

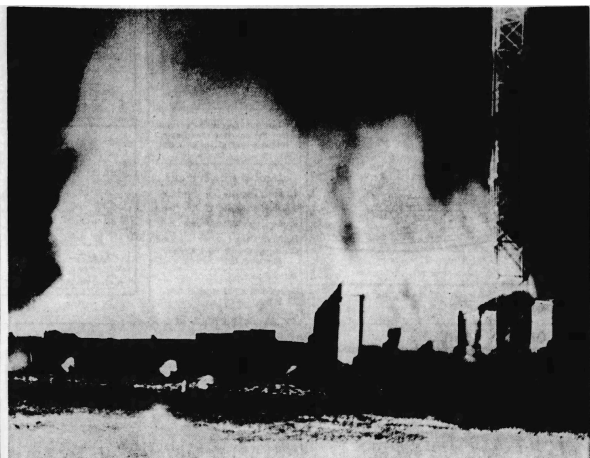
History of the Lugoff Fire Department 1968-2023



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History of Lugoff Fire Department

The Lugoff Sertoma Club led the charge to establish the Lugoff Fire Department (LFD). The Lugoff area was beginning to grow and needed fire protection. Previous fires, such as the one that destroyed the WACA-AM radio station based in Lugoff was the impetus for establishment of the LFD. This fire that occurred on February 12, 1961, destroyed the old Lugoff schoolhouse that the radio station had operated out of. The Camden Fire Department was called to respond, but under "insurance underwriter rules" they could not extinguish the flames. These rules specified that they could not act outside of their fire zone unless it was a public building or they were providing mutual aid to another fire department.



FLAMES LEAP ABOVE GUTTED CAMDEN RADIO STATION; TOWER SURVIVES BLAZE
(Staff Photo By Tom Robertson)

Fire Rages Through WACA Radio Station at Camden

Around January of 1968, the Sertoma Club began efforts to establish LFD by fundraising and distributing a petition for the landowners that lived within a 3 mile radius of the Lugoff Elementary School. Once signed, the petition was sent to the Kershaw County Legislative Delegation for approval. Once the petition was approved, the next step was adding the question to the ballot and electing the first fire commissioners of the district. Community meetings were held at the Lugoff Elementary School to discuss the upcoming election and progress made to the campaign. Fundraisers such as dances and mail-in pledge drives were coordinated by the Sertoma Club. In all, the Sertoma Club raised \$7,500 to establish the department.



On April 30, 1968, the election was held and the residents of Lugoff overwhelmingly approved establishment of the Lugoff Fire Protection District. Of the 203 votes cast, 196 voted in favor with 3 opposed and 4 votes were ruled ineligible. Nine candidates ran for the first five seats of the district board of commissioners and they included: Henry Boulware, Charles Taylor, Joseph Sistare, J.T. Shipman, C.S Caskey, W.O. Morgan, Harry Reid, B.Z. Williams, and L.E. Watkins.

On May 1, 1968 the first board meeting was held at the home of B.Z. Williams - present day 183 Longtown Road. The board elected the following officers:

W.O. Morgan, Chairman
L.E. Watkins, Secretary

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C.S. Caskey, Treasurer

Board members selected the following terms of office:

C.S. Caskey, H.V Reid - Two year term

W.O. Morgan, L. E. Watkins - Four year term

B. Z. Williams - Six year term.

The commission's first efforts focused on appointing a Fire Chief and seeking volunteers for the department. Mr. Joseph Sistare was appointed as the first Fire Chief of the LFD. In September of 1968, training classes began for the new volunteers under the direction of Fire Chief Carl Hammond at the Camden Fire Department.



LUGOFF FIRE TRUCK — Lugoff's fire truck arrived yesterday (Sunday) afternoon at the Holiday Inn from Rocky Mount, N.C. Pictured, left to right, are L.E. Watkins, B.Z. Williams, H.V. Reid, members of the Lugoff Fire Commis-

sion; Miss Sarah Williams and C.W. Williams, of the Rocky Mount firm which built the truck; C.S. Caskey and W.O. Morgan, members of the fire Commission.

The second order of business was working to get a fire truck for the department. The department ordered their first engine thanks to previous fundraising efforts of the Sertoma Club. The truck was a 500-gallon pumper truck built by the Williams Company of Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

The Lugoff Fire Board of Commissioners received the first fire truck for the LFD on Sunday, December 22, 1968. Commissioners met with Mr. Williams to accept the new delivery at the Lugoff Holiday Inn the present day Camden West Inn - 850 Hwy 1 South.

