

## The History of Firefighting in Wake County

Presentation by Mike Legeros  
January 2023

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## Outline

- Raleigh
- Smaller Towns
- Rural Fire Departments
- Wake County Fire System
- Present Day

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## Wake County Created in 1771

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## Raleigh Created in 1792

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## 1802 – Raleigh Newspaper Ad

### Fire Engine.

*The Subscribers to the Fund for purchasing a Fire Engine for the use of this City, are requested to meet at the Court-House, on Friday next, at four o'clock, for the Purpose of giving an Order for the Purchase of the Engine and other Apparatus, (a Sufficiency of Money for the Purpose being subscribed) and for forming a Fire Company.*

*As the Articles of Association will be drawn at this Meeting, and the Officers of the Company elected, it is hoped that a full Attendance will be given.*

*August 16.*

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## Pattern of Fire Protection

- Laws to prevent fires
- Bell, whistle to summon citizens
- Buckets, ladders, hooks, etc.
- Wells, hydrants as water supplies
- Fire equipment acquired
- Fire company/department formed

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### Raleigh Milestones

- 1819 – First fire engine
- 1819 – First fire company
- 1851 – First fire cisterns
- 1852 – First paid fire chief
- 1853 – First engine house
- 1870 – Steam fire engine
- 1879 – Chemical fire engine
- 1887 – First fire hydrants
- 1888 – First fire alarm boxes

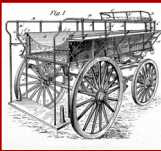
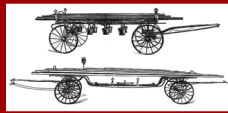
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### 1900 – Raleigh Fire Department

Company	Rescue No. 1	Hook and Ladder No. 1	Capital Hose No. 3	Victor Hose No. 2
Foreman	R. E. Lumsden	W. W. Parrish	John R. Ferrall	Sylvester Dunston
Assistant	F. Brenig	R. G. Upchurch	E. B. Bain	W. H. Palmer
Members	23	13	25	26
Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• three 2 horse hose wagons, each carrying 1000' of rubber-lined cotton hose</li> <li>• one hook and ladder truck</li> <li>• eight horses</li> <li>• one Gould steamer in reserve</li> </ul>			
Chief	L. A. Mahler, Fire Chief			
Assistant	Walter Woolcott, Assistant Chief			

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### 1900s Raleigh Fire Apparatus



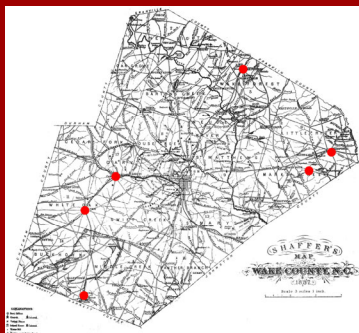
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### Great Fires in the County

- 1908 – Cary, largest building
- 1911 – Apex, nine buildings
- 1916 – Fuquay Springs, three stores and warehouse
- 1913 – Rolesville, ten buildings
- 1925 – Wendell, third of business district
- 1927 – Wake Forest, two cafes and movie theater
- 1928 – Zebulon, Wakelon High School

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### Early County Departments



Wake Forest, 1921

Zebulon, by 1921

Wendell, by 1925

Cary, 1922  
Apex, 1927

Fuquay Springs, 1922?

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### Early County Departments



Apex



Wake Forest



Zebulon

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Early County Departments



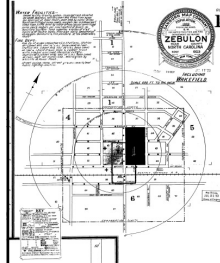
Wake Forest



Wendell

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Zebulon, 1923



**WATER FACILITIES:-**  
 Owned by City. Gravity system. 75000 gal tank elevated 100 above business section (sheet #2) Filled from 25000 gal reservoir at Power Plant (sheet #10) by motor driven Gould centrifugal pump capacity 300 gals. per min. Reservoir filled from Little River by motor driven Gould centrifugal pump capacity 300 gals. per min. (located at river). No Auxiliary System. Tank supplies 4 miles of 6" & 8" mains at 42 double hydr. Average daily consumption 42,000 gals. Domestic & Fire pressure. 32 lbs (underwriters test)

