

Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Historical Timeline



Beginnings

The need for the City of Fort Lauderdale's first fire department became apparent in 1912 as the result of a disastrous fire in the City's downtown district that destroyed nearly everything between Wall Street and New River on both sides of Brickell Avenue (now SW 1st Avenue). The town had just been incorporated in 1911 and following the fire the City Council voted to purchase its first fire equipment. About the same time, the City also formed its first volunteer fire department. The department did not have a permanent home until 1913, when the first fire station was built at Andrews Avenue and SW 2nd Street. The first paid fire chief started in 1917 at a salary of \$25 per month.



From these humble beginnings, the Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue Department has grown into an organization of more than 450 individuals working from 12 stations located strategically throughout the City. The department uses the most modern fire rescue equipment and techniques to deliver fire and emergency medical services to the residents and visitors of Fort Lauderdale.

Since 1912, there have been many changes in personnel, equipment, techniques and station locations. Some of the highlights include (stations are referenced using their current/modern number designations):

Timeline

1920's - The City's first paid firefighter starts working at a salary of \$150 per month for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The department's first ladder truck is purchased. The original Station 3 is built in 1925, followed by Station 8 in 1927.

1930's - Fort Lauderdale is given an honorable mention in fire prevention from the National Board of Fire Underwriters.

1940's - By 1940, there are 19 firefighters with seven vehicles serving 18,000 full-time residents and a nearly equal number of "snowbirds." The "Kelly Day" system is officially adopted in 1947, reducing the

workweek from 84 to 72 hours. Station 2, originally opened in 1913, moves from City Hall to 301 N. Andrews Avenue in 1948.

1950's - With the establishment of the three-platoon system, the number of firefighters rose to 107 in 1957. Stations 13, 16 and 29 open.

1960's - The first fireboat is purchased in 1964. In 1969, the 242-person department is named the best fire-preventing department in its class in Florida. Five more fire stations are added, numbers 35, 46, 47, 49 and 53.

1970's - The first black firefighter joins the department in 1970. Station 54 opens in 1971. In 1975 by the first firefighter who is also a paramedic is hired followed by the first female firefighters (five in all) that were hired in 1978.

1980s - The Firefighter's Insurance Trust Fund is established and the Fort Lauderdale Fire Department is 100 percent unionized. In 1985, Station 3 moves to its current location on SW 4th Avenue and Station 88 opens on NW 21st Avenue.

1990's - In 1996, Engine 46 is named "the busiest engine company in the state."

2000's - On March 1, 2000, the first female was promoted to hold the title of Deputy Fire Chief in the history of the City. On September 11, 2001, within hours of the terrorist attacks, six Fort Lauderdale firefighters leave for New York with a 72-member team to assist with the rescue efforts at Ground Zero. That same year, ground is broken at 528 NW Second Street for a new combined Fire-Rescue station and administration building. In 2004, voters approved a \$40 million bond issue to build, renovate and upgrade 10 fire stations. Plans aimed to hardened fire stations to hurricane forces, further reduce response times and accommodate population growth. In 2009, the City's Fire Rescue Department responded to 41,000 incidents. Operational enhancements included opening Fire Stations 3, 29, and 49.



2010's- Firehouse 49 opened in 2010 as the 5th station built within the scope of the fire bond funds. This station houses Engine 49, Ladder 49 and Rescue 49 as well as the Marine Team and both fireboats. In 2012 the new Firehouse 35 opened its doors on the site of the original Firehouse.

In 2013 Firehouse 46 was relocated and built next to Mills Pond Park at 1515 NE 19 street. This firehouse houses Engine 46, Rescue 46, and Rescue 246. In 1996 Engine 46 was named as "the busiest engine company in the State." In 2014, Fort Lauderdale Fire rescue, under the leadership of Fire Chief Robert Hoecherl, began the Accreditation process and Fire Rescue moved to the Regional Broward County 9-1-1 dispatch center. In 2015 achieved CFAI Accreditation Status.

In 2018 Fire Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr was appointed Fort Lauderdale’s twenty fifth Fire Chief and the first female fire chief in the history of the agency. The agency also achieved CAAS Accreditation.



2020's - Station 8 opened to assist the southeast corridor.

The future is bright for the men and women of Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue and the people we serve. Strong leadership, dedicated personnel, persistent training, state-of-the-art technology and upgraded facilities are key to saving lives and protecting property for this generation and generations to come.

Fort Lauderdale Fire & Safety Museum

For a hands-on historical experience, please visit the **Fort Lauderdale Fire & Safety Museum**.