

Fulton Fire Department History

It was in the year 1893 after the water system was completed, that Fulton, Kentucky organized its first Fire Department, with I.R Nolen as the first fire chief. The fire chief in those days was paid \$5 per call and firefighters were paid \$2 a call. Chester Murrell was the first salaried Fire Chief in Fulton.

From the beginning of 1893, with the hand drawn reel, to the turn of the century with the horse drawn reel, Fulton's Fire Department did extremely well in combating fires with their adequate equipment. Back in those days the department mostly tried to save adjoining buildings rather than to save the burning building itself. It was a big day in Fulton when their first motorized fire apparatus from American La France in 1913 arrived at the price tag of \$5,500. It was the only motorized apparatus between Memphis, TN and Cairo, IL at the time. Although some folks thought the price was extravagant, they soon began to see that it was the best kind of apparatus. In 1969 Fulton lost its first firefighter and to date only firefighter in the line of duty. Virgil Craven died at a fire scene due to injuries when a wall collapsed.

Under the leadership of Chief Billy Meacham in 1974 the Fire Department began operation of the ambulance service. The first EMT was hired Willie B. Hicks. In 1976 Kentucky Board of EMS issued the Certificate of Need for the City of Fulton Ambulance service.

In 1978 Chief Richard Hartz took the leadership of the Fire Department. During his years of service the EMS subscription service began in 1978 to fund the ambulance service. In 1978 the Fire Department responded to 75 fire calls and 753 ambulance calls. During this time the first "Jaws of Life" was purchased. In 1981 S.A.V.E. (Save the Ambulance Voluntary Enrollment) committee was formed by citizens to help raise funds for the Ambulance Service.

Chief Otto Mock took the Fire Chief's position in 1985 and during his time the new Parkway Regional Hospital opened on Holiday Lane in 1985 moving from the previous location at the Old Fulton Hospital located on the corner of Carr and Commercial Streets. In 1986 Chief Otto Mock organized a HAZMAT response unit using an old ambulance to transport equipment and personnel. Funding from the city and the county provided very basic equipment for the unit. However two totally encapsulating butyl rubber entry suits were obtained from the US Coast Guard and were used on several occasions. The HAZMAT unit was abolished due to the high cost of equipment and a lack of funding. In 1987 the Seagraves Ladder Truck was placed in service, large diameter supply line was placed on all apparatus. The department got its first "Stinger" deluge gun in 1987 and it was mounted on the tail board of the truck due to not having enough money to mount it on the top of the truck. The membership in 1987 was 27 members of which 10 were full time. Jackson Purchase Firefighters spring school was conducted in Fulton in 1988. This was the first regional school hosted in Fulton since the 1950's.

In 1988 notice received from Tennessee Department of EMS that the Fulton Ambulance Service employees would have to become Tennessee certified beginning in 1989 because of the number of patient pickups in the state of Tennessee. Later in 1989 Fulton Fire Department EMT's (8 full time and 2 Volunteers) completed Tennessee EMT training as mandated by the State of Tennessee EMS Division. In the future all Fulton EMT's would be required to maintain Tennessee EMT certification in addition to Kentucky EMT certifications.

In April of 1990 Kelly Edmison became Fire Chief after the resignation of Otto G. Mock. During the years of Chief Edmison the Fire Department had some manpower issues. The automatic mutual aid agreement was also accomplished during Chief Edmison's tenure. Chief Edmison even had to be placed on 24 hour shift coverage due to a manpower shortage. The Kentucky Incident reporting system became operational in 1991. In 1992 membership was 28 with 10 full time. In 1993 the HAZMAT unit was downgraded from operations to awareness level. The major reason was inadequate funding. Fire Prevention inspections began in the fall of 1993. Doctor Alvin Hinders became medical director for the ambulance service in 1993.

In 1994 Shawn Bixler Became the Chief. During this time the first female firefighter covered a night shift at the station. In 1996 Fire Department Personnel in EMS unit 1192 met the presidential motorcade in Cairo, IL. The

motorcade was carrying President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore. The crew joined the motorcade at the request of the US Secret Service and provided escort from Cairo to Paducah, Kentucky. President Bill Clinton and his motorcade arrived, from Paducah, Kentucky, for a brief stop in Fulton, Kentucky. One of the EMS units in the President's motorcade was unable to continue due to maintenance issues. The US Secret Service requested an EMS unit from the Fulton Fire Department to replace this unit. The motorcade proceeded to Union City, Tennessee, stopped for lunch in Covington, Tennessee attended a rally in downtown Memphis, Tennessee and was dismissed when the President and his entourage boarded Air Force I and Air Force II at the Memphis International Airport. In 2001 the Cities of Fulton, Kentucky and South Fulton, Tennessee joined forces and incorporated The Twin City Ambulance Service as a joint venture between the two cities. The TCAS Board of Directors was incorporated. In November of 2004 Captain Buffy Kyle worked her first shift as a Captain with the Fulton Fire Department and Twin City Ambulance Service. Buffy is the first female Captain in this department. March 2003 a letter from Dr. Gerald Russell Medical Director of TCAS stating that he supported the TCAS operating as an ALS service when a paramedic was available until such time as twenty four hour coverage could be provided. In July 2004 Kentucky Board of EMS issued an Advanced Life Support license for Twin City Ambulance Service. In 2004 the 1991 Pierce Lance, 75 foot ladder truck purchased with a federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) procured by Assistant Chief Jim Hartz. In January 2007 The Hickman Ambulance Service in Hickman, Kentucky was purchased for by the Twin City Ambulance Service and began operations on this date.

