

Wake Forest Rescue Squad

Northern Wake Rescue Squad

Northern Wake Rescue & EMS

Wake Forest EMS

Research notes by Mike Legeros
Last updated September 3, 2021

Pre-History

See main Wake County rescue squad history document.

Early History

1952 – **Wake Forest Rescue Squad** organized.

- August 23, 1952, article in News & Observer reports that a rescue squad is being organized by “the local fire and police departments” to “operate a resuscitator on victims of drowning and smothering.”
- Police Chief notes that three deaths by drowning have occurred in the area, during the year. And though the fire department has a “respirator” purchased through the contributions of local citizens, recovering the victims to revive them has been hindered, because “a boat had to be obtained” in most cases.
- Article adds that a 14-foot boat has been purchased for use by the squad, and a special trailer is being built, to carry “the boat, the respirator, an extra tank of oxygen, and blankets.” It will also be equipped with two oars and a searchlight. Donations amount to around to \$100 have been received from citizens, to pay for the boat and trailer. More money is needed, with the cost of all equipment about \$200.
- July 2, 1954, article in News & Observer mentions that the Wake Forest Rescue Squad was called to the Neuse River, to search for a drowning victim.
- April 23, 1957, article in News & Observer mentions the Wake Forest Rescue squad, in context of a drowning.

The original incarnation of the squad operated until at least 1957. By 1965, they had stopped operating. Gene Baker, an organizer of the 1965 squad, recalls that he wasn’t aware of an earlier version of the squad, when the 1965 incarnation of the squad was organized.

1965 - **Wake Forest Rescue Squad** re-organized.

Articles of incorporation filed on January 19, 1965

- Legal name Wake Forest Rescue Squad, Inc.
- Corporation purpose: “To acquire and own rescue apparatus for use by the corporation in the protection and rescue of persons from injury or loss of life; to own and acquire land and to construct buildings for use by the corporation in connection with the housing of rescue apparatus and for the providing of a place for meeting for the members of the corporation; to sponsor or hold rescue schools; to engage in any and all types of activities not prohibited by law which shall be for the betterment of the community, county and state”
- Initial Board of Directors:
 - Robert F. Christoph – 225 W. South Street
 - Gene S. Baker – N. Main Street
 - Clinton Vaughn – Ready Mix, E. Elm Ave.
 - Rodney Bright – 405 S. Main Street
- Incorporators:
 - Robert F. Christoph – 225 W. South Street
 - Gene S. Baker – N. Main Street
 - Jerry Warren – 621 N. Wingate Street
 - I. D. Wheeler – Wilkinson Trailer Park
 - A. C. Hall – 305 N. Main Street

Early Memories

From the 1965 re-organization and later:

- First located at 132 Dunn Avenue.
- Later at 149 E. Holding Avenue.
- One-story building with 2,016 square-feet, built 1940.
- One of the first squads to purchase a Hurst tool in the 1970s.
- Randy Bright (WFFD board and Bright funeral home) and Buddy Willis (Willis' hardware downtown Wake Forest) were charter members
- They used to respond using the funeral home hearses.
- Gene S. Baker was the first Captain.
- He operated the Glen Royal Café and Gene Baker Insurance in town and was a co-founder of the Wake Forest Jaycees.
- Baker remembers buying an old ambulance to get started.
- Their first call was on May 11, 1965, for the drowning of Raymond Ellington, who drowned while fishing in the Wake Forest Reservoir.

Early articles in the News & Observer, via NewsBank archives search results:

- 1/4/66 - Funding approved by county
- 1/29/67 - Sick dancer transported by squad
- 5/11/69 - Drowning

- 8/13/74 - Derailment
- 10/20/74 - Mentioned in feature on emergency dispatching [?]
- 3/24/75 - Water rescue
- 5/27/75 – Drowning

1970s

1974, circa – New fiberglass rescue boats added, part of twenty-four donated by Industrial Plastics of Louisburg to the seven rescue squads in Wake County. (N&O, 7/29/74)

1980 to 1989

1981 - **Northern Wake Rescue & EMS** created, renamed from WFRS.

1981 – New ambulance.

- 1981 Chevrolet Silverado/Swab SE-120.
- Build #4141.
- Ordered August 1980.
- Built February 1981.

1986 – Squad wins first-place in first-aid competition at North Carolina Association of Rescue Squads’ 30th annual convention in Raleigh, October 3 and 4. The competition is sponsored by NCDOT’s fire and rescue division and is held at Dorton Arena. Twenty-two teams from across the state compete in the event, which involves “two separate first-aid simulations.” (N&O, 10/15/86)

1986 – Squad chief is Benny L. Moody. (N&O, 10/15/86)

1989 – New ambulance.

- 1989 Dodge/Swab SE-120.
- Build #4141, remount of 1981 body.
- Chassis built March 1989.
- Ordered October 1988.
- Order #44685
- Built March 1989.