**FIRE DEPT:-**  
 One Co. of 15 Men (Volunteers). 3 Stations. Station #1 (sheet #2) 300' 2 1/2" C.A.L. hose (new) on reel. Station #2 (sheet #3) 300' 2 1/2" C.A.L. hose (new) on reel & hand drawn hook & ladder truck with 2 1/2 gal approved chemical extn. Station #3 (sheet #4) 450' 2 1/2" C.A.L. hose (new) on reel. Dept. not motorized. Alarm given by whistle at Power Plant.  
 Street paving none. Street graves: nearly level Public lighting electric.

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Wendell, 1925

**WATER FACILITIES.**

Municipally owned. Motor from 2 deep wells. Gravity system. One Water Tank. Capacity 100,000 Gal's. elevated 100'. Filled by elec. deep well pumps. 2 1/2 Miles of 6" to 10" water pipe. 28 ft hydr. Pressure 60 lbs. Average daily consumption 35,000 Gal's.

**FIRE DEPT.:**

Volunteer. Not motorized. One chief & one asst. chief. Not paid. 16 men. No fire station or truck. 3 hose houses: 300' 1 1/2" hose each. 3-60' extension ladders. Gamewell fire alarm system - 8 hose's.

Streets graded. Not paved. Grades: Level. Elec. street lights.

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Wake Forest, 1926

**WATER FACILITIES**

Municipally owned. Water from Smiths Creek. Gravity & direct system. 2 Morris centrifugal fire pumps (elec) capacity 200 gal per minute each. 1 75,000 gal. tank elev. 85' to base. 2 miles of 6" & 8" water mains. 42 double hydr. Daily consumption 75,000 gals pressure 50 lbs. Fire pumps give no additional pressure

**FIRE DEPT.**

Motorized. Volunteer, consisting of 20 men. 1-chief & 1-assistant. 1 fire station equipped with J-Wescott truck, with American La France combination hose & chemical equipment, 1000' 2 1/2" hose, 1-60' gal. chemical tank & 200' chemical hose. 2 hand reels with 500' 2 1/2" hose each. 2-24' extension ladders. 1-roof ladder. 300' 2 1/2" reserve hose. Gamewell fire alarm system. 11 boxes, ringing 11 alarms in homes of firemen.

Public lighting: electric. Mile paving. ground elevation as shown

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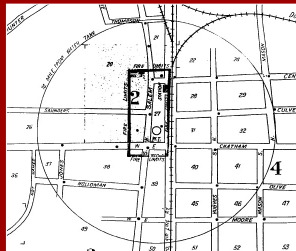
Apex, 1928

**WATER FACILITIES:**

Municipal owned. Source: Natural Lake capacity 100,000 gals. elevated 3 miles W E of town hall. System: Water pumped from Lake into Filling Plant only 100,000 gal. W. TK. elev. 100' on steel tower. sheet #2. by one Morris elec. driven cent. pump, capacity 250 gals per min. & one Morris. 2000' 2 1/2" hose. 2 1/2" hose. 1-60' gal. chemical tank & 200' chemical hose. 2 hand reels with 500' 2 1/2" hose each. 2-24' extension ladders. 1-roof ladder. 300' 2 1/2" reserve hose. Gamewell fire alarm system. 11 boxes, ringing 11 alarms in homes of firemen.

**FIRE DEPT.:**

Volunteer. 18 men. 1 chief. 1 asst. chief & one paid man on duty night & day. One fire station. Apparatus: one American La France truck, triple comb. consisting of one 400 gal. per min. pumper, one 100 gal. chem. tank with 60' 1 1/2" hose. Two 5 gal. chem. extn. 1000' 2 1/2" hose & 1 1/2" 200' 2 1/2" hose on hand reel. Fire alarm system. Alarm is phoned into Fire Dept. where elec. siren located and "100" & "200" alarm also can be rung on from filling station corner - N. Salem & Thompson streets. which is open day & night. No fire alarm boxes.  
 Paving 1 mile - ground elevts. - rolling.  
 Public lighting electric.  
 No wooden shingle roof ordinance.



