

Furina Rescue Squad

Fuquay-Varina Rescue Squad

Fuquay-Varina Area Rescue Squad

Fuquay-Varina EMS

Research notes by Mike Legeros

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Pre-History

See main Wake County rescue squad history document.

Furina Rescue Squad

1972, April 12 – First meeting held to organize a rescue squad in the Fuquay-Varina area.

- Held at Suggs Funeral Home.
- Present are:
 - Billy Tew
 - Bobby Currin
 - Percy Stuart
 - J. W. Stuart
 - Donald Powell
 - Jimmy Baker
 - Jim Stephenson
 - Craig Bullock
 - Wayne Johnson
 - Robert Connor
 - John Arnold
- Group votes to “act as a non-profit organization of volunteers,” under the name Fuquay-Varina Rescue and Ambulance Service. With Powell acting as Chairman, they elect the following officers:
 - President Donald Powell
 - Vice President Percy Stuart
 - Secretary/Treasurer Robert Connor.
- Group votes to form Board of Directors. Voted to serve on the board are Powell, Arnold, and Conner.
- Group also creates an Advisory Board. These people will be approached to serve on the board: Lloyd Suggs, Leo Matthews, Harold Parker, and Joe Stroud.
- Group discussed a uniform for the squad. They decided to use white coats, paid by each member, and left at the appointed place for the organization’s use.
- Group voted to meet each Tuesday at 7:30 p.m.
- Charter members are:
 - Donald R. Powell
 - John E. Arnold
 - William P. Wrenn
 - Billy Tew
 - Jim Stephenson
 - Bobby Currin II
 - Percy Stuart
 - Wayne Johnson

- J. W. Stuart
- Robert Connor
- Harvey Gaskins
- Mike Aikens
- Ronnie Greene
- Craig Bullock
- Henry William Gerell

1972, April 21 – Squad incorporation papers filed with state. The legal name is **Furina Rescue Squad**. Likely named after the rural fire district of the same name. More commonly called **Fuquay-Varina Rescue Squad**.

Early history:

- Advisory Board was created to “provide the new organization with advice and council concerning their operation.” Members of the first Advisory Board were:
 - Joe Stroud
 - Leo Matthews
 - Larry Stephenson
 - Lloyd Suggs
 - Joe Currin, MD
- By May 2, 1972, squad had been incorporated as Furina Rescue and adopted a set of by-laws.
- By May 2, squad has also placed their first unit in service, a used ambulance purchased from Roanoke Rapids Rescue Squad.
- Soon, squad moved their meeting place to the Chamber of Commerce building.
- Membership in the squad also began to grow.
- By August 1972, the squad had acquired two more units, and had set a fundraising goal of \$7,500 to help pay for their purchase.
- On November 11, 1972, the squad accepted an offer from the town to renovate the old Tilley House to be used as the squad’s operational base.

Fleet

- First calls were answered on a Buick station wagon ambulance owned by Sugg Funeral Home.
- Soon after, a used Cadillac ambulance was acquired from Roanoke Rapids Rescue Squad. Was it purchased or donated. Sources conflict.
- Later, 1968 GMC ambulance and 1970 Chevrolet Suburban ambulance were added, and used for a couple of years.
- In 1973, a new Chevrolet Suburban “high rise” ambulance was added. Members recall that several other squads in the county received identical units.
 - Alternate memory: Early ambulance was a 1975 Chevrolet Suburban with Modular Ambulance Corporate ZEPHYR 54 conversion. Apex, Wake Forest, and Wendell also had ZEPHYR conversions.
- Next addition was a 1975 Dodge van.
- In 1978, four county squads received new Chevrolet/Swab ambulances identical to Wake County EMS units, but on Chevrolet chassis.

- The original crash truck was an old step van that first served as a Textilease uniform truck. After upfitting by squad members, it was used for a couple of years.
- In/around 1983, upon delivery of Cary's 1983 IHC/Swab heavy rescue, the Cary squad disposed their 1974 Ford/Reading crash truck with a crawl-in utility body to Fuquay-Varina.
- The squad also received a fiberglass boat for water rescue. It was donated by the manufacturer, and considered an "irregular," meaning there was some sort of cosmetic flaw in the gel coat, but it was perfectly functional.

