

History of Idaho Falls Fire Department
(updated 4/10/97)
(compiled by Ken Anderson and D. Gosswiller)
(updated Aug 2002 by Chief Ellis & kept Current)

The first fire department was organized in the Brewery Saloon in 1885 after a fire wiped out nearly all the frame shacks along Eagle Rock Street.

Ed Winn – Was first volunteer Chief with 20 volunteers. The first fire station was on Eagle Rock Street.

That year a New Years Eve dance was held and raised \$150.00 to be used to purchase a hand hose cart with 300 feet of hose.

The railroad company agreed to install three (3) hose plugs to supply water for fire protection. (We presently have over 1400 fire hydrants within the city).

1889 - Village of Eagle Rock incorporated. Volunteer fire department served the town for many years.

Man-drawn carts until 1907.

1891 - Eagle Rock became Idaho Falls on August 28, 1891.

1902 - A. D. Wright became the second fire chief during this year and the station moved to its second location near Broadway and Park Ave.

1905 - Approximately this time J. W. Galey was appointed fire chief and served until 1909.

1907 - Horse drawn wagon began use. The cost was \$1950.00. Julius Marker was the first “driver” of horse drawn equipment.

The third fire station was a frame building on Park Avenue where Harris Publishing is located. Exact date moved from Broadway and Park is Unknown but probably same date as horse drawn equipment came into use.

Between 1907 and 1909 the first two people on the department received pay. They were Julius Marker and Lew Tolley who were the two “drivers” of horse drawn equipment.

1909 - Walley Sheriff named chief and was the first paid chief. He served one month in that capacity.

Volunteers were notified of calls by the ringing of a large bell. The bell is on display at the Bonneville County Museum.

- 1910 - Julius Marker appointed chief to replace Walley Sheriff and served until 1938 when he died. Within a few years the fire station moved to larger quarters in a single story building on Park Avenue (SH Kress/Bonanza building) in the 500 block.
- 1916 - First motorized fire equipment on the scene. It was a 1916 American LaFrance pumper. The chief and two firefighters were paid at this time by the city.
- 1920- When second motorized truck purchased (a 1919 Brockway) the department was increased to six paid firefighters plus the Chief.
- 1930 - New city hall constructed on Shoup Ave with room for fire station. Fire station moved from Park Avenue into this building. The fire bell was replaced by a siren on top of the building.

In November a big combination ladder and hose engine (1928 American LaFrance) was purchased (\$13,850.00) and another man added to the force. The truck was on display at the 1929 World Fair as state of the art fire apparatus. This vehicle is still used today for parades and other public relations events.

With eight men including the Chief now on the City payroll, the department operated two shifts of four men each. Call personnel available by phone and siren.

- 1932 - Fire loss per capita for the year was \$5.99 primarily due to Lambrecht Building fire which was worst of year.
- 1933 - Fire loss for the year equaled \$.79 per capita.
- 1937 - A Seagrave pumper was purchased
- 1938 - Julius Marker died and was replaced by L.G. Jackson as Chief.
- 1945 - Twelve (12) paid men added to the department operating three engines.
- 1947 - American LaFrance (403) open cab pumper was purchased.
- 1949 - L.G. Jackson was replaced by Bert Brown as Fire Chief in June of this year.
- 1950 - Manpower increased to 18 paid personnel.

1952- December 2, 1952, Captain Joel Humphreys dies when overcome by smoke in the basement of Spencer Grocery at North Boulevard and May Street.

1953 - Second fire station built on 8th street in 500 block. The lot cost \$5,000.00 and the building \$76,500.00. It was a single engine company station as well as the department maintenance shop. (In 1990 this station became the office of Fire Prevention Bureau).

During this year a 1953 Seagrave pumper (404) purchased.

1959 - New American LaFrance pumper (405) was purchased.

1960 - Manpower increased to 40 paid personnel.

1961 - Parley Gillan appointed as Chief.

1963 - Manpower increased to 44 paid personnel.

1964 - Carl Poulter appointed Chief in January to replace Parley Gillan.

A \$587,000 General Obligation Improvement Bond was approved.

1965 - Third fire station built at Skyline and Grandview. The cost of land was \$10,450.00 and the building was \$102,979.00. (In December 1993 this building became the Bonneville County E911 Communications Center).

Idaho Falls Firefighters joined the International Association of Firefighters and became union affiliated on July 22. They became Local 1565.

21 additional paid personnel hired.

Les Corcoran appointed Chief to replace Carl Poulter. (January).

1966 - Bond election to purchase two new Seagrave pumpers at cost of \$34,814.00 each and to install an alarm box system throughout the city.

Fire District was formed to provide fire protection to an area outside the city limits that covered approximately 390 square miles.

