



THE STORY OF THE REGINA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Deputy Chief Button prepared
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The work of the Fire Department does not vary greatly from city to city; it's usual activities being fire prevention, firefighting, fire alarm, training, investigation of fires and repair and maintenance of equipment.

I shall now, briefly outline the various broad divisions into which a Fire Department is divided.

1. FIRE PREVENTION: Fire prevention is designed to lessen the important factors which contribute to the occurrence and spread of the fire - the physical, occupational and moral hazards. Generally, fire prevention bureaus confine their efforts to inspection of buildings other than residential, seeking violations of existing municipal by-laws, securing corrections where necessary and in extreme cases, bringing recalcitrant violators before the municipal courts. All fires of any consequence are investigated.

2. COMMUNICATION: The fire alarm section is entrusted with communications. This takes the form of communications between the citizen and the Fire Department in case of fire or other emergency, and between different units of the Department. Fire Alarm is the nerve centre of the Fire Department and obviously, every precaution is taken to insure the accurate reception and transmission of every message. It is here that the location of each piece of apparatus must be known at all times, and from which all movements must be ordered or governed. To assure efficient operation of this vital section, there is a tremendous amount of tedious detail work which must be at hand and maintained to the last minute. No matter how a call is received or for what purpose, there has to be a ready answer prepared to deal with the situation and guide the operators on duty. All calls on the fire phones are recorded and in some instances, are played back to insure that there is no error in dispatching apparatus to the scene of the emergency.

3. TRAINING: The training section is a necessary adjunct of any Fire Department, regardless of it's size, for as an army is supposed to travel and progress on "it's stomach" even in our era of nuclear missiles, so also progresses a Fire Department on the amount, the quality and the regularity of it's training. Every Fire Department should have it's training programme laid down in advance for a six month period at least and firemen and officers of all ranks should be required to take instruction. The training school should provide facilities for the teaching of the basic use of tools and equipment, and also for the practice, under actual fire conditions by units, of the evolutions to extinguish all kinds of fires.

As you can realize, the basic purposes of a fire training school are: 1. to instruct the rookie fireman in his duties by putting him through an intensified course of basic training, and 2. to prepare that fireman, over a period of years, for positions of greater responsibility. The fact that the rookie fireman of today is the potential Officer, or even Fire Chief of tomorrow, cannot be overlooked by a Fire Chief who, besides keeping his personnel up to required numerical strength and well trained in practical evolutions, must at all times bear in mind the all important need of building and preparing his subordinates for higher and greater responsibility. Only proper instruction in advanced subjects coupled with practical experience, will provide such Officer material.

4. MECHANICAL SECTION: This branch of the Fire Department is a most important one in that it is responsible for keeping the fire apparatus in first class condition at all times. As a general rule, the mechanical section of a Fire Department sees to the general maintenance of equipment such as: oiling, greasing, etc.

The importance of keeping fire equipment rolling is, I believe, obvious to anyone and when repairs to a fire truck are needed, they should be done right away in order that the piece of equipment in question be placed back on duty without loss of time. For that reason, Fire Departments, that is those large enough to afford it, should have their own repair shop properly equipped and staffed to handle any mechanical difficulty that might arise. In this way, engine troubles could be attended to immediately when they were of a minor nature and thus be prevented from becoming major repair jobs.

5. FIRE FIGHTING BRANCH: This is the largest section in a Fire Department and to which is attached the bulk of the department's personnel. Depending on the size of a city, and in order to give maximum protection and a well balanced administration, this branch is broken down into divisions, districts and units. Now I think you will understand this more clearly if I take a given city such as our own city of Regina and describe it's plan of organization.

The Fire Department of Regina is organized and administered in accordance with the Bylaws of the City. The Department is under the general supervision of the City Manager and City Council. The appointment of the Chief of the Fire Department is made by the City Council for an indefinite period, subject to ratification by the Council. He can be discharged only by recommendation of the Council. All actions in matters of personnel and expenditures must be made on the basis of recommendations by the Chief of the Fire Department.

