

# Raleigh Fire Department Training Center History

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Last updated March 18, 2025

## Introduction

This document presents a history of the Raleigh Fire Department training center.

## Timeline

Before 1953	Training facilities included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Station 1 on West Morgan Street, erected in 1896. Included a hose/training tower, which was removed in 1938. The station was demolished in 1941.</li><li>• Station 2 at Memorial Auditorium, building and grounds. Opened in 1932. The fire station was housed in the rear basement; the rear of the auditorium was designed for use as a drill tower.</li></ul>
1953, Mar	Council received cost estimates and a sketch of a proposed drill tower. Referred to Public Works and Planning Committee for investigation and recommendation. [CCM, 3/4/53]
1953, Apr 1	Council approved construction of new drill tower to be located in Devereux Meadow near Pigeon House Branch. Cost approximately \$23,000. Funding from remaining bond money after construction of new Central Fire Station, which was estimated at \$29,000. [CCM, 4/1/53]
1953, May 6	Council received map showing proposed drill tower location. Referred to Joint Committee for further investigation and recommendation. [CCM, 5/6/53]
1953, May 20	Council considered site recommendation for proposed drill tower location. Vote was a tie, due to member absence. Referred to next meeting. [CCM, 5/20/53]
1953, Jun 3	Council approved proposed drill tower location. Approved 5-2. [CCM, 6/3/53]
1953	New Central Fire Station opened on South Dawson Street. Upstairs dayroom is used/later used as a classroom for recruit training.
1954	Current training grounds constructed with drill pad and five-story brick training tower. The five-story, 20-square-foot tower cost \$30,000, including pavement, and was completed in the summer of that year. The structure included a standpipe system, a safety net, and an exterior escape. Source: <a href="https://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/stations/ktc.shtml">https://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/stations/ktc.shtml</a>
1954, Mar 15	Newspaper reports drill tower is nearing completion. Measures 20x20 and approximately 60 feet high. Equipped with fire escapes, a standpipe with sprinkler heads, and a “pumping center.” Expected to be completed in July, though RFD expected to be using prior to that time. [N&O, 3/15/54]

1955, Jun 22	Council approved paving of the drill tower area along with addition of window sills and banister railings inside the tower. [CCM, 6/22/55]
1955, Aug 18	Council approved extending the project to include the access road to the drill tower. [CCM, 8/18/55]
1955, Nov 5	Newspaper feature on training tower and its use. By that time, a safety net was installed at the base. The building and pavement cost an estimated \$30,000. Usage included pompier ladder drills and aerial ladder operations. [RT, 11/5/55]
1956, April 16	Council approved request from Civil Defense authorities to use the fifth floor of the drill tower as a ground observer station on a temporary basis. [CCM, 4/16/56]
19__	Hydrants added on training grounds.
19__	Fire pits added on training grounds. Used until [goes here].
1964	Smokehouse added. Built by firefighters using bricks from old Station 5. Personnel, including companies from Station 1, cleaned the bricks, laid the foundation, and raised the building. It was used by firefighters to practice operating in a smoke-filled environment. Wood palettes and other materials were burned, for drills both with and without breathing apparatus. [MJL-SH]
1978	Final decision made to construct a classroom building at the training center. It had been sought for years by one of the prior fire chiefs, Jack Keeter. [RT, 7/14/82]
1981	By this time, the dayroom at Station 2 is being used as a classroom for recruit training. [OH]
1982	<p>Classroom building completed, named Keeter Training Center. The name was later applied to the entire facility. Building included a classroom, office space, and two double-length bays for apparatus and other vehicles and equipment. The Office of the Fire Chief was also relocated to the new building.</p> <p>From RT, 7/14/82 – In the past, drill tower training was scheduled only in the summer months. With the new building, recruiting and in-service training could be year-round. The classrooms would also be used for the EMT program and by the police department.</p> <p>New training center to be named for the late Jack B. Keeter, fire chief from 1955 to 1973, and at-large councilman from 1973 until his death in 1978. Will be dedicated on Thursday. Building was completed in mid-April, cost more than \$446,000. Housed administrative offices and two classrooms.</p> <p>Dedication ceremony unveiled a bronze bust of Chief Keeter with his wife Blois Gattis Keeter unveiling at 2:00 p.m. Fire Chief Rufus Keith and City Manager L. P. Zachary conducted the ceremony.</p>
1984, by	<p>Railroad car added on lower level, as haz-mat prop. Later also used for confined space training.</p> <p>Added by October 25, 1984. [N&amp;O, 10/25/84]</p>