1970 - In May of this year the fire department began providing ambulance service.

Intensive training for emergency care began in August for fire department and police personnel.

- 1971 - June of this year 17 firefighters received 81 hour Emergency Medical Technicial (EMT) course.
- 1972 - March to December of this year a pilot paramedic program was given to four firefighters. Program not implemented however.
- 1973 - January was beginning of paramedic course for 10 firefighters. The course ran through July. Ten firefighters certified as Trauma Paramedics.

Nine of the ten firefighters trained as trauma paramedics completed cardiac intensive care paramedic training by the end of October.

- 1974 - All Paramedics received certification through the State of Idaho.

911 Service became operational at City Hall

- 1975 - City purchased new Walters Crash Truck for airport coverage.

- 1977 - A new station was constructed at Lincoln and Woodruff which replaced the old Station 2 on 8th street. The new station cost was \$209,348.00 and the arrangement between the City and Fire District was to split the costs 1/3 Fire District and 2/3 City.

November 30 Doug Call appointed Chief to replace Les Corcoran who retired.

- 1978 - January of this year new 911 dispatch center operational at LEB on Capital Ave., with civilian dispatchers.

- 1982 - New FMC pumper purchased for \$155,000.

- 1983 - Pierce Minuteman Crash Truck purchased for airport.

- 1986 - New Pirsch pumper purchased

- 1988 - New Pierce pumper purchased for \$174,049.

- 1989 - Dick Hahn appointed Chief July 30 of this year. Land purchased for Station 4 on Woodruff near Sunnyside for \$60,882.

- 1990 - Six personnel added for airport fire protection.

Property at Bellin and Mill Road purchased by City for use as well and possible fire Station.

The 8th Street Fire Station became the office for Fire Prevention.

1991 - October- The Bonneville County Fire District merged with the City under a contractual agreement. Fourteen fire district personnel became City employees.

November- Two new fire stations constructed and occupied. One new station 3 at the airport (cost \$789,648 90% federally funded) to replace old station 3 at Skyline and Grandview. An additional station at Woodruff and Sunnyside became Station 4 at a cost of \$586,963.

1992 - Hazardous Materials Unit formed for response to Hazmat Incidents. Several firefighters trained to Hazmat Tech Level.

1993 - New E911 Computerized Dispatch Center operational at 911 North Skyline Drive (old fire station 3) in December.

Contracted supplementary fire department services to EG&G/DOE for in-town facilities. (code enforcement, training, etc).

1995 - October- A new station 5 was occupied at Bellin and Mill Road in the southwest section of the City. Cost of the station approximately \$500,000.00

New Pierce pumper purchased and placed into operation at Fire Station 1. The price was \$210,000.

1996 - April 11 Dennis Johnson appointed Chief to replace Dick Hahn who retired on March 29.

Fire Marshall Terry Edwards retired May 31.

August 4 the Fire Department Staff reorganized from having three Battalion Chiefs on shift, an EMS Chief and Fire Marshall to having four Division Chiefs working 40 hour week. The four positions of responsibility are Fire Prevention/Public Relations, Administration, EMS and Special Operations.

1996 - Dennis Johnson retired as Chief on December 27 and Don Gosswiller was appointed (Jan 5 1997) Acting Chief by Mayor Milam.

1997 - January 5 Don Gosswiller acting Fire Chief. Appointed to Chief March 2, 1997.

1998 - December 4 Don Gosswiller Retired as Chief. Bob Drake appointed as the Chief December 6.

- 2001 2 year extension signed with Bonneville County Fire Protection District.
- May 23 took delivery of Engine 14, a 2000 E-1 International \$185,000
- November 18 Mike Sheets appointed Fire Marshall
- December Gene Rockwood to FPB as 2nd Inspector. FPB increased 1 man
- 2002 August 9 Robert (Bob) Drake retired as Chief of the Fire Dept. August 11 Dean Ellis appointed Chief by Mayor Linda Milam.
- 2003 June 12 City Council unanimously approved a 10 year agreement with the Bonneville County Fire Protection District. This came about after many months of negotiations with the Commissioners (Jack Vernon, Wade Campbell and Matt Morgan) and their Liaison Officer (Dick Fowler). City Council members involved were: Ida Hardcastle, Brad Eldredge, Joe Groberg, Robert Barnes (who replaced Bruce Rose when he went to work for the City of Ammon), Bill Shurtleff and Mike Lehto. Mayor Linda Milam and City Clerk Rose Anderson signed the documents.
- Took delivery of a new Ambulance in June of this year.
- Bid awarded to Pierce for a new Commercial Pumper in June.
- July 8th and 9th the Chief and Staff interviewed 21 Civil Service New Firefighter candidates to fill 7 positions. The seven guys hired will start the 4 week training program on July 28. They will start on shift August 25th. The names of the 7 guys hired are: Josh Jacobsen, Lance Quick, Brandon Rich, Nick Stallings, Cody Anderson, Rob Hall, and Nick Hirschi. This will get us back to full staff on shift of 84 firefighters. We have been short since Aug 2002 due to the City/County Contract.
- Took delivery of a new Portable Air Filling Station in September of this year. This was received from the Federal Fire Acts Grant of 2002.
- Lynn Brown and Nolan Getsinger retired December of this year
- 2004 Six firefighters chosen to be in a Paramedic Class held in Blackfoot. Paul Radford, Adrian Russell, Tony Martin, Steve Farnsworth, Bob Zaladonis, and Scott Grimmett. They started January 5th.
- Interviewed 6 applicants for firefighter due to the retirement of Lynn Brown and Nolan Getsinger. Richard Bates and Mike Niles were hired and they start work February 2.

