

Morehead City Fire Department History

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For the Friday heck of it, here's a kinda, sorta history of the [Morehead City Fire Department](#). Primary source are Google, Google Newspaper Archives, and prior blog posts. Readers, please help with apparatus information. Missing lots. Also, fact- and error-check me. Additional milestones are welcome. All sorts of things can added.

1906 to 1949

- 1906 - Morehead City Fire Department organized.
- 1908 - Sanborn Maps describe department as volunteer with forty-five members. Apparatus consists of Howe "triplex" gasoline fire engine, one hand engine, two hose carts, and 1,500 feet of 2 1/2-inch hose. Water supplied by seven fire cisterns.
- 1911 - Water system installed with first fire hydrants.
- 1913 - Sanborn Maps describe department as volunteer, one company, thirty members, one paid driver, one horse "worked on streets during day", one hose wagon with 800 feet 2 1/2-inch hose, one hand reel with 500 feet 2 1/2-inch hose, one Howe "gasoline fire engine." Water supplied by twenty-nine double hydrants. Fire station located in two-story City Hall building at 301 Evans Street.
- 1924 - Sanborn Maps describe department as with Chief (full-paid, also Chief of Police), Asst. Chief (part-paid), Drive (full-paid), twenty-five part-paid men, ten volunteers. Brockway combination chemical/hose truck. Fire station is two-story building on east side of N. 13th Street, mid-block south of Bridges Street. Twelve Gamewell boxes. Forty-two fire hydrants.
- 1920 - Town Hall built at 801 Evans Street. Two-story building includes/later includes a two-bay fire station. (Wrong date for building? Built after 1924? WPA building, built in 1930s?)
- 1926 - American LaFrance ships two pieces of apparatus to the town: 1926 Type 75 triple-combination pumper (#297), 1926 Type 40 combination chemical/hose truck (#6779). [My interpretation of John Peckham's American LaFrance database doesn't entirely make sense. Was one of these the quadruple combination mentioned below?
- 1941 - Sanborn Maps describe department as all partly paid, plus full-paid driver. Chief, Asst. Chief, driver, asst. driver, thirty-six men. Apparatus includes an American LaFrance quadruple combination (pumper/service truck/1000/90), American LaFrance triple combination (750/40). Nineteen Gamewell boxes. Seventy-one hydrants.

1950 to 1999

- 1951 - FWD pumper delivered (but overturned on delivery date a couple weeks later, killing a firefighter. See below.)
- 1956 - Station 2 opens at 3308 Evans Street. Two-story building with two bays. One-story expansion of bays later added, plus one-story living quarters expansion.
- 1958 - Morehead City Rescue Squad organized. Occupied two-story building at 304 North 25th Street. Ambulance service only, or also rescue services?
- 1960s or 1970s - Apparatus deliveries included a Ford C pumper (red).
- 1980 - Grumman/Howe pumper delivered.
- 1986 - Ford F-350/____ utility truck delivered with high, climb-in body. Used as rescue truck?
- 1980s or 1990s - Apparatus deliveries include a Spartan/Quality pumper (white), a Ford/Pierce pumper/tanker (white), and a 1975 Mack 85-foot aerial ladder (red), that also served New Port and Cherry Point. (Purchased used? Late 1990s?)
- 1998 - Spartan/Duplex pumper (white) delivered.
- 2000 - Morehead City EMS merged with the town on July 1. Quarters later repurposed as Station

Click to enlarge:



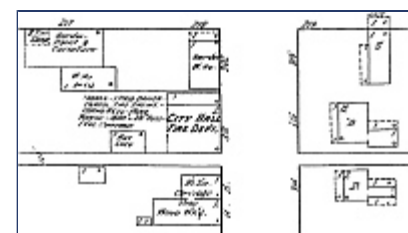
Courtesy Jesse Chaplain



Fire department in 1934, courtesy the History Place



Apparatus in 1950s, North Carolina State Archives photo

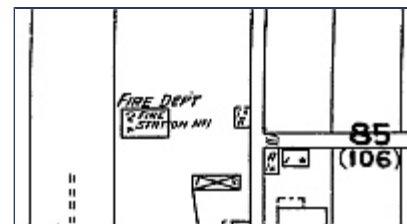


Fire station in 1913

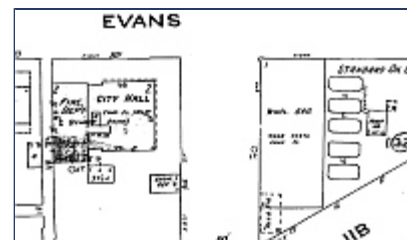
4, as training facility.

