emergency. The company would start 24/7 service on March 15. Currently the county EMS system had only four ambulances for non-emergency transport, from 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. [SN, 3/2/04]

2021 – **Novart Health** started EMS service, following a merger of New Hanover Regional Medical Center and Novart Health.