

# Austin Fire Department Historical Highlights



**1841** First fire protection organization sanctioned by the City Council. In December, Richard Bullock organized a seven-man fire protection group.

However, the group was neither skilled nor equipped to fight fires, and fire protection was still inadequate.

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**1858** Until this time there had been no organized fire company. The *State Gazette* and the *Texas Intelligencer*, two local papers, continually ran articles about the necessity of organized fire protection. Hook and Ladder Company #1 was organized in August of that year. The first home of the company was in Peck's Hall, a two-story frame building on 6th Street near the Driskell Hotel.

Equipment included a Seagrave trussed hook and ladder truck with tiller, three-horse hitch, three trained horses, extension ladders up to 60 feet, Hale harness, hangers, and Babcock extinguishers. The company used wooden buckets at first, but later was supplied with leather fire buckets. The first uniforms consisted of blue eight-cone firefighter hats, red shirts with "H & L No. 1" across the breast, and black patent leather belts with white gloves. The company's logo was "Always Ready!" Alarms were given by cries of "Fire," pistol shots and the ringing of church bells. The first man to get the key would open the truck house and act as commander; the truck then pulled out, and the members would fall in and grab hold of the ropes.

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**1866** The City Council appointed C.F. Millett as the first person to hold the position of Fire Chief. He served three years.

Also, that year cisterns were installed at eight locations to supply water for fire protection.

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**1868** Washington Fire Company #1 was established on 6th Street.

The first fire engine, pulled by hand, was replaced by a steamer, which in turn was abandoned when the water company changed to the Holly system in the early 1880s. The engine company then was converted to a hose company.

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**1870** Austin had a population of 5,000.

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**1871** The City Council purchased the first fire steam engine.

A third company, Colorado Fire Company #2, was organized. Austin's third-oldest company had a long and brilliant record.

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**1874** A fire in the State Capitol on Feb. 14, 1874, burned completely through the floor between the second and third floors. According to fire department records, "It was owing only to the timely arrival of several members of the Hook and Ladder Company that the building was saved." The City Council approved the hiring of an engineer to operate a new \$6,000 engine. He was on duty at all times and was paid a monthly salary of \$100.

The City Water Company installed the first hydrant system on Austin's two main streets: Congress Avenue and Pecan Street.

On March 23, a new city ordinance provided for an Assistant Chief, recorder, and fire and police commissioner, in addition to the Fire Chief.

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**1875** Central Engine Company #3 was established with a chemical engine at 4th Street and East Avenue. The chemical engine proved to be unsatisfactory and the company disbanded in 1877.

The Hope Hook and Ladder Company #2, also established in 1875, lived a short but

glorious existence. Hope's main claim to fame was a State Championship race won in 1878. It was disbanded in 1882.

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**1877** A fire on Nov. 9 at the Blind Asylum injured several firefighters. Foreman E.T. Deats died as a result of his injuries on Jan. 20, 1878.

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**1878** Hook and Ladder Company #3 was organized and later became Protection Hose Company #3.

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**1879** Hook and Ladder station house burned while firefighters were battling a fire in the second ward (Avenue Hotel). Efforts to save the house were futile.

The City's expenditures for the fire department were \$7,504.39. The department was comprised of two engine houses and one hook and ladder house.

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**1881** The State Capitol was destroyed by fire on Nov. 9. The 16th and 17th Legislatures had failed to approve funding for hydrants; there was insufficient water or water pressure to mount an effective attack on the fire. An entry in fire records by department recorder A.H. Robinson, noted " . . . the pressure, however, was not sufficient to throw water even a few feet. The economical solons (sessions) of the sixteenth legislature and so, too, the seventeenth, refused to appropriate enough money to supply the Capitol building and the grounds with hydrants and water. Today, we gaze upon the blackened walls of a burnt state house as the monument to their penny-wise and pound-foolish policy."

In the same year, a tribute to Austin firefighters appeared in the *Texas Siftings*: "In no city in Texas that we know of, or elsewhere, is there so large a proportion of the best men in the community connected with the fire department. The most prominent bankers, merchants, and professional men in Austin are firemen."

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**1882** On July 6, the City Council budgeted \$346 per month for salaries of engineers, rent of rooms for engines, hose carriages, hook and ladder trucks, and other

expenses.

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**1886** The fire alarm system at this time included an approximately 4,000-pound, spring-clapper, general alarm bell at city hall and bell towers at two other firehouses. All companies were connected by a special phone system. When a report of fire came in, the alarm was sent to central; central then pressed a button and all companies were notified of the fire and its location (six rings for sixth ward, for instance). The officer on-duty at city hall was notified by central over the phone and rang the alarm bell, indicating location by number of taps. Each company had a prescribed district for first alarms. All companies turned out for second alarms.

East Austin Fire Company #4 was established. Its fire hall was located between 10th and 11th, on Lydia Street.

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**1895** South Austin Fire Company #5 located on South Congress was established.

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**1896** North Austin Fire Company #6 was established. Originally located at 30th and Rio Grande streets, a permanent hall was built at 3002 Guadalupe St. The fire hall filled both the occupational and social functions of the community. The ground level was the maintenance shop and the second story consisted of one large main room with a stage. The volunteer firefighters' band would play as community members danced and socialized. The volunteers ran the house until 1916 when they turned it over to the city government, which hired professional firefighters. The structure was used for many years as a maintenance shop for the Austin Fire Department. It has since been restored and preserved for future generations.

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**1897** For the fiscal year ending Nov. 30 the value of property in the department owned by the city totaled \$25,511.75. The value of property in the department owned by the companies totaled \$13,148. The number of company members was 324 whereas the number of members on City payroll was seven. Companies responded to 70 alarms, which resulted in \$27,157.15 in property damage.

Austin ranked at the head of the "second class" insurance rating. To have "first class" status, the department had to have full-time paid firefighters, macadamized streets

and electric fire alarm systems.

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**1899** The building that was utilized as the temporary State Capitol (following the 1881 fire) and later used as Austin High School, burned on Sept. 30. It was located on the southwest corner of Congress Avenue and Mesquite (11th) Street.

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**1905** West Austin Company #7 was organized on Feb. 16, 1905, at 1000 Blanco St. This fire station is the oldest still standing and occupied as a fire station, now AFD Station 4.

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**1908** Tenth Ward Fire Company #8 was organized on May 26 at a meeting of citizens on the steps of the First Methodist Church.

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**1911** Adolf Schutze was elected Chief of the Austin Volunteer Fire Department. He barely had pinned on his Chief's badge when his first alarm sounded. He hitched a ride on a ladder truck instead of going to the fire in the wagon provided by the City.

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**1912** The first motor-driven vehicle was purchased at a cost of \$4,200 from Webb Motor Fire Apparatus Company.

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**1913** The last of the volunteer companies to be organized was Rescue Hose Company #9 on May 21. The fire hall was located on East Avenue south of 24th Street.

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**1915** During the flash floods and storms of April 1915, Firefighter Thomas Edward Quinn was killed in the line of duty on April 22 while attempting a rescue from flood waters on Shoal Creek.

