

Fire Service History

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(updated January 17, 2025)

- **65 BC Roman Vigiles (Vigilant) patrolled streets at night looking for fires. Wooden structures, candles, and open fires. 10K members-part of Roman Army. 1000-year history until Rome burned in 64AD. Water and dirt used to extinguish fires**
- **Saint Florian-Patron Saint of Firefighters supervised the team of firefighters. Many of us proudly wear the medallion today; I have for 40 plus years.**
- **1650-1700 European fire service evolved with volunteer brigades**
- **1607 Jamestown founded 1608 Jamestown destroyed by fire**
- **1623 Pilgrim Village established 1624 destroyed by fire**
- **1666 Great London Fire destroyed the city**
- **1700-1800 Firefighting untaken by Insurance Industry in Britain and US with the Fire Mark. No fire mark, no fire suppression**
- **1736 Ben Franklin, Father of American Fire Service, in Philly**
- **George Washington and Thomas Jefferson Friendship Fire Station in Alexandria VA 1774. Hose carts, hand pumpers, and water buckets were defensive items.**
- **1851 First career department Cincinnati Ohio with steam pumpers; engine driven by horses at Uncle Joe Ross Station**

- **1858 Richmond VA first career department in the Commonwealth**
- **October 7, 1871, Great Chicago, Il Fire destroyed the city. Each year Fire Prevention week is observed in honor of the Great Chicago Fire. Allegedly, Ms. O’Leary’s cow kicked over a lantern in the barn while milking.**
- **Let’s look at the devastation in southern California this month. 27 deaths as of Friday, 12K structures destroyed, 40K acres scorched, up to \$50 billion in economic losses, and 200K people evacuated. The origin and cause remain undetermined. Fire can be a friend or a foe; no question this one was a foe.**
- **1895 CBVFD ([Colonial Beach Volunteer Fire Department](#)) was established to protect the incorporated Town of Colonial Beach, VA. Town was incorporated in 1892.**
- **Early 1900’s, fire service evolved into motorized fire apparatus patterned after the British invention of the pumper.**
- **Early PPE did not afford much protection for FFers; today’s ensemble is very sophisticated, but the price tag is \$31K per firefighter**
- **Our new equipment is also extremely expensive. Official Va report in 2024; Pumpers \$1 million, Aerial \$2 million, and Ambulance \$500K**
- **Call volume is increasing each year by roughly 25% for fire and EMS. EMS constitutes 80% of all calls nationwide.**
- **Funding sources are limited to the FEDS, Commonwealth, and localities. ATL generated \$36 million in 2023 of which CBVFD received \$17,596/ Westmoreland County \$64,097.**

Localities absorbed 97.15% of the \$6.2 billion cost for fire and EMS

- **70% of fire departments are fully staffed by volunteers Nationwide**
- **New challenges coming:**
 - **New fire & EMS combined reporting system NERIS**
 - **Mandatory Electric Vehicle Training Program: 9K of 44K have completed the program in VA. Deadline is December 2025 (HB 2451 passed in 2023 by VGA)**
 - **OSHA is promulgating a revised 29CFR 1910.156 to require/mandate all NFPA standards for all firefighters/EMS personnel in US.**
 - **January 6, 2025: VCU Report outlines six (6) recommendations for the VGA to consider including funding, volunteer recruitment, and move OEMS to Secretary of Public safety in Governor's Cabinet**
 - **How does the Government cope with the increasing cost of apparatus, equipment, recruitment and retention?**
 - **New dangers from electric vehicles lithium-ion batteries**
 - **Be safe and be prepared to meet the challenges of 2025 and beyond**