Late 1980s	Smokehouse no longer used for live fire training. Building is converted into a storage facility.
1990s ?	Confined space/manhole prop added beside the smokehouse.
1993	Old Station 4 on Old Wake Forest Road repurposed as additional training office space and city offices. Used until 1997, when the city sold the property.
1996	Upstairs classroom added in main building, over the previous two-story open area used for vehicle and equipment storage.
1990s ?	Safety net removed from training tower.
2002	Smokehouse expanded with entanglement/collapse simulator added in the rear room. Rest of the building continued to be used as storage, by both training and services divisions. [MJL-SH]
2003	USAR training area on the lower level, in conjunction with creation of Task Force 8.
2005	City and county acquired ~415 acres in the area of 3211 Auburn Knightdale Road, referred to as Randleigh Farm or the Randleigh tract, more than seven miles southeast of downtown Raleigh in 2005. An interlocal agreement was established to govern the use and future planning of the site. Source: Council minutes, Nov 7, 2023.
2005, Apr	Training tower demolished. By that time, the exterior fire escape had been condemned and was no longer used. Replaced with a larger, prefabricated, combination five-story training tower and two-story fire-simulator building. [MJL-KTC]
2005, Jun 8, Jul 8	Notes in county property records: building permits issued March 18, 2005, type B construction, \$5,550, and April 12, 2005, type D construction, \$61,800.
2005, Oct 5	Notes in county property records: tower remodeled and op (operational?) and modular classroom added.
2006	Cascade system for refilling SCBA bottles installed in rear room of smokehouse. The system was removed in [goes here]. [MJL-SH]
2006, Apr	New training tower completed. [MJL-KTC]
2006, circa	First modular building added on upper pad, as additional classroom space. [MJL-KTC]
2006, circa	During the mid/late 2000s, RFD was involved with a regional fire training center concept, to be developed in the vicinity of RDU airport. The project was never realized.
2008	Smokehouse renovated. Roof replaced, second floor storage area expanded, rear metal stairs replaced, and more. [MJL-SH]

2008	Lower parking area expanded and improved, including electric outlets for battery conditioning of USAR units and other vehicles. [MJL-KTC]
2008	Roof prop added on lower level. [MJL-KTC]
2008	Two propane burn pits added on lower level. [MJL-KTC]
2008	Four more modular buildings added on upper pad. [MJL-KTC]
2008	New locker room added in the main building on the lower level. Source: RFD News, Winter 2009.
2008	Con-ex containers added on upper pad as additional storage. [MJL-KTC]
2008, Oct	RFD strategic planning session produced goals for the next three to five years. Number two goal was facility infrastructure, including developing and placing into action a facility replacement plan. RFD had outgrown its space and its ability to house apparatus and perform training and support functions. Newer and larger facilities were needed. The highest priority facilities for replacement and expansion included some of the older stations, the maintenance shop, and the training center. Source: RFD News, Winter 2009.
2009	Live-fire prop installed on lower level, a con-ex container used as a "burn lab." Source: RFD News, Spring 2009.
2009	Fire Administration and Fire Prevention temporarily relocated to classroom buildings on upper pad, during renovations of their offices in downtown Raleigh. Source: RFD News, Fall 2009.
2009	Climbing wall and observation deck added to the USAR area. A heavy lifting and moving prop was also being built, which will consist of a road tractor and fuel tanker that could be utilized both upright and on its side. The prop was designed for haz-mat, rescue, and USAR training. Vehicle and equipment shelters were also added to the USAR grounds. Source: RFD News, Fall 2009.
2010, spring	By this time, two metal shelters were added, one on upper pad to protect a pair of reserve pumpers. The second was added on the USAR grounds, to cover shoring materials preloaded on pallets for rapid deployment to local or regional incidents. Source: RFD News, Spring 2010
2011, Jan	By this time, four propane props had been permanently installed on lower level. Used for live fire training, they were a passenger van, a 500-gallon tank, a "Christmas tree," and a commercial gas meter. Also, additional permanent props had been added to the "rubble pile" in the USAR training area, for lifting/moving, breaching, and shoring exercises. Source: RFD News, Winter 2011

2011	RFD News, Fall 2011: Major concrete repairs were being completed at the Keeter Training Center. About 40% of the facility's concrete was being replaced at a cost of about \$190,000. The project started September 6, and the contractor had until November 11 to complete it. Bathroom upgrades had also started in September. The men's bathroom was being completely renovated, with new showers, lights, and fixtures. The women's bathroom was receiving new tile and fixtures. The remodeling would be completed in early November.
2011	Raleigh Fire Museum opened in converted classroom building on the upper pad.
2011	New city bus depot opened on Poole Road. The fire department subsequently used a concrete driving area for RFD driver-operator training, until the early 2020s [correct?].
2011, Dec	Live fire multi-training system added on lower level. The system was equipped for live fire training as well as ventilation, forcible entry, standpipe, sprinkler, confined space, firefighter survival, and Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) skill stations. The city received \$146,000 in federal funds for the purchase, awarded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as part of its Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. The city matched \$29,500 for a total project cost of \$175,500.
2013	Emergency power generator installed. Source: RFD News, Spring 2013.
2014, by	Bathhouse building added on upper pad.
2014, early	RFD News, Winter 2014: Facility improvements were underway at the Keeter Training Center. The classrooms had been painted and new carpet has been installed. New desks for instructors had been ordered. The upper and lower classrooms in the main building would also receive new tables and chairs in the next few months.