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**1916** Voters approved to change to a fully paid fire department in May, which began operations in June 1916 with 27 men. Clarence Woodward was appointed Fire Chief.

On July 23, 1916, the new department experienced its first major fire in the Kreisle Building. Four firefighters were seriously injured. Firefighter James T. Glass had his spine crushed after he was caught under a falling wall and staircase. He lay paralyzed at Brackenridge Hospital until his death more than a year later August 17, 1917. His badge number, "13," was permanently retired in his memory, which is why we do not have a Fire Station 13 today. However, in 2010, Engine 50 (located at our Central Station downtown) was re-named Engine 13 in his honor. That same year, it was discovered that Firefighter Glass had been buried in an unmarked grave. The [Austin Fire Museum](#) purchased a headstone that was installed with full AFD honors. He was also posthumously awarded AFD's Medal of Honor

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**1917** By the end of the year, there were 35 firefighters, five pieces of motor apparatus, one Chief's car and three pieces of horse-drawn equipment. A hose man was paid \$70 per month and the operating budget for the year was \$43,740.

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**1921** The earliest State Board of Insurance record of Austin's fire insurance rate was listed at 23 cents. Austin had a 15 percent good fire record and a 32 percent fire ratio loss, which reflected an excellent record of fire prevention and protection.

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**1923** Austin firefighters worked either a 10-hour day or a 14-hour night, seven days a week.

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**1925** The fire department's communication system consisted of two telephones, one of which was a magneto with a hand crank. People would call in a fire on the regular phone and the dispatcher would crank the magneto. There were no radios. When a fire company went out on a call, the dispatcher no idea what was going on at the fire until somebody at from fire could get to a telephone to replay the information.

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**1926** John E. Woody served as acting Chief of the department from Dec. 15, 1926 to Feb. 1, 1927. He was then appointed Chief on Feb. 1, 1927 and remained so until Oct. 1958. Chief Woody died on Dec. 21, 1987.

The old bell that had called the members of the Austin Fire Department to so many fires since 1887 was removed from its tower in 1926. It had hung at the top of a tower in the rear of the old City Hall. Weighing 3,597 pounds, the bell was said to be one of the purest-toned bells ever turned out in this country. The bell was sold to the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe, 1206 E. 9th St., and still is hanging in its church tower heralding services.



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**1929** Fire Station 9 at 100 E. 43rd St. opened on Aug. 1.

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**1931** The six-story brick drill tower located on Town Lake was constructed for training purposes, at a cost of \$6,200.

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**1932** On Nov. 20, Fire Station 2 was opened at 506 W. Martin Luther King Blvd. The original Station 2, located at 1614 Lavaca St., was built in 1878. It housed Protection Hook and Ladder Company No. 3.

On Oct. 15, Fire Station 6 was opened at 1705 S. Congress Ave. Station 6 replaced the old wood frame structure that was built in 1895 to house the South Austin Fire Company No. 5.

In 1932 the fire department responded to 613 alarms with a total expenditure of

\$123,882.66.

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**1938** The Fire Department continued to grow along with the City of Austin. New fire stations were constructed, and older stations were remodeled. The depression years slowed the growth of the department somewhat, but in 1938, a new central fire station was constructed downtown at 401 E. 5th St. and Station No. 10 was built and opened on the far west side of Austin at 3009 Windsor Rd.

An alarm system of an entirely new design was installed in all Austin fire stations and fire apparatus. Austin was one of the first fire departments in the South to have an alarm system that featured a loud speaker system connected to its 10 stations and two-way radio communications with all apparatus, including 13 fire trucks and

four official automobiles. The personnel of the Fire Department consisted of the Fire Chief, Assistant Chiefs, District Chiefs, Captains, and Privates. The 166 men in the Department worked on 24-hour shifts changing at noon.



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**1939** A fire occurred at the Austin State Hospital in a dorm and, due to the quick actions of the firefighters, 283 occupants were rescued, and no one was injured.

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**1940** The Austin Fire Department responded to 1,246 alarms. On April 10, Fire Station 7 at 201 Chicon St. was opened, replacing the old Tenth Ward building located at 111 E. 1st St.

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**1941** The Firefighters' Relief and Retirement Law was passed by the 45th Legislature in 1937 and Austin firefighters voted to become members in 1941. This retirement system is state-approved but locally administered. Today, Austin firefighters enjoy one of the finest retirement systems in the country.

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**1947** A bill authorizing Civil Service classification for firefighters and police officers was approved by the Texas Legislature. Austin voters approved the classification to become effective in May 1948. The vote passed 10-to-one in favor of the firefighters. Never before or since has an election passed with a 10-to-one favor.

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**1948** Shortly after Civil Service Law was voted in, Austin firefighters became organized as Local 975 of the International Fire Fighters Association. Only a few firefighters did not join. Firefighters were prohibited by law from striking, but general sentiment was that no one wanted to leave the city unprotected. The main focus of the organization was to pass amendments and improvements to the pension laws.

A building inspection program was initiated to foster fire prevention, which is still being carried out by inspectors and in-service fire companies.

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**1949** World War II had slowed the growth of the fire department, but in 1949 the fire department was recovering and beginning to make progress. Fire Station 11, located at 1605 Kinney Ave., was completed and placed in service on May 5, 1949. Station 12, located at 2109 Hancock Dr., was completed and placed into service on June 14, 1949. At the end of the year, fire department personnel numbered 171.

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**1950** In this year, the Austin Fire Department responded to 2,293 alarms.

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**1952** The Austin Fire Department employed three black firefighters, the first blacks to be hired under Civil Service law in the state of Texas. The three were Willie Ray Davis, who retired as a Captain; Nathaniel H. Kindred, who died of a heart attack in 1977 while at a fire scene; and Roy D. Greene, who resigned.

Also, this year crash truck apparatus were placed at newly completed Station 14, 4305 Airport Blvd., to provide fire coverage for the Municipal Airport complex. Fire Station 14 was completed and placed in service Sept. 26, 1952, providing firefighting and crash rescue operations for incidents involving aircraft. Fire personnel and equipment serving the airport operate under Federal Aviation Administration guidelines.

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**1953** Station 15, located at 829 Airport Blvd., was opened on Feb. 24.

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**1954** Beginning in 1954, the Fire Prevention Division had a new job and title to add to its line of command. The City Council voted to amend the Civil Service Ordinance to create the new Chief Inspector position.

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**1956** The City Council approved the purchase of four pumpers and a 65-foot aerial ladder truck for a total of \$75,027 from the firm of Peter, Pirsch, and Son, which provided the lowest of eight bids.

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**1957** On Feb. 1, Fire Station 3 at 201 West 30th St. was opened. The new station cost an estimated \$66,000. Station 3 replaced the old fire hall at 3002 Guadalupe St. that was built in 1906 and housed North Austin Hose Co. No. 6.



On Feb. 7, Fire Station 16 at 7000

Reese Lane was opened.