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September 29, 1928

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February 7, 1940



Knightdale



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December 28, 1946



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### Wake Forest #2

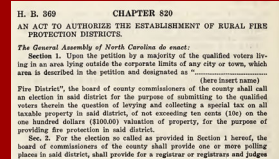
- Created 1942
- Separate municipal FD.
- All-black volunteer department.
- Merged 1982 with WFFD #1.



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### Protection Outside Municipalities

- Early mutual aid
- Early laws for rural protection
- Early rural fire programs



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### 1950s – Rural Fire Departments



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### 1950s – Rural Fire Departments



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## 1950s – Rural Fire Departments

- 1952 – Apex
- 1952 – Garner
- 1953 – Zebulon
- 1954 – Fuquay-Varina
- 1954 – Knightdale
- 1955 – Morrisville
- 1956 – Six Forks\*
- 1956 – Wake Forest
- 1956 – Wake New Hope
- 1957 – Wendell
- 1957 – Western Boulevard
- 1958 – Rolesville
- 1958 – Stony Hill

\* Originally named Six Forks Road FD

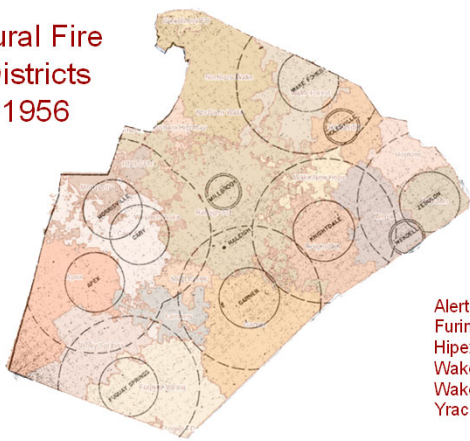
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## Early Rural Apparatus



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## Rural Fire Districts 1956



Alert  
Furina  
Hipex  
Wakelon  
Wakette  
Yrac

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## Who Were These Volunteers?

In 1958 members of Six Forks Fire Department included:

- barber
- Civil Defense official
- detective
- florist
- grocer
- heating contractor
- lawyer
- mail carrier
- mechanics (2)
- school teacher
- state workers (several)
- telephone man

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## Central + Radio System

- Created in 1958.
- County-wide radio network for rural FDs.
- Raleigh FD provided dispatcher.
- Located at Central Fire Station.
- Radio call sign was "Central."



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## OSFM Programs

- 1955 - Fire and Rescue Training Division of the NCDOT organized. Sherman Pickard hired to lead.
- 1962 – Fire division expands, adds rescue.
- 1966 – Elwood Inscoe hired as new director.
- 1969 – Division has director, five instructors, and secretary.



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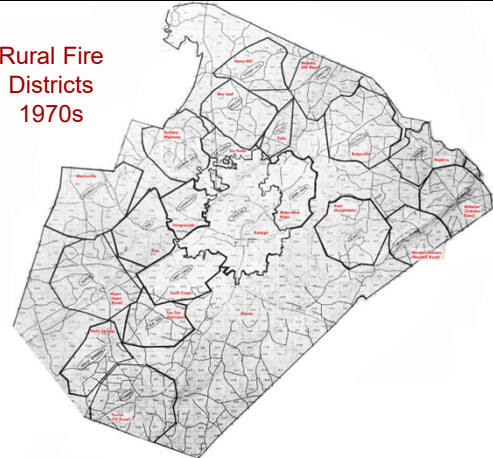
### Early Closures – 1960s

- Disbanded
  - Western Boulevard FD in 1961
  
- Relocated
  - Six Forks FD, farther north in 1962.
  - Six Forks FD, north and west in 1974.



