

History: The Past and Present of Fire District 8

In the mid, 1940's firefighting efforts were maintained for several years using a water tank left in the Rucker mill yard by the Rucker family. A large electric pump was installed on the Lake to fill the water tank. Mr. Charles Cockburn kept it in working order and did any repair that was needed. In conjunction with this, a hose cart and chemical engine (hand propelled) was kept in a space between the bank and Eggert feed building. Later a cart was used with a 50 gallon tank and that could be towed behind a car. As time went on some fire extinguishers were used, which proved to be more satisfactory for fire fighting.

After the Snohomish County Public Utility District (P.U.D.) was established a map was made and the Lake Stevens area became District # 8. Water pipes were laid along the main roads and fire hydrants were installed.

In 1946 a committee of three, C.G. Cockburn, Willard Eggert and Erness Hunt had set out to purchase a used fire truck. In the city of Pasco Washington, the committee members located a used fire truck at the war surplus supply. The value of the fire truck was \$4,000. The fire truck was a 1943 Chevrolet Military fire engine. The fire engine was kept in one of the Eggert buildings downtown. In 1947 a new fire department was formed and Mr. C.G. Cockburn became the first fire chief.

In April 1948, a Board of Commissioners for Fire District 8 was formed with Ben Mitchell as Chairman, Elmer Pardee Vice Chairman, and Elwood Reber Secretary.

In 1950, the annual report indicates there were 15 volunteer firefighters and one fire station serving the fire district. In 1950, there were a total of 32 alarms. There would be an average of five firefighters that would respond to fire calls.

In the Annual Report for 1957: Total Alarms 49

- ❖ 20- chimney fires
- ❖ 7- house fires
- ❖ 6 - overheated oil stoves
- ❖ 5 - brush and grass fires
- ❖ 3 - resuscitation calls
- ❖ 2 - car fires
- ❖ 1 - first aid call
- ❖ 1 - clothes dryer
- ❖ 1 - garage fire
- ❖ 1 - oil barrel fire
- ❖ 1 - bulldozer fire
- ❖ 1 – lantern fire

In 1948, Fire district 8 covered 36 square miles. The H.P. Pratt and Company of Seattle purchased Coupon Warrants in February 1949 in the amount of \$15,000. The Coupon Warrants were acquired so the District could purchase a land site, build a fire station, and acquire a fire truck with the necessary fire equipment to pass the State Underwriters tests. The land and fire station cost a total of \$7,200. The fire station was built on the Vernon road near the Richfield Service Station in Lake Stevens. The first new fully equipped fire engine was a 1952 Diamond-T was purchased for \$11,888.25 without tax. The Coupon Warrants and interest were paid off in 1956. The assessed value of the property in Fire District 8 in 1956 was \$2,092,436.

In 1956 a new emergency truck was purchased for \$2,004. The emergency truck was a 1956 International Panel Truck, which would be used for medical emergencies. The emergency unit carried oxygen bottles, oxygen masks, first aid equipment, and a resuscitator all valued at \$1,000.

In July 1957, the Fire Commissioners saw a need for an auxiliary station to better serve the south and west areas of Lake Stevens. The Commissioners also looked closely at an area that would provide sufficient volunteer manpower that could respond 24 hours a day.

In March of 1959, a building site was purchased south of Frontier Village on Chapel Hill Road. At the Commissioner's meeting on October 5th 1959, building construction contract bids were opened for the new fire station. The contract bids were reviewed and the bid was awarded to Puget Sound Builders for \$17,300. The station was a concrete block building, two bays for emergency vehicles, hose tower, upstairs meeting room and a bunkroom. The new Frontier Station would be completed in 1960. During this time the 1943 Chevrolet fire engine and the 1952 Diamond-T Fire Engine was then moved from the city station to the new "Frontier Village fire station".

A new fully equipped 1960 Crown fire engine was purchased for \$27,739. The emergency unit and the crown engine were placed at the Lake Stevens City fire station (City station) during 1960.