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**1959** Robert H. Dickerson was appointed to the position of Fire Chief on June 19. He remained in the position until March 15, 1968.

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**1962** During the Cuban Crisis, interest in Civil Defense increased in Austin and public fallout shelters were designated throughout the city. In 1964, City Manager

W.T. Williams was appointed Director of Civil Defense. The Fire Chief was designated Chief of the Fire and Rescue Services, which included agencies assigned to this emergency service. The Fire Department's role in the civil emergency operation was to provide emergency fire prevention, fire control, rescue support, and facility decontamination support. In 1973, the Civil Defense operation was merged into the Fire Department.

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**1963** Joe Villareal was the first Hispanic firefighter employed by the Austin Fire Department. He served until his retirement on Jan. 1, 1992.

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**1965** On Jan. 15, Fire Station 18 at 6311 Berkman Dr. was opened.

In March, the City's Fire Prevention Division opened its newly completed building at 1621 Festival Beach Rd. Located just east of the Interregional Bridge on the north shore of Town Lake, the 10,000-square foot, two-level structure cost \$170,000.

On August 10, a fire caused by a spark from a welder's torch used by workers installing air conditioning equipment broke out on the 20th floor of the University of Texas Tower causing damage to the P.T. Barnum, Robert Downing, and Harry Houdini collections that

were kept in the Hoblitzelle Theater Arts Library. Water used to put out the blaze ran down the stairway and elevator shaft causing damage to books below and heat and smoke damage was sustained on the 21st floor.

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**1966** Austin accepted delivery on its newest piece of firefighting equipment, a \$50,000 Snorkel truck. It featured a basket-type platform on a jointed hydraulic boom that could be raised 75 feet in the air, extended 39 feet horizontally, and rotated in a complete circle in either direction. Straight or fog type water streams could be pumped at a rate of 1,100 gallons per minute from a four-way maneuverable nozzle on the platform.

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**1967** On Oct. 1, Fire Station 19 was opened at 5211 Balcones Dr.

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**1968** Ed S. Kirkham was appointed Fire Chief on Sept. 27. He came to Austin from the San Angelo, Texas fire department.

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**1969** In March, Fire Station 5 at 1201 Webberville Rd. was opened. This station replaced the fire hall that housed East Austin Fire Co. No. 4 at 1005 Lydia St. originally built in 1886.

Firefighters received new uniforms consisting of navy blue slacks, light blue shirts, ties and Eisenhower jackets. Officers wore white shirts and caps to set them apart. After being outfitted with new uniforms, Austin firefighters were considered by many to be the best-dressed firefighters in the state.



**1970** Fire department applicants underwent 12 weeks of training before being admitted to the force. The first six weeks involved classroom training in which they were taught standard approaches for responding to and fighting fires. Fire department discipline and basic Civil Service also were part of the compulsory curriculum. The second six-week program was on-the-job training, where the potential firefighter was assigned to a truck and worked

under observation.

A new airport crash truck was purchased for \$68,000. It held 1,500 gallons of water for making foam. The truck could spray its load in five minutes at a range of 150 feet.

The Salvation Army Canteen, staffed by Claude and Leona Rutledge on a volunteer basis, began responding to major alarms to provide firefighters with refreshments, cool towels, a place to relax, and words of encouragement. The Rutledges quickly were adopted by the firefighters and continued to provide this most appreciated service until 1987. Claude Rutledge died Sept. 13, 1995. Several fire trucks lead the procession at the funeral.

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**1971** The City Council recommended closing the station located at 43rd and Speedway, but a delegation of Hyde Park residents descended upon the council and the plans were canceled. This same scenario has been repeated two times since.

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**1972** In February, Fire Station 8 at 8989 Research Blvd. was opened. It originally was located at 21st and East Avenue, which was the home of Rescue Hose Company No. 9, the last volunteer company to be formed (May 21, 1913).

On June 17, Capt. James L. Buford died in the line of duty while attempting to rescue a 15-year-old boy, who also drowned in the Shoal Creek flood waters. Capt. Buford received the AFD Medal of Honor posthumously on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1998.

Austin firefighters began receiving Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training and certifications.

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**1973** Willie Ray Davis was promoted to the rank of Captain, the first black firefighter to achieve the Captain's badge in the Austin Fire Department, as well as in the state of Texas.

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**1974** The Fire Department accepted delivery of three diesel pumpers and one diesel aerial ladder truck. This was the first diesel fire apparatus to be purchased for

firefighting in Austin. In the following years, all new engines and trucks were diesel-fueled.

AFD began training in its new six-story fire drill tower located at 517 S. Pleasant Valley Rd. On Jan. 23, Fire Station 20 at 6601 Manchaca Rd. was opened. On Feb. 26, Fire Station 21 at 4201 Spicewood Springs Rd. was opened.

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**1975** On April 3, Fire Station 22 at 5309 E. Riverside Dr. was opened.

May 24 was declared Firefighter Recognition Day by Austin Mayor Jeffrey M. Friedman. The Hyde Park neighborhood again waged a successful fight against the City's recommended closing of Fire Station 9.

It was decided that Emergency Medical Services would be a separate City department beginning Jan. 1, 1976. Prior to this decision, Austin Ambulance was the franchise-holder for ambulance service within the city. The Fire Department began active recruitment of women to serve as firefighters.

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**1976** Austin covered 104 square miles and had a population of 300,000 people. There were 21 fire stations with a total of 459 personnel. AFD was organized into five divisions: Combat, Airport Firefighting,

Training, Fire Prevention and Communications. Equipment in 1976 consisted of 25 pumpers, seven aerial ladder trucks, one snorkel, four squad cars, three crash trucks, three boats and 30 automobiles. The operating budget for 1974-75 was \$6,528,920.

On Jan. 5, Austin's first woman firefighter, Lucinda Hough, was appointed. She served more than two years, resigning in August, 1978. Since that time women have become an integral part of the department.

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**1977** On March 4, Specialist Nathaniel Kindred, one of the first black firefighters

hired in the department, died of a heart attack in the line of duty. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

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**1978** "9-1-1" emergency number system was proposed by City Council Member Ron Mullen and approved by the Council.

On April 1, Fire Station 23 opened at 1330 East Rundberg Lane.

The City Council approved a project to install a carillon and restore the old fire training tower on West 1st Street (Caesar Chavez) near the shores of Town Lake. Sponsored by the Austin Chapter of Women in Construction, the \$45,000 project was launched with a pledge of \$30,000 from Mrs. Effie R. Kitchens, whose late husband built the tower when he entered the construction business in 1931.

This tower is now called Buford Tower in honor of the late Captain James L. Buford, who died in the line of duty on June 17, 1972.



In April 1978, flames devoured a downtown office supply warehouse. Two firefighters were hospitalized for smoke inhalation in the three-alarm fire at Abel Stationers, 401 Colorado St. The same business was hit by a second three-alarm fire at its new location (910 E. 5th St.) later that same year.

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**1979** In May, Geno Chavarria became the first Hispanic to promote to Captain at AFD and in November, Betty Swint was appointed as Austin's first black female firefighter.