In 2007 Jim Hartz was promoted from Assistant Chief to Fire Chief. In May 2010 a 1996 Pierce Dash engine received in Fulton, Kentucky. The apparatus was purchased with a federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) procured by Chief Jim Hartz. Chief Hartz passed away suddenly on August 4, 2010. During Chief Hartz tenure the department experienced the Ice storm knocking out power and knocking down tree limbs and debris for most of our region.

In December 2010, Peter Lamb became the next Chief of Fulton Fire Department and Twin City Ambulance Service. During this time there was a huge amount of rain that caused the Mississippi River to reach critical flood stages. The end result was the Byrd's Point Levee had to be blasted to provide relief on the already critical flood levees along the river. During his time Pete Lamb promoted Captain Mike Gunn to the Assistant Chief's position. Pete Lamb resigned in June of 2011. City Manager Kenny Etherton resigned and Steven Freedman took the City Managers position.

July 2011 Assistant Chief Mike Gunn became the next Fire Chief. During Chief Gunn's short time as Chief the Fulton City Commission voted on Monday November 28, 2011 to reduce full time fire department personnel. This was a result of the decision by Twin City Ambulance to transfer the management of the ambulance service to Parkway Regional Hospital. At a previous special call meeting held on November 22nd, 2011, the commission requested to see a more detailed overview of the fire department, including daily workload, finances, etc. Fulton Fire Chief Mike Gunn provided the commission with just that. Chief Gunn went into further detail on how they could possibly run the fire department after December 31st, 2011, when Parkway Regional Hospital takes over operation of the Twin City Ambulance Service on January 1st. Chief Gunn suggested that they keep three full time fire personnel to be on call during the day, Monday through Friday. Calls at night and on the weekends would be handled by volunteer firefighters. It was further suggested in response to low volunteer turnout, Chief Gunn's idea would be have an incentive pay for volunteers. The number of the volunteer's hours throughout the year would be tracked then the volunteer incentive pool would be divided by the number of man hours and a check issued to each firefighter based on the number of hours they had worked. As a result of Executive Session the commission passed municipal order 2011-229 stating that effective as of December 31st, 2011, the City of Fulton will reduce the fire department to no more than two full time fire personnel. On January 1, 2012 Chief Gunn assumed command of the now all volunteer fire department without an ambulance service, first time in 38 years. On January 9, 2012 Terry Rudolph was promoted to the Assistant Chief position.

During the year of 2012 the fire department was able to recruit eight new volunteers and begin the two year training process for them. Equipment purchases were made to complete requirements for ISO & NFPA on

specific equipment. The department began updating its respiratory protection SOG and further brought the department in line with the standards in regard to this. The department completed a shared yearlong cross training program with its automatic aid department of South Fulton, TN. The department was tasked in conjunction with the police department to perform the tasks of buildings and codes enforcement. The department in conjunction with the police department began a joint arson investigation task force. The department received a grant for approximately \$400,000 as a regional FEMA grant to improve radio communications and this grant is in the process of completion. The department completed the green energy grant it had received the previous year and had a 17% reduction in energy costs this grant included new insulated bay doors, air knife systems for the doors to prevent heated air from escaping in the winter, new infrared heaters for the apparatus bays and installation of energy efficient windows and exit doors.

During the year 2013 the fire department was assigned the task of redesigning the building codes and property maintenance division for the city. This meant hiring a part time code enforcement officer and getting numerous ordinances passed. The ordinances created a legal and comprehensive plan to handle the growth and maintenance of property in the city in regards to safety and preservation. Daniel Zickefoose was hired as the part time code enforcement officer. Chief Gunn and Assistant Chief Rudolph attended the two week fire origin and cause at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The training is part of the process to get both of them certified as Certified Fire Investigators. The department received a \$39,000 dollar FEMA-AFG grant for the installation of a vehicle exhaust system for the apparatus bay. The department was able to provide several members with training in NFA Leadership I & II that were interested in becoming officers in the future. Membership remains strong at 29 members and all but four are certified to the KY 150 hour level. Engine 1151 the 1984 model Ford Pierce pumper could not pass its pump certification. It was found that the pump was deteriorated and cost was estimated over \$30,000 to repair it. After much discussion and debate the City Commission allowed Chief Gunn to take bids on a new Fire Engine. This bid was awarded to Ferrara Fire Apparatus. Delivery was set for February 2014.

During the year 2014 Fulton Fire Department took delivery of an international chassis Ferrara Fire Engine with a 750 gallon water tank and a 1250 gallon per minute waterous pump. This apparatus took the designation on Engine 1152 and replaced the old Engine 1151 and Rescue 1181 to become the departments first rescue pumper. This also marked the first new piece of apparatus that the department had received in 30 years. The department continued its restructuring and training of the newer recruits in Hazmat awareness and operations. Several members were promoted to the rank of Captain and Lieutenant. This brought the command staff to a total of 11 officers. A grant was awarded through the Kentucky Fire Commission for a thermal imaging camera. The department went through its Insurance Service Organization (ISO) audit and received and improved score from its previous rating of a 4 to an ISO class 3. This placed Fulton Fire Department in a class of about 5 percent of the nation's fire departments.

During the year 2015 Fulton Fire Department received a grant for SCBA air pack replacement of six packs and twelve cylinders. With this grant and receipt of SCBA equipment the entire ensemble of SCBA packs are now in compliance with standards and on track for the rotation to keep them on track. This grant also had funds for the replacement of four sets of PPE turnout gear which helps to keep the rotation cycle going and all PPE in compliance with standards. The department purchased its third thermal imaging camera making this equipment available on every piece of apparatus. The Department also received another grant for the purchase of an outside emergency warning siren that was purchased and installed at Fulton County Transit to provide more coverage to the West side of town. This year saw the funding to hire a full time code enforcement officer, allowing more concentration on the objectives of improving the health, welfare and sustainability of the community.