Mr. G. P. Wilson is the present Fire Chief and executive and operational head of the entire Department. He is responsible for it's maintenance, discipline and operations. The Fire Chief submits an annual report of the activities of his Department and an annual budget with recommended expenditures to the Manager of the City. He is also privileged to appear before the City Council regarding his budget estimates and his recommendations.

Chief Wilson is assisted in headquarters administration and in direction of fire operations by one Deputy Chief. The City of Regina is divided into four areas which we call districts and these four districts are commanded and administered by one Battalion Chief on each Platoon, who is directly responsible to the Deputy Chief.

The subsequent breakdown is from District to fire fighting units. There are two basic types of Units in any Fire Department; the Pump and Hose Unit and the Aerial Ladder Unit, although some of the larger cities such as ours, have other types in addition to Hose and Aerial Units. These are Rescue Units. Each Unit consists of from two to five men and is commanded by a Captain or by a Lieutenant, as the case may be. The Units are housed in Fire Stations, of which there are four in our City, located strategically throughout the City. Unit Officers are responsible to the Battalion Chief in each case. I might add here that the Fire Unit in carrying out it's role, is a self-contained and self-reliant Unit.

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THE FUNCTION OF THE PUMP AND HOSE UNIT: There are nine Pump Units in Regina. Briefly the Pump and Hose Units are responsible for getting water onto the fire and extinguishing it. Their crews of five men lay out and advance hose lines to the fire, and the pump with which the apparatus is equipped provides the necessary pressure to send the water in the required volume through the hose onto the fire. This is necessarily a very brief description of the work accomplished by a Pump and Hose Unit. However, the job is not quite as simple as that. The tools of these Units are many and varied and to successfully carry out his job, each member must be highly proficient in their use. It is a tough job to say the least for, in order to get to the seat of a fire, a considerable amount of physical punishment and exertion is usually absorbed by each member of the Unit.

THE FUNCTION OF THE LADDER UNIT: This type of unit is responsible for the raising of ladders to the building on fire, for rescue work, ventilation, forcible entry and a multitude of other jobs. The Aerial Ladder Unit works in close co-operation with the Pump and Hose Unit which relies upon the ladder crew for gaining entrance to the building, relieving the building of smoke and gases, floors, etc, where concealed fires are burning. Our Fire Department operates two ordinary City Service trucks and four aerial ladder trucks whose ladders are hydraulically or mechanically raised and extended generally to heights ranging from 65 to 100 feet.

THE FUNCTION OF THE RESCUE UNIT: Rescue Units are an important addition to any fire department but more especially are they required in larger cities where the frequency of fires and other emergencies justify their existence. As the name implies, the work of the Rescue Unit is primarily that of saving life, not only at fires but under emergency conditions for which they are equipped and trained. However, as such situations are not frequent occurrences as compared to fires, for example, these Units assist or participate in certain other phases of fire fighting. Work in dangerous concentrations of contaminated atmospheres is one of their specialties. In carrying out this work, they are often required to operate hose streams in danger spots where, due to long training and experience and to the equipment they carry, they are more at home than the average member of other Units. Because of this general, all-round ability, the Rescue Unit is usually a very busy one and the members of the unit are very often envied by members of other Units for this reason.

The Fire Department of Regina operates two Rescue Units. The Officers and men of these Units accomplish outstanding work day-in and day-out. They are a group of specialists who thoroughly know their job and who train and practice with their equipment every day in the week.

The equipment carried by these two Rescue Units is so varied and in such quantity that the apparatus is commonly referred to as "the truck of a thousand tools". To my personal knowledge, there are no other Units like them in Canada and I feel safe in saying that very few in the United States equal them.

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A brief description of some of the equipment carried may be in order. For example, both trucks mount a large capacity air compressor and the tools that go with it such as; air drills, circular saws as well as a smoke ejector, all operated by compressed air. There are lifting jacks, ranging from five ton capacity up to the big fifteen ton size, operated hydraulically, portable acetylene cutting equipment for cutting away steel bars and other metal obstructions. There is a special ratchet type pulling device for moving beams and other debris up to ten ton capacity; breathing apparatus consists of six self-contained units and twelve spare cylinders, special rubber gloves etc. It carries portable lighting equipment, hi-lift pumps and waders for flooded cellars, tools of refrigeration and other gas leaks, first aid equipment, resuscitators, inhalators and unique in Canada, at least, many other and varied rescue equipment.