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**1980** On June 1, Fire Station 25 at 5228 Duval Rd. opened. On July 20, Fire Station 24 at 5811 Nuckols Crossing Rd. opened.

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**1981** The Memorial Day flood of May 24 claimed 13 lives and sent firefighters into rushing currents to rescue 31 people from cars and houses that later were swept away. AFD was stressed to the point of not having any additional equipment or personnel to respond to calls. Because of that flood, the Office of Emergency Management began to focus more on its response to natural disasters, particularly floods.

The Fire Department upgraded its rescue boats and equipment and offered additional training in swift water rescue to all of its members.

The Memorial Day flood also led to the creation of AFD's Dive Rescue Team. Eighteen members volunteered, led by Terry Hill (now a Rescue Captain). Divers provided their own equipment and began training. With increased confidence in the Dive Team, it gradually became formalized. Originally there were 12 active members placed all over the city. If a call came in, they responded if they were able to get away from their companies. It was not until 1983 that the Dive Team was centralized at Station 1.

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**1982** Austin firefighters began wearing new fire-retardant turnouts made of Nomex, replacing the old cotton canvas turnouts.

On Dec. 2, Fire Station 26 was opened at 6702 Wentworth Dr.

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**1983** Austin Fire Department moved its Dispatch office from Fire Operations at 401 East 5th St. into a new centralized communication center located at the Austin Police Headquarters at 715 East 8th St. The new equipment and radios greatly assisted incident communications.

Three new Rescue units were placed into operation. The \$15,000 trucks, designed by Austin firefighters, gave the department capabilities it never had before, such as scene illumination.

On February 6, 1983 a fire began in the apartment of [William P. Hobby Jr.](#), then the state [lieutenant governor](#). A guest of Hobby's was killed, and four firefighters and a police officer were injured by the subsequent blaze. The capitol was crowded with accumulated archives, and the fire was intense and came dangerously close to destroying the structure. It caused severe damage to the east wing and compromised much of the



framing, which was largely composed of exposed cast iron posts and beams. Restoration continued until 1993, and the state took advantage of the extensive rebuilding to update the mechanical and structural systems to modern standards.



Bill Roberts was appointed to the position of Fire Chief on March 7, 1983. He came to Austin from the Dallas Fire Department.

A series of fraternity fires plagued the University of Texas, including one that was caused by a discarded cigarette and resulted in one fatality and six injuries.

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**1984** The Fire Department implemented a physical fitness program for department personnel. The purpose of the program was to create an awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle and to improve the quality of life for department personnel.

A High-Volume Smoke Removal System, known to Austin firefighters as the Smoke Buster, was placed into operation in March. This was a giant fan placed onto the back of a truck and its assigned driver responded to every fire in the city. This concept was the brainchild of Chief Roberts and he was able to get funding for a Research & Development Section to enhance the program. Captain Frank German and FF Billy Webb worked on the concept for 2 years. This program revolutionized the concept of positive pressure ventilation and influenced the fire service nationwide.



AFD's Hazardous Materials Response Team was created in response to new federal regulations requiring fire departments to plan and train for hazardous materials emergencies. AFD Hazmat teams were formed from the crews of Austin's three Rescue units and led by Battalion Chief Richard Brumbelow. Training was sought outside of the Department and eventually included the crews from the engines at each of the respective stations. By 1989, hazmat technician training was done in-house as it is today.

Over two days, Austin Fire experienced two multiple alarm fires in South Austin. One was a paint storage/factory warehouse with an attached building full of chemicals along IH35 in deep South Austin and the other was a 5-alarm fire at the Battle Bend Apartments, which were under construction. Though no one was seriously injured, both fires taxed fire resources tremendously for those days and the apartments were completely destroyed. Pictured is FF Andy Sackett in his second month on the streets with Austin Fire.



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**1985** On April 29, the Safety Officer position was created, and Battalion Chief Roger Roe was the first Safety Chief. The first year had Chief Roe responding to over 100+ incidents and it placed firefighter safety as a priority in incident mitigation.

On July 18, a worker died in a trench collapse at a sewage plant in east Austin. This incident, along with an incident in 1986, led to the Department's acquisition of trench rescue and training for its members.

On August 28, the Vehicle Accident Review Board was created to review AFD vehicle incidents.

On May 1 STAR Flight helicopter service was placed into operation. The service combined City of Austin EMS, Travis County EMS and Brackenridge Hospital as providers of emergency care throughout a 10-county area.

On Aug. 16, Station 27 opened at 5401 McCarty Lane.

In September, 2 firefighters were seriously injured during a "wild line" hose drill involving a 2 1/2" hose.

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**1986** On September 29, a critical incident response team and peer support system was put in place to address fire fighter stress and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This program was led By Battalion Chiefs Richard Brumbelow and Roger Roe, along with Dr. Rick Bradstreet.

On October 1, money was budgeted for purchasing of fire resistant uniforms to replace the polyester uniforms that were issued in 1969. Nomex was eventually selected for use.

Personal Alert Safety Systems (PASS) were purchased for all Operations personnel. This is an alarm attached to a firefighter's air pack to signal their location if they should become unconscious or lost.

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**1987** Three fire stations were opened: Fire Station 29 at 3704 Deer Lane and Fire Station 30 at 1021 W. Braker Ln. on Sept. 28 and Fire Station 28 at 2410 Parmer Lane on Nov. 10.



The Dive Team unveiled its new Hovercraft, designed to travel across land or water.

On Dec. 13, a train derailment outside of Round Rock sparked a huge chemical fire, forcing 5,000 people to evacuate and requiring mutual aid assistance from AFD.

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**1988** On Jan. 22, approximately 2,200 gallons of hydrochloric acid spilled from a ruptured tank in the Lockheed Plant. The incident caused area residents to seek information about the chemicals stored at the plant and their potential dangers. The neighborhood also became active in trying to get the plant moved.

On June 29, a six-alarm blaze gutted a nightclub on Riverside Drive and damaged three other businesses. Approximately 160 firefighters and 40 trucks battled the blaze.

Another three fire stations opened in 1988: on Feb. 28, Fire Station 32 opened at 2804 Montebello Rd.; on Aug. 15, Fire Station 33 opened at 9409 Bluegrass Dr.; and on Sept. 26, Fire Station 31 opened at 5507 FM 2222.

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**1989** In April, the Office of Emergency Management became an extension of the Austin Fire Department. Formerly an extension of the Austin Police Department, the Office assists victims and agencies in the event of natural disaster or any extended, large-scale incident.

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**1990** On Sept. 15, Fire Station 17 opened at 4128 South 1st St., replacing the station located at 702 W. Ben White Blvd. that had been built in 1961.



In November, four stations piloted different models of semiautomatic defibrillators on cardiac patients. Now, all Fire Department personnel are trained in the use of semiautomatic defibrillators and the units are carried on all engines and trucks.

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**1991** Specialist Doug Kusey received the Medal of Honor for his actions in rescuing a civilian from a fire on January 24<sup>th</sup>.