Notifications

- The squad's original telephone number rang at a steady ring, at about ten members' homes.
- Later, calls were answered and dispatched by police department dispatchers.

Tilley House

- Former residence.
- Located on South Fuquay Avenue, beside the town hall. Present site of public library.
- Two vehicle bays added in the rear, and sleep quarters added in converted attic space.
- Front of house was converted into a couple offices for the town.
- Housed rescue squad until 1978, when a new fire station was completed, and an old fire station at 128 S. Fuquay Avenue, located across the street from the town hall, was vacated. The squad moved into the building.

By 1973...

- Donald Powell is chief.
- Fleet consists of two ambulances:
 - 1968-70 Chevrolet Suburban
 - 1973 Chevrolet Suburban high-rise

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)

In 1976...

- Hurst tool and extrication equipment purchased. Sold by Herb Wall.
- Step van acquired as crash truck, a converted bread truck. Members add a lot to the truck.

During 1970s:

- Also had a squad car.
- Also had automatic chest compression apparatus.

Early 1980s, by this time the squad...

- Has duty crews on call 24/7.
- Each crew has at least two certified EMTs.
- Squad has three “fully equipped” ambulances and one “heavy-duty crash unit.”
- Squad has support equipment to handle “almost any emergency, including injury and illness, cardiac care, child birth, automobile accidents, radiation accidents, drowning, and search and rescue.”
- Squad also conducts first aid classes and CPR instruction in community.

Other memories:

- Scandals would plague the squad in its last decade. Twice in ten years, between 1981 and 1991, members were convicted of embezzling squad funds. (N&O 4/4/91)

1982, September – The squad’s former treasurer pled guilty to embezzlement and was sentenced to pay more than \$10,000 in restitution. He pled guilty to 29 counts of “embezzlement by a treasurer of a charitable organization.” He received two consecutive prison terms of two years each, both sentences suspended. The charges resulted from an investigation, after a \$5,000 down payment for a \$24,000 ambulance was never made, and another \$10,000 in their savings was never used to buy a certificate of deposit. In July, they learned that there were more than \$16,000 of funds unaccounted for. The squad had 14 volunteers and two paid employees, and three ambulances and one crash truck. (N&O, 9/1/82, 9/29/82)

1982, October – Squad holds fundraiser at Raleigh Memorial Auditorium, a concert with Jerry Clower from Yazoo City, MS, and the Gospelaires from Fuquay-Varina. Tickets to the October 22 event were \$7.50. (N&O, 10/17/82)

1986, August – State Court of Appeals upheld the constitutionality of a section of the state’s bingo law, that prohibited more than one session of bingo from being at the same location within 48 hours. The squad along with Durham Highway Fire Protection Association Inc. challenged the provision in a 1984 lawsuit after the county sheriff warned them that they would be prosecuted, if they continued to conduct bingo games immediately after other groups had conducted games in the same building. The two groups raised a contention, among issues, that the statute violated their First Amendment right of freedom of speech, because “it interfered with their solicitation of contributions through bingo games, which is how they said they let people know they existed.” (N&O, August 21, 1986)

1990, January – Squad president charged with malfeasance after an investigation by the county sheriff’s department, following a five-month investigation that someone embezzled \$66,000 from the squad. During the investigation, they discovered other improprieties, which resulted in the charged. But the chief was “not charged in any way with embezzlement.” The warrant said that while serving as president, without authority from the squad’s directors, obtained a loan and mortgaged the property of the squad’s corporation “with the intent to injure or defraud or deceive the Fidelity Bank in the amount of \$15,000.” The date of the offense was listed as May 1, 1987. The malfeasance charge was a felony and applied to agents of corporations “who embezzle,

willfully misapply money, make financial transactions with permission from the directors or engage in false bookkeeping intended to injure, defraud, or deceive.” The squad had about 18 members including two paid employees and an annual budget of approximately \$100,000, mostly from public sources. Wake County was under contract to pay the squad \$41,000 this fiscal year, Northern Harnett Rescue District \$26,400, and the town \$3,000, plus use of the building and utilities. (N&O, January 19, 1990)

1990 – **Furina Rescue Squad** ceases operations [or did they?], after town votes to cease funding.