Took delivery of new Pierce Pumper on an International Chassis on March 20th

March 31st John Simpson resigned from Fire Dept.

Joseph (Tory) Stewart hired to replace John Simpson. He started work on April 19th.

June 19th 01:36 L. A Weight Loss Fire 503 S. Woodruff \$700,000 damage.

July 4th Arson fire at the 4th Street Post Office Building.

Dave Peck retired July 22 of this year.

July 23 Captain Brett Johnson appointed to A Platoon as Platoon Captain due to the retirement of Dave Peck

Scott Criddle retired which leaves an opening in fire prevention for an inspector.

Took delivery of a new Regional Response Haz Mat truck on August 2nd

Dave Coffey promoted to Captain August 8th, to replace Dave Peck

Joe Nichols chosen to be the new fire inspector and starts Sept 22

October 6th Interviewed 15 candidates to fill 3 vacancies created by retirements and 2 new positions offered in the Ambulance budget by the County. Parker Ruby, Wynn Whitmeyer, Steve Walker, Keith Morse and Isaac Eaton are hired and will start October 25, 2004.

Jim Deuel retired October 15th. Rick Taylor appointed to Division Chief to fill the vacancy and will start October 18th.

November 2 Brad Pettingill appointed to B Platoon as Platoon Captain due to the appointment of Rick Taylor to Division Chief.

Ralph Risenmay promoted to Captain effective October 31 to replace Taylor's vacancy with his promotion to Division Chief. Stay on A Shift

Dave Lamont promoted to driver effective 10/31 to replace Ralph Risenmay due to his promotion. Lamont transferred to B Platoon

Rick Ackerman transferred to A Platoon. Gene Rockwood transferred to B Platoon. Dave Coffey transferred to C Platoon and Chris Farnsworth

transferred to A Platoon. These transfers are effective end of October and first of November.

2005 June 10, 11 & 12 First Annual Eastern Idaho Fire Chiefs Conference in Idaho Falls @ EITC. 160+ registered attendees

July the IFFD took possession of a D Con trailer furnished by the State of Idaho for the Regional Response Haz Mat Team. This came with many dollars of equipment for decontamination of victims and personnel.

September 5 the IFFD sent six personnel to help in the Hurricane Katrina Disaster in Louisiana and Mississippi. Dave Hunter, Brandon Rich, Brian Wood, Duane Nelson, Jeff Parsons and Lance Johnson all volunteered the day after. They spent their time in Gulfport, Mississippi. One stayed 4 weeks, 4 stayed 5 weeks and one stayed 6 weeks.

October-Rick Ackerman pursuing a medical retirement with the neck and back surgeries he has had from AOs. He has been on light duty at fire prevention for an extended period of time. We received an award through the Fire Act Grant for all new SCBAs. The grant was \$300,000 approximately. Hired 3 new firefighters Dan Muhlestien, Sean Allen and Jon Drollinger. One was an extra paid by the City and the District to bring manning to 4 at Station 5 with the 2 received last year from the Ambulance budget.

November 16 Captain Gary Day retired. John Tenerowicz promoted to Captain to fill his vacancy. Rick Saunders promoted to Driver to take Tenerowicz vacancy. Jared Fuhriman elected as the new Mayor of Idaho Falls. Karen Cornwell a new councilperson.

December 22 Captain Kim Getsinger retired. Sam Villabisencio was promoted to Captain to fill the Vacancy.

December the IFFD took possession of a new GMC 1 ton crew cab Pickup as the prime mover for the Haz Mat D Con trailer. New Ambulance delivered this month from Med Tech. Curtis Clark filled the vacancy of a drivers position due to Rick Ackerman retiring.

2006 January- Ida Hardcastle and Karen Cornwell the new Fire Dept. Council Committee. The Council approved a piggyback bid on the new ambulance delivered in December for the same cost. Projected delivery in May.