In October, the Austin Fire Department received the Austin Quality Award for "significant progress in the pursuit of total quality." That same month, the department received national recognition for being a model department in the field of fire prevention.

Also, in October, Becky Malone became the first female to promote to Captain at AFD.

The Christmas floods kept the department busy during the holidays. On Dec. 20, AFD responded to 20 calls throughout the night and activated the Emergency Operations Center, a composite of multiple city and county agencies designed to act as a central coordination point during major emergency incidents. Calls ranged from a construction barge that was free floating on Town Lake to rescuing families trapped

in cars. This incident was the first critical test of the Emergency Operations Center since the Office of Emergency Management was incorporated into the Fire Department.

Cadet class 93 graduated 22 new firefighters.

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**1992** In April, Austin began implementing its Canine Accelerate Detection Program. "Nickie," a black Labrador, assisted fire investigators in determining whether a fire is intentionally set for nearly a decade.

In May, the AFD Dive Rescue Team added two inflatable rescue boats and a pontoon boat.

In June, a new Aircraft Fire Rescue Unit (AFR 4) was put into commission with two times the capacity of the older units. The new unit was paid for by the Federal Aviation Agency and the City Aviation Department.

In August the citizens of Austin voted to approved \$8.76 million in bonds to build and staff four new multi-company fire stations. Also in August, the department purchased three thermal imaging cameras to assist in firefighting and overhaul operations. The cameras initially were carried on each of the Manpower units and now are carried on all Rescue units and several trucks.

The Austin Fire Department won the Greater Austin Quality Award for Highest Achievement. Also, in October, Chief James Ash was asked to form a Rope Rescue Team and serve as its coordinator. Station 32 was selected as the location due to its proximity to the Barton Creek Greenbelt. Volunteers were trained and assigned. The team since has grown to include trench rescue operations and is now referred to as the Technical Rescue Team. The Austin Fire Department now has more than 25 certified Technical Rescue Team (TRT) members. They now are stationed at Station 1.

Cadet class 94 graduated 12 new firefighters.

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**1993** At the beginning of the year, AFD began training with its new Flashover Survival Training Container. The flashover unit was replaced in 2000.

On March 13, a fire at the Holly Street Power Plant sparked community concern. The

department responded by designing a proposal to provide human services at emergency incidents that later became the Community Services Sector included in the Incident Command System. An emergency evacuation guide for the Holly Street Area also was developed.

In July, Greg Keyes became the first African-American to promote to Battalion Chief at AFD.

Cadet classes 95 and 96 graduated 30 new firefighters

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**1994** In January, Chief Bill Roberts retired. Robin Paulsgrove, then an assistant chief, was appointed Fire Chief. He was the first Austin firefighter to head the Department in more than 25 years. He officially was sworn in Feb. 11, 1994.

Also, this year, the fire service lost its exemption to the Federal Age Discrimination Employment Act, allowing people 40 years or older to apply for the job. In January 1995, Bob Dameron and Roger Holtz became the first cadets over the age of 40 to be hired with the loss of the exemption.

Cadet classes 97 and 98 graduated 88 new firefighters.

In March a high-rise alarm at the University of Texas Welch Hall chemistry laboratory turned into a hazmat alarm and then escalated to a five-alarm fire when fire combined with hazardous materials creating explosions.

AFD demonstrated its commitment to the Fire Prevention mission by setting about to train all lieutenants in the department to the State Fire Inspector level. Currently, AFD conducts the 180-plus hour training class once every year. To date all AFD lieutenants, with only a few exceptions, are trained and certified. The annual training class continues today with newly promoted or to-be-promoted lieutenants as the target audience. Other members of the department are encouraged to receive the training and certification.

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**1995** Station 34 was opened on March 5 at 11205 Harris Branch Pkwy. It closed 10 months later when residents in that neighborhood voted to de-annex from the city. In September, Station 35 opened at 5500 Burleson Rd.

Also, that month, an AM radio station (AM 530) was designated to keep residents

near the Holly Street Power Plant informed of any emergencies that neighborhood. The station enables the Fire Department and other City officials to disseminate information in English and Spanish within minutes an emergency incident.



The new training facility at 4800 Shaw Lane opened for operation. The facility was dedicated to Fire Chief Bill Roberts to commemorate his 10 years of service to the department and the city.

Capt. Paul Maldonado was appointed Assistant Chief in October, making him the highest-ranking Hispanic to serve in AFD.

Tom Lerma became the first Hispanic to promote to Battalion Chief in August.

An In-Service Inspections program was initiated. Today each operations company conducts 70 fire code inspections per year. The In-Service program focuses on high fire risk, multi-family maintenance inspections.

In 1995 AFD companies made 30,469 runs.

Cadet classes 99 and 100 graduated 52 new firefighters.

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**1996** In 1996 the State of Texas adopted the U.S. Dept of Transportation revised the EMT Curriculum prompting AFD Command Staff to make EMT-B the minimum level of certification for the department. A department-wide transition program was initiated. By May of 1998, all AFD firefighters were trained with EMT-B certification.

On Feb. 15, Austin Bergstrom International Airport Fire Station opened, staffed with a structural fire engine.

An Oct 19, a six-alarm fire at the University of Texas Welch Hall was the last straw in a long series of fires, hazmat alarms, and chemical spills that had put AFD firefighters at risk due to lack of safety precautions (the University is not required to conform to the City of Austin Fire Code). The fire resulted in Fire Chief Robin Paulsgrove publicly criticizing the University for lack of safety at the hall, which prompted a meeting with AFD and UT officials to address the problems.

On Dec. 14, the three-story Centennial Condominiums occupying three-quarters of a city block, burned to the ground during a six-alarm fire. AFD requested a National Response Team from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) to assist with the fire investigation. The fire displaced 225 renters and was the costliest residential fire in Austin history, with loss estimates of \$15-20 million. It was determined that a stray ember from an earlier dumpster fire had lodged in the garbage chute and smoldered for hours before erupting into flames. Firefighters who responded to the dumpster fire earlier had extinguished the fire, used a thermal imaging camera, and remained on scene for two hours to ensure the fire was out. Lack of draft stops contributed to the rapid spread of the fire, which left nearly 200 students homeless.

Cadet class 101 graduated 22 new firefighters.

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**1997** In the fall, computers were placed in every station.

Chief Lionel Bess was appointed Assistant Chief in September, making him the highest-ranking African-American to serve in AFD.



Station 36 at 400 Ralph Ablanado Dr. goes into operation on Oct. 12.

The City of Austin expands by 26,655 people and 20.5 square miles due to the largest annexation in its history, prompting plans to build Stations 38, 39 and 40.

After seven months of negotiations, AFD and the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Local #975 signed the first contract ever negotiated for firefighters under the Meet and Confer legislation approved for Austin by the Texas State Legislature in 1995.

After three and a half years as Fire Chief, Robin Paulsgrove retires from AFD to become the City of Arlington's Fire Chief. Chief Gary Warren, the AFD Assistant Director, is appointed Fire Chief.