The Rescue Unit also carries a variety of small tools too numerous to mention, plus special extinguishing agents and special fog type nozzles, stretchers, blankets and so on. It only remains for me to say that a lot of people are walking the streets today who, had it not been for the excellent work of our Rescue Units, would not be alive to tell the story.

In order to complete the picture of the Regina Fire Department, allow me to mention some statistics quoted from Chief Wilson's Annual Fire Report of 1966. The fire department personnel of today totals 221 men. In 1966, the Fire Department answered 1158 alarms; of these, 198 were false alarms. These emergency calls were for fires in dwellings, apartment houses, stores, warehouses, manufacturers, workshops, schools, office buildings, institutions, churches, theatres, halls, clubs, garages, service stations, sheds, etc. Other fires were for grass and shrubs, bonfires, automobiles, fences, etc.

In 1966 there were 42 firemen injured at fires. This indeed demonstrates once again that fire fighting calls for so many risks that cannot be outlined but must be faced time and again by experienced men who must even sometimes give their own lives in the fulfillment of their duty.

The Fire Prevention and Investigation Division, which is under the jurisdiction of the Chief of the Fire Department, made close to 7,429 fire inspections in 1966, in commercial and industrial establishments, hostels, rooming houses, schools, colleges, churches, hospitals, theatres, clubs, meeting halls etc. They are entrusted with the inquest investigations into the cause of every fire, working in close co-operation with the Police Department.

CONCLUSION: This brief outline of a Fire Department organization has not mentioned the most important factor of all, namely, finance.

The money to maintain this organization comes from taxes. We are all familiar with the complaint against taxes. One test of the taxpayer's knowledge and sincerity is to ask just what taxes should be abolished or reduced. Nine times out of ten, if he has an answer, it will be in some field in which he is directly concerned. Then the next step is to concede his point, and ask what service should be reduced or

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abolished. This is where his sincerity meets the acid test because seldom will he choose a field in which he derives a direct benefit.

The City of Regina has a population of close to 140,000 spread over 30.15 square miles. It is a centre of diversified industries and manufacturers; from heavy equipment, including machinery, structural steel and electrical power equipment to drugs, chemicals etc. It also accomodates a large tourist trade and boasts many entertainment facilities. The fire protection coverage for our growing city is quite extensive and by no means is it an easy task.

HISTORICAL SKETCH
OF
REGINA FIRE DEPARTMENT

- I882 First public meeting held for the purpose of forming a fire brigade.
- I884 Regina Fire Department commenced it's existance as a bucket brigade. The first Fire Hall was located in the rear of the town hall at Scarth Street and Eleventh Avenue where the present Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce now stands.
Rope attached to Catholic Church bell to give alarm of fire.
- I886 A horse powered fire engine was purchased which pumped water for fire purposes from underground cisterns.
Fire Department organized as a Volunteer Brigade with J. F. Smith as Chief.
- I890 A fire bell weighing 2500 pounds was purchased.
- I894 A Ronald Steam Fire Engine was purchased. This engine had taken first prize at the World's Fair at Chicago. This was a horse drawn vehicle.
- I900 W. A. White appointed Volunteer Chief.
- I905 First time waterworks system used for fire fighting, gravity flow pumps not yet in operation.
First horse drawn hose wagon and ladder truck was purchased.
- I906 W. A. White appointed first paid Fire Chief. First team of horses purchased for the Fire Department. Prior to this, when an alarm of fire had been sounded, the first team to arrive at the fire hall would take the apparatus to the fire. The teamster would receive \$5.00 for this service.
- I907 Fire apparatus at this time consisted of I - Hose wagon, I - Ladder truck, I - Steam fire engine and all were horse drawn. One team of horses and a hand drawn chemical engine.
Moved from fire hall at Scarth and IIth. to one in I800 block Hamilton Street.
- I908 First Street Fire Alarm System installed with 25 fire alarm boxes. August 2Ist, first fire alarm received over new system.
Underground cisterns filled in as paving was put down.
Up to this time, the fire brigade had been strictly volunteer with the exception of the Chief. From here on, one or two paid men to be added each year.
- I909 A horse and buggy was purchased for the transportation of the Chief.
- I9II December 6th., No. 2 Fire Hall was opened at Scarth Street and Eighth Avenue.
- I9I3 Volunteer firemen disbanded - motor fire apparatus installed;
I - Pumper, I - Chemical Engine and I - Aerial Ladder.
- I9I4 Installation of fully paid department - no more volunteers.
No. 3 Fire Hall at Robinson Street and Fourteenth Avenue opened.
No. 4 Fire Hall at Winnipeg Street and Victoria Ave. opened.
- I9I5 One of the first horses purchased by the Department dropped dead while responding to an alarm of fire.