General memories:

- In its heyday, Northern Wake Rescue and EMS operated two stations: one in Wake Forest and one in Rolesville.
- The Rolesville station was the old fire station.
- They basically served the entire northern area of Wake County from Falls Lake in the west, to Buffalo Road in the east.

1990 to 1999

1990, January – Stan Wilson appointed Chief. (N&O, 7/4/91)

1991 – Nine volunteer rescue squads in Wake County abandoned tradition of free ambulance service and begin charging fees for transporting patients. (N&O, 6/10/91)

Snapshot of rescue squads, from September 10, 1991, News & Observer:

Rescue Squad	BLS fee	ALS fee	Lifetime Membership	1990 Calls
Northern Wake Rescue and EMS	\$148	\$178	\$35	1,400

1992 – **Northern Wake Rescue & EMS** votes to reorganize in June.

Timeline of events:

- June 1991 – For several months, squad members have engaged in “internal squabbling,” resulting in contentious membership meetings, prompting some squad members to quit, lowering squad morale, and damaging their customers’ confidence in the squad. The infighting prompts county commissioners that month to suspend the squad’s authority to charge fees for services, to force the squad to fix its problems. Initially, the “acrimonious exchanges at membership meetings” continued. Then “efforts to mend the rift began in earnest,” with a committee of three board members and three squad volunteers meeting to consider changing the bylaws.
- July 1991 – Reports the News & Observer on July 4, 1991, the squad’s customers are worried. At least a half-dozen of the volunteer members have quit, “blaming the management style of squad leaders.”
Some “blame jealousy from a deep-seated rivalry” between the two towns, Wake Forest and Rolesville, which jointly fund the squad’s two stations. Also noted as a “hot point of content” are the policies and management style of Chief Stan Wilson, which “some blame for driving members away.” His critics, “mostly Rolesville volunteers who accuse him of favoring Station 1 in Wake Forest, have asked him to resign.” Chief Wilson denies playing favorites and says “he has no plans to quit.”
“There has always been bickering between the two stations” says Wilson, who is a Wake Forest native. His son, Stan Wilson Jr., says the conflict is a power struggle. “There are too many people who want to be chief and not enough Indians, in my view.” Others say the Rolesville volunteers are “being contrary.” And “whatever action [the chief] takes is [said to be] unfair. They dig their heels in and won’t do it.” She adds “it’s like the Hatfields and McCoys.”
Residents have contacted county commissioners with their concerns. Merrie R. Hedrick, commissioner, says she received three letters in one day alone.
Partly to “quell residents’ concerns about service,” the board recently voted to ask the county to “provide paramedics to Northern Wake” [e.g., paramedic-level medics to ride the NWRMES units? Or deploy WCEMS units? TBD.]

- August 1991 – Believe the “rift” is mending, county commissions reinstate the squad’s ability to “levy membership and servicer fees.” The squad ranks begin to grow, with people volunteering, and replenishing “squad ranks thinned by resignations of some veteran members.”
- September 1991 – In news reports, the squad leaders’ management style was to blame for the conflicts, say some of the half-dozen veteran volunteers who quite earlier in 1991. Others cite a “deep-seated rivalry between Wake Forest and Rolesville, which jointly support the squad’s two stations.”
The squad’s board, which numbers eleven members, is expected to vote on eighteen proposed amendments next month. They include a provision for creating a grievance board that meets, whenever a volunteer feels they have been wrongly suspended. The board would meet within seven days of a suspension. If the suspension was determined as unjust, it would end immediately. Squad members had previous complained about “the lack of resources in those situations.” Other changes “clarify members’ and leaders’ roles and attempt to improve communications between the two groups.” Another change “spells out the makeup of the squad board.” Two other changes call for “posting board meeting minutes and other information, such as squad audits, at each station.”
Also changing is the institution of fees, as a “reliable source of money” to “pay for better equipment and more training for volunteers.” Starting November 1, residents will have the option to pay annual membership dues of \$35 and “receiving free ambulance calls.” Those who opt-out will pay \$148 per ambulance call involving basic EMT service, and \$170 per call requiring EMTs with “advanced life-saving training.”
The Board also plans to approach the county “about posting paramedics at squad stations.”
- March/April 1992 – After the “squabbling” resumes, the squad’s board removes Stan Wilson as Chief and replaces him with Charles O. Brown Jr., a Stony Hill native. The membership, however, restores Wilson to a “leadership role,” voting to appoint him as Assistant Chief.
Some of the problems preceding the changes are cited in a May 21, 1992, news story, noting that the squad began “losing volunteers and drawing negatively publicity” last year, after members “began airing their grievances in public.” Some members complained that Chief Wilson “enforced squad policies inconsistently and played favorites,” charges he denied.
- Spring 1992 – Despite the new leadership, “volunteers continued to argue with each other and board members at meeting.” And at one board meeting “in late spring, a fistfight broke out.”
- May 1992 – Effort by some of the squad’s board members to reorganize the squad fails on a tie vote and angers some squad volunteers early last week, reports News & Observer on May 21, 1992.
On Monday night, May 20?, with about 30 volunteers “warily looking on”, the board charges a committee with “restoring unity and improving district in the squad’s district.” The committee is composed of board Chairman Buddy Willis, board member A. Taylor Wiggins, and Chief Charles O. Brown Jr. They will propose a plan to the board next month.
The panel will consider consolidating the squad’s two stations into a single location, dividing the shared district into two districts managed by the same board, or having Wake

County EMS serve the area. Or, they will leave things as they are and “hope our personnel problems go away,” which, he says, “I think we’ve seen they won’t.” Brown is serving his second month as Chief, since the “outster” of Stan Wilson.