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**1998** The Insurance Services Office (ISO) upgraded AFD's rating from 3 to 2.



AFD purchased its first Quint, which has capabilities of both an engine and a ladder truck and is assigned to Station 28.

On Oct. 17, torrential rains pounded Central Texas. More than 7,000 people were displaced in central Texas and 14 people died statewide. Robert Mueller Airport reported 6.24 inches of rain here in Austin. AFD responded to 69 flood calls using a total of 110 units.

City of Austin voters said yes to Proposition 3, which cleared the way for funding on a \$22.9 million combined 9-1-1 emergency communication and transportation management center. The center will be located on 11 acres at 51st Street and is expected to go into operation in late fall of 2002.

Station 34 at 10041 Lake Creek Pkwy. went into operation. Also, Station 41 (originally opened in 1995 as Station 34) at 11205 Harris Branch Parkway became operational.

Cadet class 102 graduated 38 new firefighters. This was the first class hired using the BPAD test, oral interview and cognitive written exam rather than a straight civil service test.



**1999** AFR Operations at Robert Mueller Municipal Airport were closed. The Austin Bergstrom International Airport officially opened for passenger travel on May 23. Special Operations, which now oversees the Hazmat Team, the Technical Rescue Team and the Dive team, moved to Station 14 on Airport Blvd.

AFD received numerous awards including the Partners in Education Special Project Award in recognition of AFD's Fire and Life Safety program; the Texas Health Department's First Responder Award; and the Austin Quality Significant Merit Award.

AFD Administration moved from the Red River location to 1721 Wilshire Blvd. at the former Robert Mueller Municipal Airport.

In August Station 38 opened at 10111 Anderson Mill Rd. and in December two more stations went into operation: Station 39 at 7701 River Place Blvd. and Station 37 at 8660 State Highway 71 on Oak Hill.

The Office of Emergency Management, formerly under the Austin Fire Department, became an autonomous city department in October. AFD participated in extensive city-wide planning in preparation for Y2K.

Cadet classes 103 and 104 graduated 88 new firefighters.

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**2000** As of Jan. 1, the full purpose area of Austin was 225.6 square miles (219.1 square miles in Travis County and 6.5 square miles in Williamson County). The full purpose population of Austin is 619,038.

In March the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT) was used for the first time to determine the latest cadet class. Of the 144 candidates, 120 passed. The CPAT uses eight job-specific tasks to test the physical ability of candidates.

On Jan. 5, a three-alarm apartment fire on Lakeshore Blvd. resulted in three firefighter injuries, including a life-threatening injury to Capt. John Butz. Capt. Butz, who was pulled from the burning apartment by Firefighter Alphonse "Axe" Dellert, suffered second- and third-degree burns over 53 percent of his body. He spent nearly two months recovering in Brooke Army Medical Center. FF Dellert was awarded the Medal of Honor February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 for his actions in rescuing Capt. Butz.

A truck room/training room addition was completed at the Bill Roberts Training Center on Shaw Lane.

In November the Austin Fire Department won the Highest Achievement Award from the Greater Austin Quality Council. AFD became the first organization to be recognized with this distinction twice, having also won the honor in 1992.

Cadet class 105 graduated 49 new firefighters.

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**2001** On April 7<sup>th</sup>, an Austin police officer was attempting to arrest an individual when the two began fighting. Firefighters Richard Platz and Brandon Wade intervened and rescued the officer from harm. For their actions they were both

awarded a Medal of Honor.

The Emergency Prevention Division launched a new program to help educate students in the Greek system at the University of Texas about fire safety and to foster a positive relationship with that population. Two Greek Fire Academies (one for fraternities and one for sororities) were held in April and yielded excellent attendance and participation.

City Council approved a resolution for Task Force Staffing, a safety-driven staffing plan, that was scheduled to go into effect Jan. 1, 2002.

Cadet Class 106 graduated 69 new firefighters.

The tragic events of Sept. 11 changed the world and deeply affected firefighters everywhere. Austin firefighters responded by assisting with and organizing many fundraising efforts for the victims and their families. Ten AFD members responded as part of Texas Task Force I to assist with rescue and recovery operations at the World Trade Center.

In early October a national anthrax scare had an effect locally on the number of calls to which AFD hazmat teams responded. Numerous calls came in regarding suspicious packages and letters, keeping hazmat teams busy for several weeks.

Heavy rains pounded the Austin area and several tornado touchdowns were reported the afternoon and evening of Nov. 15. AFD crews made numerous boat rescues around town, especially in South Austin and on Lamar Road.

A new burn building was constructed at the Bill Roberts Training Center. The structure provides a realistic setting for teaching and practice of firefighting operations.

AFD completed an "organizational health" survey within the department that resulted in numerous recommendations for improvement, including key issues such as communication.

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**2002** Task Force Staffing went into effect on Jan. 1, 2002. Task Force Staffing is a plan that delivers a minimum of four firefighters on the scene of a reported structure

fire in the shortest amount of time possible given the current authorized department strength. This approach combines units to address the strategic/tactical needs of an incident.



The Special Operations Team underwent a realignment that became effective the first of the year. A functional battalion -- Battalion 6 -- was created that consists of the territories of Stations 1, 14, 20 and 21. The realignment followed a year-long evaluation and planning process.

A new Records Management System went into effect Jan. 1, 2002. The system encompasses all data entry for emergency incidents and inspections and maintains information on various locations in the City.

AFD received full accreditation status by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. Accreditation is an evaluation and review process for public safety agencies that uses a set of internationally recognized criteria; those accredited are recognized to meet the highest standards for service delivery of public safety.

A new assistant chief position was added, bringing the total number to five. In addition, a fourth division chief position was added to oversee Special Operations.

A 5-alarm fire displaced multiple residents of an apartment complex located on Golden Meadow Drive in North Austin.

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**2003** Station 40 (12711 Harrisglenn Lane) opened in August.  
Cadet class 107 graduated 56 new firefighters.

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**2004** Cadet class 108 graduated 65 new firefighters.

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**2005** Station 42 (2434 Cardinal Loop) opened in January.  
Station 43 (11401 Escarpment Blvd.) opened in October  
Assistant Chief Jim Evans was appointed Acting Fire Chief upon the retirement of Chief Gary

Warren.

Lt. David Brietzke and FF Chris Lafferre were awarded the Medal of Valor for their rescue of a woman dangling from a rope after being lifted out of her boat that was trapped in the floodgates at Tom Miller Dam. They had commandeered a Parks Dept. boat and drove up to the damn and rescued her just before the entire boat fell through the gate.

The LBJ Fire Academy was established in collaboration with Austin ISD. This is a 2 year program for high school juniors and, when completed, the students will be state certified EMTs and firefighters.

Austin Fire performed major operations at the refugee shelter set up at the Austin Convention Center housing Hurricane Katrina refugees from New Orleans. The center housed approximately 2500 residents for 2 weeks. Austin FFs were assigned major roles in the Command Post, managed logistics for infrastructure needs and performed round the clock medical monitoring of the refugees.