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### Rural Fire Districts 1970s



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### Tax Districts

- 1960? – New Hope
- 1964? – Six Forks, Wake Forest Rural
- 1964 – Rolesville, Stony Hill, Yrac
- 1965 – Durham Highway
- 1967 – Bay Leaf
- 1971 – Knightdale, Swift Creek
- 1988 – Garner
- Etc.

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### Growth of Governance

- 1954 - Wake County Fire Districts Commission
- 1963 - Wake County Fire Chiefs Council created
  - Served as advisory board for decades
  - Still active in early 1999
- 1996 - Wake County Fire Protection Advisory Board created
- 1998 - Wake County Fire Commission created
- 2012 - Wake County Association of Fire Chiefs created

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### Wake County Fireman's Association



- Organized 1955
- Discontinued 2010s



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### Rural Water Supply

- Nahunta FD (Wayne County) receives municipal rating in 1979.
- Mutual-aid tankers for sustained flow of water.
- Developed over seven years, from system created by Iowa farmers.
- Other NC FDs in other counties soon rated similar.



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## Volunteer to Part-Time to Career

- First paid members in early municipal FDs
- Cary adds first full-time in 1958
- Cary ends volunteer program in 1982
- County FDs add paid part-time members in 1970s
- County FDs add full-time members in 1980s
- County FDs expand full-time members in 1990s, 2000s, etc.
- July 2017, three FFs (minimum) funded for all fire tax district FDs

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## Split Departments

ROSTER  
Garner Volunteer Fire Department February 20, 1947

Municipal Section		Rural Section	
1. Chief	L. C. Noel Bryan	2. Richard Gullley	Asst. Ch.
3. George King	Capt.	3. B. B. Poole, Jr.	Capt.
4. Alex Umstead	Lt.	4. Harold Williams	Lt.
5. H. W. Barrow		5. Wayne Ruocco	
6. Billy Buffaloe		6. Bobby Hyatt	
7. Mickey Cochran		7. Sam Carroll	
8. Archie Castlaberry		8. <del>Harold</del> Cecil Parker	
9. Jimmy Jackson		9. H. W. Jackson	
10. Joe Jackson		10. Tommy Johnson	
11. C. P. Jones		11. Randolph Creech	
12. W. B. Knight, Jr.		12. Phil Mitchell	
13. Sam Penny		13. Sherman Pickard	
14. Jimmy Creech		14. Marshall Honegoutt	

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## Split Departments

- 1972 – Fuquay-Varina (town) > Fuquay-Varina Rural
- 1983 – Wake Forest Rural > Wake Forest
- 1985 – Wendell (town) > Wendell Rural
- 1994 – Morrisville Rural > Morrisville (town)
- 1997 – Holly Springs Rural > Holly Springs (town)
- 1999 – Fuquay-Varina Rural > Fuquay-Varina (town)
- 2000 – Zebulon Rural > Zebulon (town)
- 2002 – Apex Rural > Apex (town)

Also: Cary, Garner, Knightdale



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## First Responder + Rescue

### First Responder

- 1976 – RDU CFR adds service
- 1980 – Raleigh FD starts city-wide
- 1982 – Fairview FD adds service, first county FD
- 1993 – EMT-D starts in Raleigh
- 1999 – First responder now county-wide

### Rescue Services

- 1953 – Raleigh FD adds rescue services
- 1974 – New Hope adds rescue services
- Etc.



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## Extrication Services

- 1953 – Raleigh
- 1974 – New Hope
- 1993 – Morrisville
- 1994 – Fairview, Stony Hill
- 1995 – Holly Springs PS, Hopkins
- 1995? – Bay Leaf, Durham Highway
- 1996 – Cary, Wake Forest
- 1996? – Yrac
- 1997 – Apex, Knightdale
- 1997? – Fuquay-Varina
- 1998 – Rolesville, Western Wake
- 2000 – Zebulon
- 2001 – Swift Creek
- 2002 – Garner, Knightdale PS
- 2003? – Wendell

### Notes

RDU likely decades earlier, before Hurst tools  
Fairgrounds had none, relied on Yrac  
Six Forks FD extrication handled by Six Forks Rescue