<p>2014</p>	<p>RFD News, special facilities edition: The Raleigh Fire Department has a long-term goal of replacing the Keeter Training Center (KTC) with a larger comprehensive training facility that would incorporate classroom and administrative space, physical and fireground training areas, and an emergency vehicle driver (EVD) course.</p> <p>The training grounds were opened in 1954. Over the decades, the grounds have been expanded. They presently include a training tower, a classroom office building, five modular classroom buildings, a bathhouse with restroom and shower facilities, a storage and maintenance building, and assorted sheds, shelters, and training props.</p> <p>The project is proposed to be completed in phases, starting with the necessities first: the driver course and additional classroom facilities. This would be followed by a training tower, offices, auditorium, training equipment storage, and special operations training grounds.</p> <p>Currently, the Raleigh Fire Department is working in conjunction with the Raleigh Police Department to develop a proposal for the acquisition of a parcel, or an assemblage of parcels off Old Poole Road, just south of the future site of Station 12. This land is expansive, centrally located, and adjacent to major thoroughfares. It offers benefits for both public safety departments to jointly develop.</p> <p>[ This location was later changed to Battle Bridge Road, where RPD later built a driving training facility. Some years later, a city/county law enforcement administrative/training facility was opened. ]</p>
<p>2016</p>	<p>RFD News, Spring 2016: HVAC upgrades are underway in the classroom building. Work started in mid-March and should be completed by late May. The project will replace all HVAC systems, with separate heating and cooling systems and controls for three areas: upstairs, downstairs, and the offices. The project has been planned since late 2014.</p> <p>All communications and technology wiring at the training center is also being upgraded, with work coinciding with the HVAC project. This will help with future needs for replacing or upgrading components.</p> <p>Other upgrades at the training center include replacing the lower gate with a mechanical system that includes keypad entry. The project should start in mid-May and finish in June.</p> <p>In addition, the ventilation prop on the lower drill pad has been rebuilt. The structure simulates a slanted roof, where firefighters practice using saws and other techniques for ventilating heat and smoke from inside burning structures.</p>
<p>2016, Fall</p>	<p>Roofs replaced on classroom and modular buildings. Source: RFD News, Winter 2017.</p>
<p>2019</p>	<p>Land acquisition and preliminary services funded for FY20, for the first phase of a new training center in the Battle Bridge Road area.</p>

2020	Offices of Haz-Mat Program Coordinator and EMS Program Manager from KTC to new training annex at Station 26, in former emergency communications training center. [MJL-KTC]
2020	From Council minutes, Sep 3, 2024: In August 2020, the City entered into a contract with HH Architecture, P.A., to complete a feasibility study to relocate the current Keeter Training Center from its current location to the Randleigh parcel jointly owned by the City and Wake County. In addition to the completion of the feasibility study, the scope of work included preparation of a master plan of a new training campus on the Randleigh parcel.  From council minutes, Nov 7, 2023, the study was completed in 2020.
2021, Nov	From council minutes, Nov 7, 2023: In November of 2021, a cross departmental team determined that the original objectives for the site had changed such that the site could used, in part to host a Regional Fire Training Center. After discussion with Wake County, Wake County staff found the goal to use approximately 71.45 acres of the property for the Regional Fire Training Center to be compatible with the County's interests for the site.
2023	Lower parking area repaved, with approximately 1,650 square yards of pavement removed and replaced.
2024, Sep	From Council minutes, Sep 3, 2024, amending the feasibility study from 2020: This professional services contract amendment adds scope to prepare a swift water rescue concept preliminary design and site plan updates, and conduct two (2) flow tests.

**Sources**

- City Council minutes, various.
- MJL-KTC - Raleigh Fire Department – Keeter Training Center history by Legeros, <https://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/stations/ktc.shtml>
- MJL-SH - Raleigh Fire Department – Smokehouse history by Legeros, <https://legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history/writing/smokehouse.htm>
- Newspaper articles, various.
- OH – Oral histories.
- RFD News - Raleigh Fire Department Newsletter (2007-2019) issues, <https://www.legeros.com/ralwake/raleigh/history/newsletter>