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**2006** In early 2006, radio station KOOP's 304 E. Fifth Street studio was hit by two fires. On 6 January a fire caused significant smoke damage; the station suspended operation for just five days and sought a new home. Before a site could be found, a second fire occurred on 4 February which destroyed KOOP's building and three adjacent structures that housed artist studios and a nightclub. Both fires were declared accidental. The first was blamed on careless smoking by a neighbor; the second, on the nightclub's faulty heating and air conditioning unit.

Chief Juan Adame was appointed Fire Chief. He came from the Corpus Christi Fire Department, where he was the chief for 18 years.

Austin Fire received recognition from national media outlets. Reggie Tait was named to People Magazine's 50 Hottest Bachelors list and the firefighters from Station 2, led by FF Rip Esselstyn, were recognized for their heart-healthy vegetarian eating by The New York Times and NPR.

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**2007** Cadet classes 109 and 110 graduated a total of 104 firefighters.

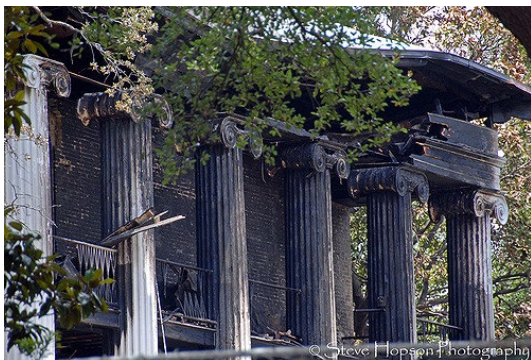
Station 44 (11612 Four Iron) opened in March.

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**2008** Assistant Chief Jim Evans was appointed Acting Fire Chief upon the retirement of Chief Juan Adame.

On June 8, a 4-alarm fire occurred at the Governor's Mansion. Surveillance video showed a

possible suspect throwing an ignited device onto the front porch of the mansion. Firefighters fought the fire all night long and were hindered by multiple concealed spaces from 100 years' worth of renovations.



Due to an ever-increasing proliferation of high-rise buildings in Austin and the unique challenges they present for firefighting, the AFD High Rise Committee was formed to design and implement strategies and tactics to address these specific fires.

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**2009** Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr was appointed Fire Chief. She came to Austin from the Little Rock, Arkansas Fire Department.

Austin Fire employed 1,079 firefighters, 67 civilians.

Cadet classes 111 and 112 graduated a total of 52 new firefighters.

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**2010** Station 45 (9421 Spectrum Dr.) opened in December.

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, a small single-engine aircraft was intentionally flown into the Echelon I office building in North Austin. The pilot was targeting the IRS office located in this building and the incident resulted in one civilian fatality. Prior to this event, the pilot had set his own house on fire, which occupied many of the units that would have been dispatched to the plane crash. There were several Travis County Fire Department units training across the street and were the initial responding units until AFD took over the scene.

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**2011** Austin Fire increased its' strength to 1,084 firefighters and 70 civilians.

On April 17<sup>th</sup>, the Pinnacle Wildfire became one of the largest fires ever in the city, both in number of acres burned (200) and in number of homes damaged. The dollar loss was approximately \$5 million. 11 homes suffered a total loss, with 10 others incurring moderate/minor damage. This was Austin Fire's first true Wildland Urban Interface activation.

Labor Day Weekend had Austin Fire providing multiple resources all in support of three major incidents outside Austin: the Bastrop County Complex fire, Pedernales Bend Fire and

the Steiner Ranch Fire.

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**2012** Cadet classes 113 and 114 graduated 84 new firefighters.

The strength of Austin Fire was 1,083 firefighters and 70 civilians.

The AFD Wildfire Division was formed to inform and educate the public concerning wildfire dangers, assist in preventive measures throughout the city, as well as, support Operations in active wildfire incidents.

AFD fully stood up a Regional Type IV Structural Collapse Team consisting of 14 Structural Collapse level I and II certified personnel per shift and six Structural Collapse Incident Command certified personnel.

AFD assisted ESD 11 with providing resources for the first Circuit of the Americas Formula One race.

In December, a cold front blew in and Austin resources were stretched due to numerous multiple alarm fires, the largest of which was just outside the city at the International Residences Apartments. What became the Copper Creek incident, in high-wind conditions and limited resources, resulted in 3 entire apartment buildings destroyed with hundreds of residents displaced.

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**2013** Cadet classes 115 and 116 graduated 96 new firefighters.

Austin Fire grew to 1,121 firefighters and 79 civilians.

On June 18, Firefighter Colin Camp was biking home after soccer practice at Zilker Park with fellow firefighters when he was hit from behind by a pickup traveling on the shoulder of Manchaca Road, just south of West Slaughter Lane. The driver was later found not guilty of aggravated assault. FF Camp is still recovering from his injuries at the time of this writing.

Austin Fire achieved minimum four-person staffing on every Austin Fire apparatus, an identified minimum staffing requirement recommendation from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

On October 30<sup>th</sup>, 14 inches of rain fell in the Wimberley portion of the Onion Creek Watershed causing Onion Creek to crest to a record high of 40.17 feet. Austin Fire responded to more than 800 incidents over the following 24 hours. Roughly 370 people

were rescued, 400 evacuated, 253 self-evacuating and 50 animals were rescued.

Austin Fire became involved in Automatic Aid agreements with six surrounding Emergency Services Districts (ESDs). This means the computer dispatch system doesn't recognize boundaries and thus, the closest fire apparatus is dispatched, regardless of jurisdiction, providing seamless delivery of services to citizens across 7 jurisdictions.

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**2014** Austin Fire employed 1,129 firefighters and 83 civilians.

After months of development and stakeholder engagement, the City of Austin and Travis County finalized and launched the region's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). This plan provides a foundation from which effective and strategic community wildfire preparedness can emerge.

The Austin Fire Department became the sole provider of hazardous material emergency response to all of Travis County.

The automatic aid agreement was expanded to include a seventh Emergency Services District (ESD): #8. Formal agreements were now in place between Austin Fire and ESDs 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

The AFD Chaplain Program was created with a focus on a larger Public Safety Chaplain partnership with the Austin Police Department and Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services. Four new Fire Department chaplains visited personnel at their worksites and participated in special events.

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**2015** Austin Fire employed 1,129 FFs and 94 civilians.

Cadet classes 117 and Class 118 graduated 63 new firefighters.

Austin Fire units assisted in the recovery of ATCEMS Starflight medic Kristin McLain, who fell from the helicopter while extricating a patient from the Barton Creek Greenbelt. The firefighters who had just assisted her with the patient were then called upon to recover the fallen medic.