2000 to present

- 2001 - Station 1 relocated to 1406 Bridges Street. One-story building with three double-deep bays.
- 2004 - E-One Typhoon pumper (white) delivered.
- 2006 - Sutphen aerial platform, 1500/500/70-foot delivered.
- 2006 - Fireboat added, 1984 Mitchell Marine Builder, 25-foot. Surplus from Army COE. Sold in/circa 2011. [Read blog post.](#)
- 2007 - Station 3 opened at 5293 Highway 70, in partnership with Wildwood Fire Department. One-story building with six bays, two of which are converted to living areas.
- 2011 - Medical Ambulance Bus added, 2012 Thomas/Sartin. Purchased with Homeland Security grant. [Read blog post.](#)
- 2012 - Station 2 opened at 4034 Arendell Street. One-story building with three bays. Former *Carteret County News-Times* building, built in 1977. The administrative offices are relocated from Station 1.
- 2013 - Pierce rescue pumper delivered.



Fire station in 1924



Fire station in 1941



Legeros / MHFD photos

The department has also lost three members in the line of duty:

- 1951, May 1 - Firefighter Andrew Bell died of injuries while ~~test driving newly delivered~~ driving recently delivered FWD fire engine. [Read blog post.](#)
- 1973, Jun 14 - Firefighter Anthony Gaylets died of heart attack.
- 1978, Oct 15 - Fire Chief Earl Guthrie died of heart attack while en route to fire call.

Notable fires and major incidents:

- April 16, 1933 - Atlantic Hotel destroyed, along with several small buildings. The building occupied a block on the Morehead City waterfront.
- March 31, 1955 - Ocean King Hotel burns on Atlantic Beach, along with several boardwalk concession stands. Crews respond from Morehead City, Beaufort, and the Coast Guard station. Trucks also come from Newport, Cherry Point, and New Bern (!). There are no hydrants nor fire department on Atlantic Beach. [Read blog post.](#)
- October 10, 1955 - The Heart of the Beach pavilion on Atlantic Beach destroyed. With no town fire department, crews came from Morehead City, Beaufort, Newport, and the Coast Guard base.
- February 12, 1956 - Morehead Theater destroyed, adjoining Belks department store damaged. Beaufort, Newport, and Fort Macon Coast Guard base assist. Fire fought for four hours. The movie house was playing "There's Always Tomorrow."
- September 29, 1961 - USNS Potomac explodes and burns while docked at Radio Island, across channel from the state port. More than 3,000 military and civilian firefighters respond to scene, from departments nearly 200 miles away. [Read blog post.](#)
- November 12, 1969 - Biltmore Hotel on Bogue Sound, five miles west of town. Four-story, built in 1928. Undergoing renovating. Beaufort, Atlantic Beach, Newport, and Cherry Point also responded.
- July 4, 1970 - Three businesses on Arendell Street. Police had to clear holiday crowds from several blocks near the fire, so equipment could reach the scene. Five departments assisted.
- June 19, 1977 - Morehead Elementary School in downtown burned. Two-story brick structure burned on a Sunday afternoon. School was out of session.
- August 25, 1983 - Military jet crashes in downtown residential area along Shephard Avenue. Four crew members escape safely. One house is destroyed by fire, and one of the elderly residents is fatally injured.
- April 18, 1987 - Diesel fuel tanker truck crashes and explodes on the Atlantic Beach causeway bridge. Accident occurred midday on the new high-rise bridge, which had been opened to traffic a few days earlier.
- August 24, 1989 - Fuel storage tank on Radio Island ignites, after lightning strike. Numerous fire departments respond.

- April 21, 1997 - Munden Garden Center off Highway 70 burns. Regional haz-mat team from Wilmington responds. Crews from Wildwood, Atlantic Beach, and Newport assist. Highway closed for nearly two hours.

Do not believe Bell was killed the day truck was delivered. They had taken the truck to Newport to draft water out by the prison on Mill Creek Road.

On return trip to Morehead truck overturned in the sharp curve on Mill Creek Road almost to Newport.

I have a copy of the newspaper but I have moved and it is packed away.

My father used to tell me there were several MCFD engineers who would not drive this truck.

JC - 09/16/14 - 12:22

Name: (real name preferred)

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Web Site: (optional)

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No

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

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Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

Small print: All html tags except and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.