In the 1960's, Volunteer Firefighters would drill every Monday evening at 7:00 p.m. for two hours. The training consisted of first aid drills, hose testing, live fire practice burns, fire engine pump testing, fire engine driving practice, and training of any new emergency equipment. The first America Lafrance was purchased in 1967 for \$23,508 and the other one in 1968 for \$25,773. The new American Lafrance fire engines carried 750 gallons of water and were able to pump 1000 gallons of water per minute. One fire engine was placed at City Station and the other at Frontier Station. The price of a new fire engine today would cost approximately \$220,000. A 1968 GMC Suburban truck was purchased to replace the 1956 panel truck used for medical calls. The new 1968 GMC Suburban truck cost about \$5,000. A new aid unit today cost approximately \$90,000.

The volunteer firefighters would host the annual "Fireman's Ball". The fireman's ball was a community event with dancing (music provided from area bands). Raffle tickets were sold for prizes from the Volunteer Firefighters Association. Over the years the fireman's ball was held at the K.P. Hall downtown Lake Stevens, Lake Stevens Community Grange hall, Lake Stevens Community hall, and Lundeens Park Dance Hall.

In 1967, the Annual Report indicates total alarms 127. There were 19 emergency medical calls, 102 fires of different types and 6 false alarms.

On February 12 1967, Snohomish County would suffer its worst fire in its history. At 4:56 a.m. Fire District # 8 volunteer firefighters were summoned to a home on the Robinette Road. When firefighters arrived flames and smoke were pouring from the front and side window of the home. The family was unable to escape from safety; husband age 24, wife age 25, and their children ages 7, 5, and 18 months all perished in the early morning blaze.

In 1971, fire district # 8 purchased its first new aid unit for medical emergencies. The new aid unit was a 1976 Chevrolet Superior and cost approximately \$27,000. It was capable of transporting up to three patients at one time. This aid unit also had numerous compartment spaces for storage of medical equipment. Fire District 8 would transport citizens to area hospitals that lived within Fire District 8 to area hospitals free of charge; this service continues today.

In the late `70's and early `80's, Fire District 8 continued to thrive forward with the constant changes in fire service. Fire District 8 would acquire some new advanced technologies in Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Fire Suppression, and Rescue Equipment. In early 1980s,

Fire District 8 purchased a piece of the new medical technology a "heart defibrillator". This was a large step forward to saving the life of a person who was in cardiac arrest. Buy now many of the firefighters had become Emergency Medical Technicians (E.M.T's) and the Fire District 8 continued to transport patients to the area hospitals.

In 1974 a new fire station was built at the intersection of Grade Road and 21st Street N.E. in Lake Stevens. This would replace the old down town station in Lake Stevens that was built in 1950. The new fire station was constructed of brick and had four apparatus bays, office, day room, training room, kitchen, hose tower, and two restrooms. The new station was built for approximately \$122,000.

As the community continued to grow, Fire District 8 began to look for a building site for a future fire station in the Machias area. In 1977, a building site was located in Machias, where the former "Machias School" was located, at the corner of Division Street & Machias Road. The land was then purchased for \$9,150 and would become the future site of the third fire station in Fire District 8. In 1981 fire district 8 purchased a new American LaFrance Fire Engine for \$121,762. This new fire engine came with an automatic transmission and had the capacity to carry 1000 gallons of water and pump 1500 gallons of water per minute. This new and improved fire engine was an important tool for fire fighting and is still in service today. Fire district 8 continued to keep up with new technology, and provide the best possible service to the public.

In 1983 it was beginning to be very evident that Fire District 8 was in need of a rescue tool to extricate people who were trapped inside crushed automobiles. The Volunteer Firefighters Association and Fire District 8 purchased a Rescue Hurst Tool commonly known as the "Jaws of Life" for \$10,000. The Hurst rescue tool was placed into service and kept on the aid unit. Later in the 1980s fire district 8 purchased another aid unit for Frontier Station.

The 1980s also introduced "Paramedic Service" that would provide Advanced Life Support care to the sick and injured. In the beginning this service was provided on a mutual aid basis with the Everett Fire Department. As Everett Fire Department medical emergency alarms increased in the city of Everett, paramedic service to Fire District 8 would be discontinued.