The Memorial Day floods resulted in 7 deaths and multiple people still missing as of this writing in the Central Texas area. Shoal Creek flooded causing damage throughout central and downtown Austin producing numerous water rescues. AFD purchased four rescue paddle boards and coordinated training by water rescue and paddle board subject matter



experts for the AFD units that received them. With this added capability, four of AFD's units that are closest to Lady Bird Lake can now access victims in distress more quickly prior to the arrival of a boat crew. AFD purchased additional water rescue equipment, including two additional Swift Water Rescue Boats, six Inflatable Evacuation Boats, two Rapid Patient Access Personal Water Craft, and \$19,500 in additional water rescue equipment. A comprehensive "Severe Weather Step-Up Plan" was developed and implemented to place additional Operations Level, Technician Level, and Command units in service more quickly during severe weather situations.

In October, 3 Firefighters were injured during a 3-alarm fire at the Dry Creek West Condos. At its apex, 90 firefighters were onscene to extinguish a fire that amounted in \$2 million in damages. This fire resulted in new training efforts to better prepare fire officers for extreme fire dangers and situational awareness.



On Halloween night, the neighborhoods near Austin-Bergstrom International Airport were overwhelmed in the early morning hours when water from nearby Onion Creek surged past its banks and rolled into their streets, filling homes within minutes. They were caught in a historic flash flood with more force and volume of water than the city has ever seen. The flood killed at least four people – including a woman and her

8-month-old son who were swept away in their car – damaged more than 1,200 homes and sent hundreds of residents fleeing to higher ground. Onion Creek rose 11 feet in 15 minutes and crested at a record 41 feet, sending walls of water into surrounding neighborhoods. The flood had a flow rate of 120,000 cubic feet per second – nearly twice the force of Niagara Falls. Austin Fire and other local ESDs performed hundreds of rescues throughout the ensuing hours.

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**2016** Austin Fire had an assigned strength of 1,147 firefighters and 97 civilians. The Insurances Services Office (ISO) raised the city's ISO rating from Class 2 to Class 1 effective January 1, 2017. This is the highest and best classification a fire department can receive.

The drill field at the Public Safety Training Center was paved completely in concrete and provided with light towers to facilitate training at night.

Station 46 in Shady Hollow opened in June. It also houses the Wildfire Division.

Staffing, response and inspection capabilities were increased at the Airport Rescue and Firefighting facilities at ABIA.

AFD began awarding Firefighter, Fire Officer and Chief Officer of the Year awards and the first recipients were: FF Louise Joubert, Captain Ron Coleman and Battalion Chief Chris Watson.

Due to the ever-increasing proliferation of mid-rise buildings (4-6 stories) in Austin and the unique challenges they present for firefighting, special Mid-Rise SOGs were put in place to address these specific fires.

Due to its unique nature and considerations for firefighting above and below ground, a specific SOG was designed and implemented for the State Capitol.



**2017** Based upon recommendations from the Battalion Realignment Committee, two new battalions (Battalions 7 and 8), were created. The new BCs were stationed at Stations 27 and 40 (later 41). Battalions 2 and 5 were moved to Stations 44 (later 34) and 42, respectively.

Austin Fire employed 1,151 firefighters and 106 civilians.

Cadet classes 119, 120, 121 and 122 graduated with a total of 124 cadets.

For the first time ever, AFD merged with a county Emergency Services District (ESD) and started providing coverage for the merged areas in Travis County. ESD 4 was once called Travis County Fire Control and protected all the northern portions of Travis County. At the time of the merger, due to annexations, the territory covered consisted of 4 small islands spread throughout northern Travis County. With the merger of ESD 4, Class 122 graduated with 14 cadets who were previously employed with ESD 4.



With the ESD 4 merger, two new stations were added to Austin Fire, Stations 47 (4200 City Park Rd.) and 48 (14312 Hunter Bend Rd.). These were formerly ESD 4 stations.

Austin Fire signed agreements with the remaining ESDs in Travis County establishing Auto-Aid agreements covering the entire county.

In August, Hurricane Harvey struck the Texas coast affecting the Port Aransas, Rockport,

Houston and Beaumont areas causing extensive damage and resulting in large dollar losses after dumping 50" of rain on the coastal areas and further inland. Austin Fire resources were deployed to assist all along the coast from Port Aransas to the Louisiana border to assist with rescues and evacuations. Austin Fire performed major operations at a refugee shelter set up at the Metropolis Center housing Hurricane Harvey refugees from the Gulf Coast area. The center housed approximately 400 residents for two weeks. Austin FFs were assigned major roles in the Command Post, managed logistics for infrastructure needs and performed round the clock medical monitoring of the refugees.

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**2018** Cadet Classes 123 (with already certified firefighters) and 124 graduated 75 new firefighters.

In March, the Austin area was the victim of several package bombings. AFD provided patient care on six of the victims and aided local and federal law enforcement agencies. The bomber eventually committed suicide in Round Rock.

On June 12<sup>th</sup>, there was a 4-alarm fire at the Mission San James Apartments at 4009 Victory Drive. The fire destroyed one entire building displacing numerous residents. The cause was an improperly discarded smoking material.



Cadet Class 126 began, and tragically, Cadet Devon Coney, suffered a medical incident on the first day. He succumbed to his condition a few days later. He then received a full firefighter funeral. Prior to being a cadet, he worked as an administrative assistant at AFD Headquarters.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr retired and was replaced on an interim basis, by Chief of Staff Tom Dodds.

In late July, two large brush fires occurred in Blanco and Llano counties encompassing more than 3000+ acres combined. AFD sent units and command elements to assist until replaced by state resources.

For the first time ever, Austin Fire sent resources to assist in California at the Carr Fire, which killed three firefighters, burned more than 229,000 acres, destroyed 1,604 structures and did more than \$1.6 billion in insured property damage. 5 Austin Fire members, including officers and firefighters, spent two weeks assisting at this record-breaking incident.

Cadet class 125 graduated 29 firefighters, including a 6<sup>th</sup> member of the Sullivan family to

join Austin Fire, four brothers and one mother.

In October, the Central Texas area upstream of Austin experienced record rainfall, resulting in multiple floodgates along the entire Highland Lakes chain to be opened. AFD deployed water rescue resources throughout the affected area to assist with rescues. As a result of the flooding, the COA issued its first ever boil water notice for Austin. AFD resources manned the EOC and assisted with water distribution stations throughout the city.

December brought Austin a new fire chief, Chief Joel Baker from Atlanta, Georgia. Chief Baker was the recently retired chief of Atlanta Fire/Rescue.

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**2019** in January, Cadet Class #125 graduated with 38 new firefighters. Later in the year, Cadet Classes #126 and 127 graduated.

After a slate of retirements in the Executive Team, Austin Fire promoted multiple officers to the Executive Team. With the retirement of Chief of Staff Thomas Dodds, Division Chief Rob Vires was promoted to Chief of Staff. Along with that, Captains Carrie Stewart, Jeff Kennedy, Chiefs Tony Haden and Thomas Vocke were promoted to Division Chief.

AFD members were deployed to the Houston and Beaumont area to assist with rescues as a result of Tropical Storm Imelda.

In September, a 3-alarm fire occurred at a construction site on Banister Lane, displacing multiple residents of 2 apartment buildings adjacent to the site and destroying 2 buildings.

Cadet Class #128 began in October with 45 cadets.

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