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## County Fire Marshal

- 1957 – A. B. Hales, appointed in lieu of county electrical inspector
- 1966 – No fire marshal by this time
- 1978 – Fire Marshal role added to Director of Raleigh/Wake Civil Preparedness
- 1986 – Full-time Fire Marshal position created
- 1996c – Position renamed Fire/Rescue Director
- 1999c – Position renamed Fire Services Director

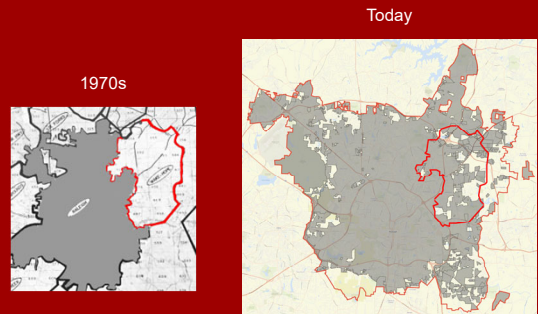
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### Fire Marshals / Fire Directors

- Russell Capps (1978-86)
- Rick Hall (1986-88)
- Ed Schmelzer (1988-94?)
- Greg Grayson (1994-98)
- Ray Echevarria (1999-01)
- Dewey Poole (2001-02) (interim)
- Ray Echevarria (2002-11)
- Joe Durham (2011-13) (interim)
- Mike Wright (2013-14)
- Nick Campasano (2015-20)
- Darrell Alford (2021-)

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### Municipal Expansion



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### Contracts with Raleigh

1960  
Six Forks for newly annexed areas in north Raleigh, about \$350 per month.

[ need more examples ]

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### Early Ladder Trucks



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### Evolution of Tankers



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### Evolution of PPE - City



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### Evolution of PPE - County



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### Evolution of Rescue Tools



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### County Fire Academy

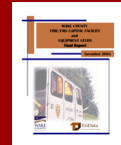
- 1985 – County training center completed
- 1987 – Classrooms added at training center
- 1988 – County fire training program started, tower added at training center
- 1992 – Raleigh fire academy includes county firefighters for first time
- 2009 – First county recruit class graduates
- 2022 – First fully-paid county fire academy



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### Consultant Studies

1994  
Comprehensive Review of  
Wake County Fire Protection



2004  
Wake County Fire/EMS  
Capital Facility and Equipment

Read reports at [legeros.com/ralwake/docs/wcfc/tridata/](http://legeros.com/ralwake/docs/wcfc/tridata/)

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### Consultant Studies

1994  
Comprehensive Review of  
Wake County Fire Protection



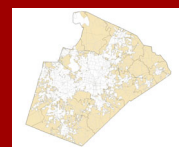
Recommendations included:

- Create advisory board
- Restructure FM office
- Consolidate tax districts
- County ownership for some assets
- Rural FDs <-> municipalities
- Establish minimum ISO rating
- Response standards
- Communication
- Staffing
- Overall system

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### Fire Commission / Fire Tax District

- November 24, 1998  
First meeting of Wake County Fire Commission.
- July 1, 1999  
Individual fire tax districts consolidated into single county-wide tax district.



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### Special Services / Incident Support



1995



2000-2001



2007

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### Fire-Based EMS



Holly Springs

1998 to 2010

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### Co-Located EMS



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### Wake County Growth

Years	Population	New Fire Stations	
2000 – 2004	633,529	AFD Sta 3 BLFD Sta 3 (SFFD) CFD Sta 6 FVFD Sta 3	GFD Sta 4 RFD Stas 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 WFFD Sta 2
2005 – 2009	754,159	AFD Sta 4 CFD Sta 7 HSFD Sta 3	RFD Sta 28 WFFD Sta 3
2010 – 2014	906,875	CFD Sta 8 WFFD Sta 5 (FFD)	
2015 – 2019	1,022,871	AFD Sta 5 CFD Sta 9 RFD Sta 29	WFFD Sta 4
2020 – present	1,133,553	AFD Sta 6 GFD Sta 5 FVFD Sta 4	KFD Sta 4 WFD Sta 3

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### Managing Money

2001 - New rules for private agencies under county contract.