- I919 First car purchased for Fire Chief to replace horse and buggy. Two-Platoon system instituted for the fireman, the hours of work being ten on the day shift and fourteen on night shift. This was the end of firemen living in the halls and just getting off to go out for meals.
- I921 Central Fire Hall opened in I600 block Eleventh Avenue. Hamilton Street hall closed.
- I929 Additional motor fire apparatus purchased. New No. 5 Fire Hall opened at King Street and 7th. Avenue. New Central Fire Alarm Office opened with all new equipment.
- I938 No. 5 Fire Hall closed, leaving only four in the city. W. A. White, first paid Fire Chief retired.
- I939 One Day's Rest in seven instituted. Firemen had previously worked seven days a week. No. 4 Fire Hall, Winnipeg and Victoria Avenue closed leaving only Nos. I-2-3. Department completely motorized and horses disposed of. Original type Sou-Westerns and Slickers taken out of service and firemen supplied with Hard Helmets and improved turn-out clothes for better protection.
- I940 New No. 2 Fire Hall opened at I435 Albert Street to replace the one at Scarth Street and 8th. Avenue.
- I946 Adoption of the Three-Platoon System with 48 hour work week.
- I948 First of self-contained breathing apparatus purchased. First piece of fire apparatus purchased with a cab. Previously, all vehicles were cabless.
- I950 First of two-way radio equipment purchased. One base station, three mobile units and one Porta-Phone.
- I956 New No. 4 Hall opened at Pasqua Street and 6th. Avenue. New Central Fire Alarm Headquarters opened at rear of No. I Fire Hall. All new equipment installed in this building.
- I957 Hours of work for firemen reduced from 48 to 44.
- I958 Hours of work for firemen reduced from 44 to 40.
- I960 New No. 3 Fire Hall opened at Hill Avenue and Kings Road doing away with old No. 3 at Robinson and I4th. Ave.
- I965 New No. 2 Fire Hall and Training Area opened. Old No. 2 closed.
- I966 Four Platoon, Two Shift, 42 hour week adopted on July Ist. on trial basis.

Present Personnel of the Department includes:

I Chief	I Secretary
I Deputy Chief	I Ass't Secretary
4 Battalion Chiefs	I Fire Marshal
28 Captains	4 Fire Inspectors
24 Lieutenants	I Director of Training
<u>145</u> Firemen	I Ass't Director of Training
203	5 Fire Alarm Operators
	I Electrician
	I Electrician's Helper
	I Mechanic
	<u>I</u> Maintenance Man
TOTAL PERSONNEL - 221	18

Present Apparatus includes:

9 Pumpers
 4 Aerial Ladders - 65', 75', 85', 100'
 2 Emergency or Rescue Units
 2 Staff Cars
 2 Service Trucks
 (All two-way radio equipped)

Number of Hydrants	1916	Number of Fire Alarm Boxes	220
Number of Fire Halls	4	Self contained Air Masks	36
Pneolator	I	Inhalator	I