Without a fire station, the fire engine was kept in several places until a permanent fire station was constructed. These locations included a private residence garage, located today at 15 Magnolia Lane, Lugoff. When this resident died in 1969, the truck was moved to Albert Branham's garage, located today at 742 Hwy 1 South (charter member and later Fire Chief). In 1969, local resident Clyde Branham donated a little under a half an acre at 892 Highway 1 South in Lugoff for the first fire station to be constructed. The station was constructed by brothers Billy and Shag



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Hinson. Once the two-bay station was completed, the fire engine was moved to the new station.



Ironically the location of the first fire station (and current Headquarters) is adjacent to the tower for the WACA-AM radio station that burned in 1961. The tower remained standing and the radio station rebuilt their building, located at 810 Ridgeway Road. This building is to the north of the rear entrance of our Headquarters station, formerly Maples Chiropractor, and is currently vacant. After the radio station moved, the only evidence that remains of the radio station tower is the base, which is at the corner of the LFD Headquarters retention pond.

In 1972, LFD hired its first full-time employee, Fire Chief James Williams. As a part of his compensation, Chief Williams lived at the fire station full-time and responded to all calls. Alarms were phoned into the fire station and Chief Williams was responsible for writing down the call location on the board and sounding the station siren to alert the other volunteers of a call. This method would continue for many years until implementation of a radio and paging system for volunteers. After installation of a radio system, staff on duty would page out the call, then respond to the emergency. Volunteers would respond to the emergency or come standby at the station, serving as a dispatcher. LFD would continue to have its own dedicated phone number for alerting the fire station with volunteer dispatchers until joining the county's 911 dispatch system in July 2003.



In January 1973, Ronnie Clements was hired as the first paid engineer for the department. The hiring of Engineer Clements allowed the department to implement 24 hour on/24 hour off shift rotation between himself and Chief Williams. LFD received its second fire engine, provided by Kershaw County, in 1977. This engine was a 1977 Ford FMC

Cab over style engine. This engine was received in exchange for LFD expanding the coverage area two additional miles.

In 1981, Fire Chief James Williams transitioned to become a volunteer Lieutenant/Training officer and Russell Clements was elected by the 30 members as the new

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volunteer Fire Chief of the LFD. In 1982, an additional paid engineer position was added to bring the total to three. This allowed for the implementation of 24 hour on/48 hour off shifts. These engineers included Steven "Steve" Stewart, Earnest "Ernie" Debruhl, and Bryon Branham. In 1983, Johnny Halshall III was elected Fire Chief, serving in that position til 1985.

In 1984, LFD expanded the two-bay station by adding a \$40,000, 40 by 60 foot addition to the rear of the station. This new addition included three bays and was named in memory of commissioner Steve Tetterton, who died in 1983 after an off-duty automobile accident. Tetterton was also memorialized by implementation of the Steve Tetterton Fireman of the Year Award. Jack Truesdale Jr. was the first recipient of the award (later our Interim Fire Chief). Tetterton was instrumental in efforts to improve the department including the addition of a tanker - Unit 6 - to the LFD fleet.



In 1986, Albert Branham was elected Fire Chief and served in that position until 1987. In 1987, William "Steve" McIntyre was elected Fire Chief. Chief McIntyre would first serve as a volunteer Fire Chief until the position transitioned to paid in 1993, becoming the second full-time paid Fire Chief in LFD history. In addition to Chief McIntyre, one paid firefighter was added who worked a forty-hour work week.



Around the same time in 1986-1987, the decision was made to transition LFD apparatus to white fire trucks with a red stripe. The debate even included consideration of lime green as a color to enhance visibility. This transition began with the newly constructed Engine 7 that was delivered from E-One. As funding became available over the years, all the trucks were painted to match Engine 7's white with red stripe scheme. The tradition of white fire trucks continues today for LFD.

On March 25, 1990 LFD was called to a reported structure fire at the Cogsdill Tools plant on Guion Drive. Fire units from the Kershaw County Fire Service and Camden Fire joined LFD in response to the fire. LFD arrived to find the 15,000 square foot building that contained the engineering offices was on fire, with the roof already caving in. The offices sustained significant damages while an adjacent structure experienced significant smoke damages, estimated losses were over \$4 million dollars. Fire investigators determined the fire was arson after finding evidence of forced entry, vandalism, and traces of liquid accelerant used to start the fire. A former employee, Ronald Peoples of Camden, was charged with grand larceny, malicious injury

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to property, second degree burglary, and third degree arson. Peoples' motive was revenge after someone stole his tools at the plant. Peoples pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 10 years in prison.



Rescue workers stand near damaged cars of Amtrak's Silver Star passenger train after it derailed Wednesday.

One incident that many never forget is the Amtrak train derailment that occurred on July 31, 1991 behind the DuPont plant. This derailment was a mass casualty event that brought many resources together that included the LFD. Upon accessing the scene the devastation quickly mounted with the discovery of 76 injured passengers and 7 passengers who died. First responders who arrived on scene described arriving to hundreds of passengers wandering around.