- They numbered 16 fire and 8 EMS agencies.
- Audits showed occasional poor accounting practices.
- New rules empowered county to ensure correction of problems.

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### County Ownership - Facilities

2002 - County ownership of new facilities introduced:

- Fuquay-Varina Sta 3 (2002)  
New service area
- Stony Hill Sta 1 (2004)  
Replacement station
- Garner Sta 4 (2010)  
New service area
- Bay Leaf Sta 1 (2013)  
Replacement station
- Wendell Sta 3 (2020)  
New service area



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## County Ownership - Apparatus

2005 – County ownership of apparatus introduced.

- Plus bulk purchasing and county-wide base specs.
- Pierce Contender pumpers, first purchase.
- Eighteen delivered in 2005.
- Seven or more ordered in 2006.
- Some municipalities piggyback on order.



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## Co-Location



Cary Station 7  
+  
Morrisville Station 3

Opened 2007



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## Mergers and Closures

### Mergers

- 1998 – Fairgrounds + Yrac > Western Wake
- 2002 – Six Forks > Bay Leaf
- 2012 – Falls > Wake Forest
- 2018 – Bay Leaf + Stony Hill > Northern Wake
- 2020 – Eastern Wake > Knightdale

### Closures

- 2008 – Western Wake Station 2
- 2022 – New Hope Station 1



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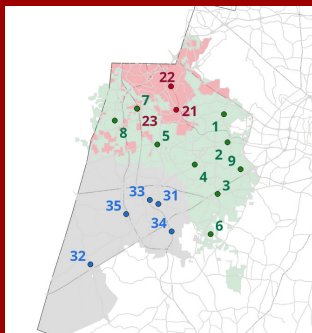
## Tanker Task Forces



2012

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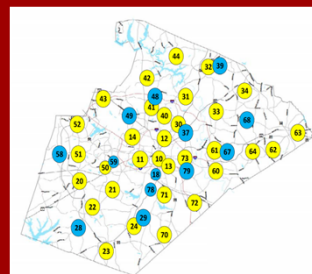
## Cary-Apex-Morrisville (CAM)



May 7, 2019

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## County-Wide EMS



- Cary EMS (2021)
- Eastern Wake EMS (2021)
- Apex EMS (2018)
- Garner EMS (2011)
- Six Forks EMS (2011)
- Holly Springs FD EMS (2010)



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## Data Analysis

- FY17 – New funding formula for cost-share FDs.
- FY17 – Staffing and deployment study.
- FY19 – New countywide records management system, also integrated with CAD.
- FY22 – First data-driven analysis of response data. Informed staffing and budget decisions for FY23.

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## Data Analysis

The collage includes three main documents:

- Wake County Fire Services Long Range Planning Data Analysis:** A report dated January 26, 2022, from a Fire Commission Meeting.
- Effective Response Force (ERF):** A table with columns for 'High Response Fire Risk Control Units', 'Control Unit', 'Number of Personnel', and 'Fire District'. It lists various units and their personnel counts.
- Northern Wake Fire - Northwest Hook:** A GIS Travel Time Analysis showing a map of the area and a table of travel times for different fire stations.

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## New Hope Closure

- Station 1 closed on July 1, 2022.
- Staffed engine company moved to Station 2.
- First two-company station in Fire Tax District.
- Station 1 district now covered by Raleigh.
- Consideration of concept started in 2020.

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## Future Plans

- Apex Station 6
- Garner Station 5
- Fuquay-Varina Station 4
- Holly Springs Station 3 relocation
- Knightdale Station 1 relocation
- Knightdale Station 4
- Northern Wake County "hook" station
- Garner FD > Town of Garner
- Rolesville FD > Town of Rolesville

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## Big Finish Goes Here

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## Any questions?

Learn more at [www.legeros.com/ralwake](http://www.legeros.com/ralwake)

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