Fire District 8 would continue to explore other directions to continue this valuable life saving service. In conjunction with Snohomish County Fire District 7 (Clearview) paramedics were provided and the service would continue in Fire District 8. As rapid growth continued, Snohomish County Fire District 7 also would be consumed with an increasing number of medical emergency alarms. Once again Fire District 8 would pursue other means for paramedic services. In 1989 Fire District 8 and Valley General Hospital, in Monroe, entered into a contractual agreement to provide in district paramedic service to the citizens of Lake Stevens.

The system was started to provide Advanced Life Support (ALS) with a short response time to the citizens who required this specialized care. Unfortunately, after 4 years of service the hospital cancelled the contract. Effective October 31, 1993, Valley General Hospital's Medic 8 would no longer serve the Lake Stevens / Granite Falls area.

The Valley General Hospital/Medic 8 system was designed to generate revenue by a fee for service operation. This system failed financially due in part to the low volume of transports by Medic 8. Consequently, the service lost \$ 97,000 in 1992 and had a projected loss of \$ 277,000 in 1993.

In order for Fire District 8 to continue to provide paramedic service to the local citizens, an EMS levy had to be proposed to the citizens of Fire District 8. The public supported the E.M.S. levy and 6 paramedics were hired to work 24-hour shifts 7day a week.

In 1988, Fire District 8's Board of Commissioners had a new headquarters station built to replace the aging "Frontier Station". It is now our current Headquarters station (04 – 99th Ave NE). The station is wood frame, single story with a mezzanine. The station contains three apparatus bays, four offices, an alarm room, kitchen, day room, conference room, exercise room, four bunk rooms, and restrooms. At that time it cost \$411,000 to build.

As growth continued in the area, a fire station was built in Machias 1989 to provide better emergency service to the Machias area. Fire District 8 began to recruit for volunteer firefighters in the Machias vicinity. The station has two apparatus bays, a kitchen, restroom, two bunkrooms, one office, and an alarm room. The cost to build this station was \$226,839. Volunteer firefighters soon began to respond to emergency calls from the Machias fire station.

As fire district 8 moved into the 1990s, the word "**rescue**" would have new meaning. Firefighters would now learn the latest technology in "Technical Rescue or Special Rescue". Firefighters would begin training in high & low angle rescue, confined space rescue, heavy rescue, and trench rescue. In 1993, a training tower was built in Machias next to the Machias fire station. The training tower was four stories tall and constructed of concrete blocks. The new tower would support training for all fire training and technical rescue training. The training tower cost \$147,257 to build and was completed in October 1994.

As training continued in technical rescue, the Machias facility expanded to include confined space and heavy rescue props. All of the material and training props for the confined space and heavy lifting were donated from local businesses. As the Machias training facility was expanding, firefighters moved forward to become technical rescue instructors. The Machias training facility is currently used by other fire departments through out the state of Washington.

In 1997 the title of "volunteer firefighter" would slip into the departments history books from an era that began in the 1940s. Volunteer firefighters would now become part paid employees of Fire District 8.

Currently Fire District 8 has 3 fire stations, 5 fire engines, 1- 3000 gallon water tender, 5 aid units, 1 medic unit, 1 brush truck, 1 mobile fire safety house, 1 rescue equipment trailer, 2 watercraft river/lake, 2 command vehicles, 2 staff vehicles,

The assessed tax value in Fire District 8 in 1997 was \$1,462,474,943.

Fire District 8 administration currently includes a 3 member Board of Commissioners, 1 Fire Chief , 3 Deputy Chiefs, 1 District Secretary, 1 Administrative Assistant, 4 Captains, 3 Lieutenants, 12 full time firefighters, 12 full time firefighter/paramedics, and 25 part paid firefighters.

- ❖ In 1996 Fire District 8 responded to 2,405 alarms.
- ❖ In 2001 Fire District 8 responded to 3,717 alarms.

The history of Fire District 8 would not be complete without a salute of gratitude to all Firefighters, Commissioners, and Chiefs that have served for Fire District 8. And for the thousands and thousands of hours they have contributed over the years to gain the necessary technical and practical knowledge for saving life and property in our community. The firefighters of the past and the present, no matter if they are volunteers, part paid, or career, are the investment for the safety of our lives and properties.

To all who have served and supported Fire District 8, THANK YOU!!

Dick Adkins, Deputy Chief