In November of 1993, the Wateree Plaza fire brought resources from across Kershaw County to assist LFD with extinguishment of the fire. Around 11:20 pm on the night of Saturday November 13, LFD received the call of flames coming from the east most section of the Wateree Plaza (located today at 814 Hwy 1 S). The fire consumed five total stores and caused an estimated \$1.5 million dollars in damages. The owner of the Startrends/Dragon's Lair Store, David Coppage of Lugoff, was arrested for the fire in an apparent attempt to defraud his insurance company. Coppage pleaded guilty to arson on May 1, 1995 and was sentenced to 6 months in jail, 5 years probation and pay \$32,625 in restitution.



In March 1996, LFD entered a lease with DuPont, a local textile industry, to add a substation at 100 Lachicotte Road on Dupont Property. Using an existing building, called the Conoco transport maintenance facility, saved the LFD time and money in acquiring an additional station. The LFD needed a place to store its ladder truck along with serving as an area for firefighter training. This location would serve LFD until the lease was canceled March 1, 2008.

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In February 1997, after months of preparing specifications, bids were received for a new engine for the LFD. LFD chose Southern Coach out of Ocala, Florida to provide the engine. The total cost was \$215,000 for the engine. The engine was delivered in late 1997. The engine served as Engine 5 and later would serve as Engine 9 before being sold in 2018 to Meigs County Fire and Rescue in Tennessee.



As the LFD progressed, it had quickly outgrown the 5 bays and a lean-to structure that encompassed the original fire station. Efforts began to modernize and build a new fire station for the LFD. In March 1992 and July 1998, a total of 1.68 acres were purchased behind the original fire station for expansion. Plans were developed and construction began in December of 1999 on a new 14,000 square foot fire station. Construction was expected to last 210 days but was delayed due to issues with the contractors. The construction costs were \$875,000 and the station included 4 drive through bays, downstairs offices and upstairs sleeping quarters. LFD was able to move into the new building on June 13, 2001 after over a year's delay. After moving to the new station, the old fire station that had served since 1970 was torn down.



In May 2002, LFD purchased an E/One Engine that was used on the television show "Third Watch". The show was based in New York City and was used as a Fire Department of New York truck in the show. In honor of the firefighters lost during the September 11, 2001 attacks, only minor changes were made to the striping and

special decals were added. The truck was later sold to Sandhill Volunteer Fire Department, Jefferson, South Carolina. Sandhill Volunteer Fire Department recently sold the truck to Marlboro County for their high school firefighter program.

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In June 2006, plans were discussed to add two new substations to the LFD, along with purchasing a new ladder truck and engine. In 2005, LFD responded to 650 incidents with 10 paid staff and 30 volunteers. The district was growing and needed to add additional stations to serve the area. Ladder 10, a 2007 Ferrara 75 foot quint, was purchased and arrived in January 2007. This replaced the former Ladder 10, a 1966 Snorkel Ladder truck that was purchased in 1994 from the Bohemia Fire Department in the state of New York.

The two new substations, constructed by Billy Jackson at a cost of \$127,300 each, were completed and accepted by LFD in October of 2007.

In July 2007, Engine 10, a 2007 Ferrara Pumper-Tanker was purchased. Engine 10 would serve the department until it was totaled in a motor vehicle collision with an 18-wheeler while responding to a call on July 13, 2016. Thankfully no injuries occurred to the two firefighters on board or the 18-wheeler driver.



In October of 2007, Fire Chief Steve McIntyre medically retired. Chief McIntyre served as Fire Chief for 20 total years until his medical retirement in 2007. Chief McIntyre remains the longest serving Fire Chief in LFD history. Robert Polk was hired by the Board of Commissioners to serve as interim Fire Chief. In December of 2007, Robert Polk was named Fire Chief of the LFD. Chief Polk would serve as Fire Chief until September of 2009, when the board of commissioners decided to terminate his contract. Jack Truesdale Jr. was named interim Fire Chief.

In June 2010, LFD received a \$323,586.00 Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant to hire 3 new firefighters. This grant allowed LFD for the first time to have 4 career paid firefighters on each shift in the 24 hour rotation. Dennis Ray, who was instrumental in getting the grant for LFD was hired as the LFD Fire Chief. Jack Truesdale Jr. would remain Assistant Chief until his retirement in 2016. After hiring the 3 new firefighters, total paid career staffing was at 13 personnel.



In March 2012, Chief Ray presented and the Board of Commissioners approved plans to lease-purchase two new apparatus for the LFD. These apparatus would include Rescue 10, a rescue pumper and Service 10, a service truck.