- Effort by some of the board members to reorganize the squad “failed on a tie vote.”
- June 1992 – Squad receives letter from county commissioners “urging them to end more than a year of infighting among members.” The letter notes that in recent months they had been “inundated with calls from squad volunteers and residents” in the squad’s district of Wake Forest, Rolesville, and surrounding areas. The letter is signed by Chairman Vernon Malone, who says the controversy has caused the squad’s customers to “doubt they were getting good service.” The commissioners tell the squad’s board to “reach a solution ‘as expeditiously as possible.’”

After receiving the letter, the board votes to reorganize. They set July 31 as a deadline to “retool the squad’s bylaws” and board Chairman A. Taylor Wiggins appoints a committee to propose changes. He says “In the past, I think we lacked a clear definition of who was running what. I think we’re taking care of that now.”

They also approved an agreement with “county rescue personnel” serving the Northern Wake district “if the squad finds itself short of volunteers.” Under the agreement, the county will serve the area no longer than 90 days.

- Sources: N&O, 9/19/91, 5/21/91, 7/4/91, 7/23/92

1992, August 1 – Wake County EMS begins providing primary paramedic service squad’s district.

- EMS 10 is stationed at Wake Forest fire station.
- They run first-duty calls for the district, while Northern Wake runs second-duty at a reduced level (non-paramedic) of service.
- Sources: Oral history, N&O, 2/4/93, WCEMS News.

1992, September – Horace Macon appointed Chief. (N&O, 2/4/93)

1992, November – Squad sells 1972 ambulance to doctor for \$2,000, who plans to fill it with medical supplies and drive it to the Gabriel Garcia Civil Hospital in Patzcuaro, Mexico, which always needs equipment. (N&O, 11/12/92)

1993 – Squad turmoil is over, reports News & Observer on February 4, 1993. Board meetings, “once marked by acrimonious exchanges between squad leaders and volunteers, have become more businesslike.” Local officials are longer receiving complaints about service from townspeople. Says Chief Horace Macon, the “volunteers are working together better than they have in a long time.” At the request of the board, county commissioners are “keeping county EMS paramedics in the area” and “expect to provide service countywide by 1994.” Meanwhile Macon is “poring over the squad’s finances, figuring out how to boost lagging membership sales, improving the squad’s record-keeping, and attending to routine maintenance.” (N&O, 2/4/93)

1993 – Horace Macon takes charge of squad and “turns it around.” They have twelve EMTs then, but June 1993 they have thirty-five, with plans for more than a dozen to be paramedics within a year. (N&O, 6/2/93)

1995 - **Wake Forest EMS** created, renamed from Northern Wake Rescue & EMS. Name change filed August 28, 1995.

- When squad resumes service, they provided second-duty, non-paramedic (?) unit in Wake Forest.
- Wake County EMS 10 continues to serve as first-duty unit. Circa 1996, it moves to old Northern Wake Hospital. Dedicated county EMS station opened on South Franklin Street in Wake Forest in 1998.

1995 or abouts – Rolesville rescue station closed, building donated to newly formed Rolesville EMS.

1998 - **Wake Forest EMS** disbands on/by March 31, 1998. The town is left with only one “county ambulance” to serve the area. (N&O, 2/3/98) In April, town commissioners endorse a request by the squad board of directors to give the county control over EMS services in the area. The “director” of the squad is Horace Macon. (N&O, 4/23/98) The corporate dissolution is filed November 25, 1998.

See also Rolesville EMS history document.

Help Wanted!

This document is part of a project to research and record the history of rescue squads and EMS providers in Wake County.

You can help in any number of ways, including:

- Read this document and visit the project web site, www.legeros.com/history/ems
 - What’s good about what we’re doing?
 - What could be improved?
 - What haven’t we thought of?
- Proofread this document as casually or extensively as desired:
 - Misspelled names?
 - Wrong makes or models of vehicles?
 - General timeframes that seem off?
 - Etc.
- Supplement this document with things that you remember, or stories you’ve heard.
 - Jot your thoughts in an e-mail.
 - Send a long, detailed e-mail.

- Write things down on paper and send via postal mail.
 - Talk to the project organizers in person, at your convenience.
 - Etc.
- Share any scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, old photos, or old documents that you have, or can find.
 - Want some blasts from the past, to help you remember?
 - Visit <https://www.facebook.com/WakeEMSHistory>
- Suggest particular people that we can contact, for more information.

Contact Mike Legeros or Jeff Hammerstein at any time. Thank you in advance!