- Squad operates from a town-owned building and was receiving a \$3,000 allocation this year.
- Town asks the county to provide “full rescue services” until a new squad is organized, and approved by both Wake and Harnett Counties.
- Town board had a “long-standing desire” to improve rescue services in Fuquay-Varina, and particularly keep a paramedic on duty around the clock.
- Source: N&O, 11/1/90.

1990, November – County orders squad to reorganize or face losing its contract and primary source of funding. (N&O, 2/8/91)

February 4, 1991 – Wake County EMS assumes primary service in Fuquay-Varina.

- County commissioners vote to withdraw contract agreement with rescue squad, effective February 12.
- The rescue squad ceases to provide service the same day, February 4.
- Wake County EMS “C” shift is notified to send a unit to the district.
- Area mutual aid providers (Apex, Angier, Garner) were informed of the need for extrication services and second-duty back-up.
- By 9:00 p.m., EMS 8 is in the district.
- Fuquay-Varina Fire Department is requested to provide temporary quarters.
- EMS 8 is provided space in a first-out bay.
- Living quarters are ready by the second day, in the TV room with an adjoining restroom.
- EMS 9 is activated and deployed soon thereafter.
- Source: WCEMS News.

Fuquay-Varina Area Rescue Squad

February 6, 1991 - **Fuquay-Varina Area Rescue Squad** incorporated. The new organization was incorporated two days after the county the contract of the former squad. On Monday, county commissioners voted to sever ties with the original squad. The squad’s contract was terminated effective February 12, but the squad stopped responding to emergency calls on Monday. Wake County EMS and rescue squads from Apex, Garner, and Angier would handle calls in the area until a new squad was functioning. (N&O, 2/8/91)

February 1991 – Squad names first acting chief, Charles C. McLaurin, one of four directories. The squad was working to find funding and volunteers. They hoped to begin operating in 30 to 45 days. The board was working the town, the county, and Harnett County to obtain funding for the new squad. The acting chief was named on February 10. On February 18, the board voted to accept the assets and liabilities of the old squad. Assets included five vehicles plus rescue and medical equipment. Liabilities included \$18,278 owed on one of the vehicles and more than \$19,000 in bills to “oil, insurance, auto supply, and other companies and bad payroll checks.” (N&O, 4/21/91)

Notes from April 4, 1991, News & Observer:

- Spent two months preparing to take place of **Furina Rescue Squad**.
- They reorganized, recruited volunteers, and arranged to pay more than \$39,000 in debt from their predecessor.
- The interim Chief is Donald R. Powell. They have twenty members.
- They signed a contract with the county the week before, to provide rescue services and received \$23,115 in startup money. This grant, plus funds from the town and Northern Harnett Rescue, will pay the former squad’s debts.
- They have obtained an ambulance, a 1987 Ford.
- The rescue station has been refinished with paint, carpeting, and other repairs. It’s ready for county personnel to move in.
- The county set a pair of deadlines:
 - By April 15:
 - Be ready to answer rescue-only calls, those not requiring emergency patient care or transport.
 - Maintain enough staff to keep response time below eight minutes.
 - Provide place to house personnel and equipment from Wake County EMS.
 - The WCEMS unit has been housed in the volunteer fire station since February.
 - They’ll receive a \$1,222 monthly subsidy.
 - By December 31
 - Provide a vehicle and a driver to assist Wake County EMS paramedics.
 - Drivers must be certified EMT-I.
 - They will remain stationed in town.
 - Once this is met, FVRS can respond to calls for emergency patient care and transportation.
 - They’ll receive a \$3,666 monthly subsidy when this is met.
 - After this time, the squad will receive 60 percent of charges for EMS services currently paid to the county. \$148 for basic services, \$208 for ALS.

April 4, 1991 - EMS 9 moved from fire station to rescue building.

- Responds as first-duty unit, with paramedic service.
- Can request squad for manpower assistance.
- Squad also providing extrication and water rescue services.