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In April 2013, Rescue 10 was displayed at the Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) International in Indianapolis, Indiana. Both trucks were delivered in June of 2013 after being profiled at the annual South Carolina Fire-Rescue Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC.



In July 2013, Battalion Chief Chris Spitzer was hired to serve as the first Battalion Chief for LFD. This position would be responsible for coordinating operations of the LFD, giving Fire Chief Dennis Ray more focus on his administrative duties. Career staffing at this point was a total of 14, including 2 administrative officers and 12 shift firefighters. Battalion Chief Spitzer would later become Fire Chief in 2017.

In July 2014, Fire Marshal Will Catoe was hired as the first full-time Fire Marshal for LFD. Fire Marshal Catoe would oversee fire inspections, plan reviews, fire pre plans, and community risk reduction activities for the department. Upon the addition of Fire Marshal Catoe, the department had 15 paid career staff. Fire Marshal Catoe would later be promoted to Assistant Fire Chief in June of 2018.

In October 2014, after responding to an occupied vehicle stalled in stormwater, LFD sent 4 firefighters to become swift water rescue certified. LFD also purchased basic equipment for these 4 firefighters to use should a water incident occur. The training and skills of these firefighters would be tested during the 1,000 year floods that occurred in October 2015. LFD's swift water rescuers were able to save one person from an overturned vehicle in the Twenty-Five Mile Creek at Pine Grove Road. Grant funding would later purchase two new boats along with additional equipment and additional training for more swift water certified firefighters.

In November 2015, LFD hired Recruitment and Retention Coordinator/Training Officer Chris Jones after receiving a \$350,588 SAFER grant to cover the position over a period of four years. R&R Coordinator Jones responsibilities included recruiting and retaining the volunteers of the LFD. R&R Coordinator Jones would later be promoted to Battalion Chief of Administration in May of 2023. Career paid staffing at this point included 16 total career staff, 4 that were administrative officers and 12 shift employees.

In March 2016, LFD acquired a new response vehicle to be used for medical calls. Squad 8 would respond to all medical calls in the district to avoid wear and tear on the larger vehicles and keep fuel costs down. Squad 8 also carries all LFD swift water rescue equipment.



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On August 1, 2016, LFD's new ISO rating class of 3 went into effect. The rating was a drop from the previous rating of 5 that was issued in 2010.

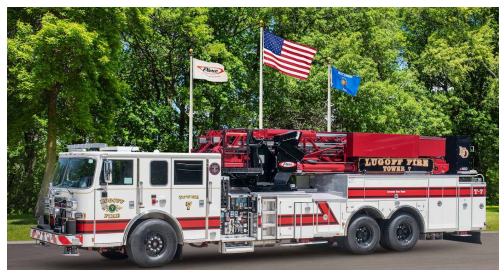
Later in August 2016, LFD received a second SAFER grant, totalling \$355,780 to provide various incentives to boost the number of volunteers in the department. This grant provided four years of funding to help purchase items such as a mobile message board sign, advertising, physicals, turnout gear, and apparel for new and current volunteers.

In December 2016, LFD received three Christmas presents. Two brand new Pierce engines, Engine 8 and Engine 10 arrived. Also, the replacement for the old Engine 10 that had crashed earlier in the year, a 2016 Ferrara MVP Rescue-Pumper arrived. The Ferrara MVP would be known as Engine 7.



In October 2017, Fire Chief Dennis Ray announced that he had been appointed as the Superintendent of the South Carolina Fire Academy. Battalion Chief Chris Spitzer was named by the LFD Board of Commissioners as the interim Fire Chief, effective December 1, 2017. In July 2018, the LFD Board of Commissioners appointed Chris Spitzer as the Fire Chief for the LFD.

In November 2018, LFD held a 50th anniversary celebration at the Headquarters station. The event included remarks from Fire Chief Chris Spitzer, Dr. James Ann Sheley, former principal of Lugoff Elementary School, Kershaw County Councilman Jimmy Jones, LFD Chairman of the Board Ken Truesdale, State Fire Marshal Jonathan Jones, Fire Academy Superintendent Dennis Ray, and South Carolina State Firefighters' Association Executive Director Kyle Minick. After the event, a drop-in reception was held.



In July 2021, Tower 7, an apparatus that took two years of planning and development arrived at LFD. The 2021 Pierce Ascendant is a 100 foot Tower-Ladder truck.

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After Tower 7 was placed in service, Ladder 10 was moved to Station 9 on Whitehead Road to respond from there.

In September of 2021, ISO announced that the LFD had achieved an ISO rating class of 2. This rating, the lowest to date for the LFD, would be effective January 1, 2022. The department previously was a class 3.

In August 2022, LFD gained approval to implement an additional fire fee. This fee added three additional staff per 24 hour shift. This brings the total to 18 career full-time employees with 5 per shift and 3 administrative officers.