- Squad has nine certified members, and up to two may ride with EMS 9, if present at station at time of dispatch.
- Source: WCEMS News.

May 1991 – Town board recently voted to spend \$3,500 to renovate the town building housing the squad. It had already spent about \$2,000 on the floor and carpet. The squad’s board also asked the town to handle its finances and contribute \$250 for operating expenses. (N&O, 5/21/91)

December 1991 – County commissions approved spending \$48,000 to maintain county paramedics for the squad, and granted the squad a six-month extension after the squad indicated that it would not meet the December 31 staffing deadline. (N&O, 12/20/91)

February 1992 – Furnia Rescue Squad lost its contract with the county. (N&O, 4/4/91)

May 1992 – The squad would soon be responding to emergency medical calls. They had only been responding to rescue calls since it took over from the former Furina Rescue Squad. Calls requiring medical assistance had been handled by county EMS paramedics stationed in town, and backed up by squads in Garner and Apex and, until recently, Angier. The squad was working on a contract with the county to let serve as backup for county EMS units. The squad would also cover special events like high school sports games, which had been covered by county EMS units in the past. Fourteen squad recruits would graduate in mid-March with EMT status, and eleven of which with EMT Intermediate certification. If they’re certified as expected, they would join the squad on April 1. The squad was upgrading its two ambulances, was planning to hire two part-time employees, and beginning a membership drive, to sell \$45 memberships per household. Families in Wake County were eligible, but not northern Harnett County. Non-members who need emergency transport service would be charged \$188 for basic life support and \$263 for advanced life support. The squad would keep 60 percent of all membership fees, with the other 40 percent going to the county. (N&O, 3/5/92)

Oral history notes:

- Most of the members were former squad members, who had neither the time nor the interest in obtaining paramedic certifications, but still had a desire for service.
- 1974 Ford/Reading crash truck, from the former rescue squad, continues as part of the fleet. It’s used for rescue and recovery operations only, and serves for a number of years, until those duties were transferred to Fuquay-Varina Fire Department, circa 1997.

Fuquay-Varina EMS

1997 - **Fuquay-Varina EMS**, renamed from FVARs. Name change filed March 25, 1997.

Notes:

- Begins paying weekday workers in early 1990s. This slowly built resentment among volunteers, who worked at night and weekends, doing the same job for free.

- Begins paying entire staff in 1998.
- Some problems continued. Squads were taking too long to respond, and training requirements overwhelmed many employees.
- Ceased operation April 1, 2001. N&O, 2/17/01.

1999 - Snapshot of Wake County EMS System, from TriData's *Comprehensive Assessment of the Wake County Emergency Medical Services System Final Report*, which was submitted to Wake County EMS on June 16, 1999:

Agency	Ambulances		Square Miles	1995 Population	Personnel	1998 Calls	1998 Revenues
Fuquay-Varina VRS	One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First-duty provided by Wake County EMS 9 • Second-duty, non-paramedic 	82.6	20,580	15 paid, 23 vol.	560	\$160,693

2001 – **Fuquay-Varina EMS** ceases operation on April 1.

- EMS 9 has been providing a first-duty unit since 1991.
- EMS 14 activated on March 1, 2001. Rotates with EMS 9 for first and second-duty calls.
- Fuquay-Varina 771 continues to operate from 0600 to 2200 through the month of March, serving as third-duty.
- On April 1, full responsibility for ambulance coverage by Wake EMS.
- All three ambulances respond from Fuquay Avenue rescue building.
- Fuquay-Varina EMS was one of the slowest squads in the county, averaging 9 minutes and 23 seconds. (N&O, 2/17/01) (WCEMS News)

Sources

- History of Furina Rescue by Ralph M. Brown, Secretary/Treasurer, early 1980s.
- Minutes of first meeting of Furnia Rescue.
- WCEMS News

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:
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 - Jot your thoughts in an e-mail.
 - Send a long, detailed e-mail.
 - Write things down on paper and send via postal mail.
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Contact Mike Legeros or Jeff Hammerstein at any time. Thank you in advance!