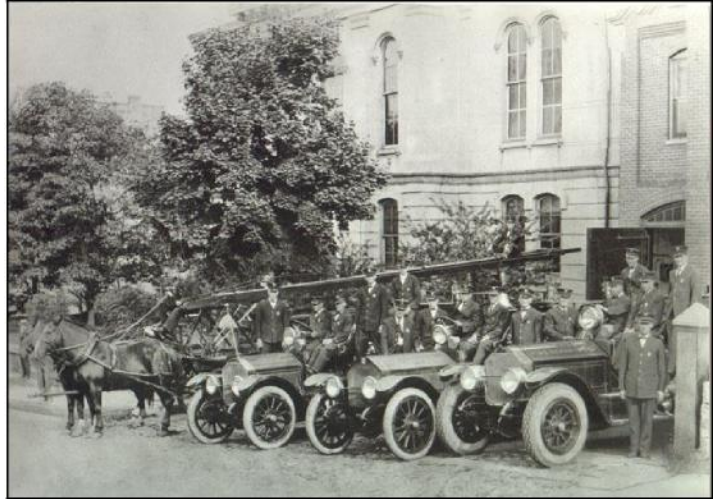


The Beginnings of the Department

The Danville Fire Department dates back to January 1, 1884, when the City of Danville established its first paid fire department with C.S. Bennett as Fire Chief. The new department's equipment was one Button fire engine, two Ainsleys, one hose reel, and four horses. Prior to this time, the City of Danville was protected by two private fire departments: the Pace Hose Company and the Chambers Hose Company. Each company had two hose reels, a host of volunteer firefighters, and a determination to beat the other one to the fire. Citizens paid to have fires extinguished, and the first company to reach the scene was awarded the money.

A new station was built in 1896 on Patton Street where the Municipal Building is today. Previously the department's quarters were little more than a shack. That same year, a fire station was established on the north side of Danville in conjunction with the annexation of Neapolis, now known as north Danville. The North Main Station was built in 1898 at the intersection of North Main Street and Keen Street.



Patton Street Station

Early 20th Century

In 1920, the department boasted two pumpers. The department consisted of only 16 or 17 men, including Chief Jim Brooks. The personnel worked seven days and were off on the eighth day, unless someone was sick, and then another person would have to work on the eighth day. Firefighters only saw their families at mealtimes.

A new Seagrave ladder truck was obtained in 1924. The new truck had solid rubber tires, a tiller, and a 75-foot hand-operated ladder. This replaced the old hook and ladder, the last piece of horse-drawn equipment. Sandy and Campbell, the two horses that had pulled the old hook and ladder, were retired to Ballou Park where they were later buried.



Iron Bridge Fire, June 30, 1927

The department's No. 1 Fire Station on Patton Street moved into new quarters on Bridge Street in 1926. A major fire occurred in Danville on June 30, 1927, as the Main Street Iron Bridge burned. The wooden floor of the bridge caught fire when a tar wagon overturned. The steel girders buckled from the intense heat and finally collapsed, separating the north and south sides of Danville.

On December 18, 1934, the Danville Fire Department sustained its first fatality – Assistant Fire Chief James Stonewall Jackson, 54, was electrocuted while fighting a fire. Another fatality occurred on December 1, 1938, when Charles F. "Dick" Royster died after falling from a pole while working on the fire alarm line. The exact cause of the fall was never determined.

New Communications and Growth

In 1950, the department had 47 members. That year, the Fire Department installed a two way radio system and a communication nerve center. Through a tie-in with the police radio system, the Fire Department was able to establish radio communications at a minimal cost. The cars of Chief Long and the assistant chiefs all received two-way radios, and the department planned to add them to the trucks. A telephone switchboard was set up at Bridge Street to receive all calls instead of each station answering calls.

With the City's annexation of Schoolfield in 1950, Danville needed another fire station, and in 1951, the West Main Station was acquired. Initially, it was rented from Dan River Mills for \$2,500 annually on a trial basis to make sure there would be no traffic problem. The Department continued to grow, from 54 men on the force in 1952 to 65 men on the force in 1965. The Third Avenue Fire Station opened in January 1957.



Fire Trucks of the Past

On December 30, 1974, a new third shift was added to the department. 18 new firefighters were hired to meet the Fair Labor Standards Act requirements, which stated that hours had to be cut from 85 to 60 hours per week in 1976 and then no more than 54 hours per week in 1977. The number of firefighters went from 79 to 97.

In 1977, department members banded together and formed the Danville Professional Firefighters Association (Local 2532), receiving its charter on September 21. The firefighters stated that although more money would be welcome, the determining factor for the move was job security and working conditions. On October 4, 1978, a new Station #3 on Industrial Avenue was dedicated. This replaced the old West End Station built in the early 1900s on McGruders Alley behind the Sutherlin Mansion.

Danville Firefighting in the Present and the Future

On June 3, 1985, the department suffered a fatality. Captain G. Herman Knight died of a heart attack while fighting a fire at F. W. Woolworth's on Main Street. He was a 29-year veteran and had been a captain for 12 years.

On January 1, 1988, Danville annexed 26 square miles of Pittsylvania County and opened two new stations. These temporary stations were located on Westover Drive and on

Airport Drive until permanent facilities could be built. Due to the annexation, 30 more personnel were hired and graduated from Danville Fire Department's Training Academy. On January 28, 1990, the Fire Department again mourned. Firefighters Robert T. Crutchfield III and Vernon Dennis Deshazor died in a house fire on Guilford Street. Investigation revealed that an unknown toxin caused the deaths. Captain Bobby L. Johnson retired on disability as a result of this fire.

As a result of an agreement between the City of Danville and Department of Emergency Services, Danville formed a Level II Enhanced Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team which became operational in December 1990. The agreement provided equipment and training for the team through the State of Virginia. The team would respond to the City of Danville, Pittsylvania County, and parts of Halifax and Henry Counties, including South Boston and Martinsville. In 1992, the team was upgraded to a Level III team with 30 members, and they expanded territory to include Charlotte County, Patrick County, and a portion of Mecklenburg County.

In 1998, the City Council authorized the formation of the Fire Marshal's Office at the request of Chief Lewis. This allowed the Fire Prevention and Education Bureau to have sworn officers that would have more power to enforce the fire codes and enhance fire investigation authority.

In 2000, the City of Danville and Pittsylvania County applied together and received a grant from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. This grant provided \$325,000 and was used to build a burn building, which has become the basis for the Regional Training Center at 658 Stinson Drive in Danville. In 2001, the Department underwent its 10-year Insurance Services Office (ISO) analysis. Led by Fire Chief B.G. Lewis, the men and women of the department had put much effort into preparing for this examination. In February 2002, the department learned that they had received a Class 2 rating.



Long Mill Fire, May 8, 2008

On April 1, 2007, Chief Lewis retired, and Fire Marshal David R. Eagle was appointed Fire Chief.

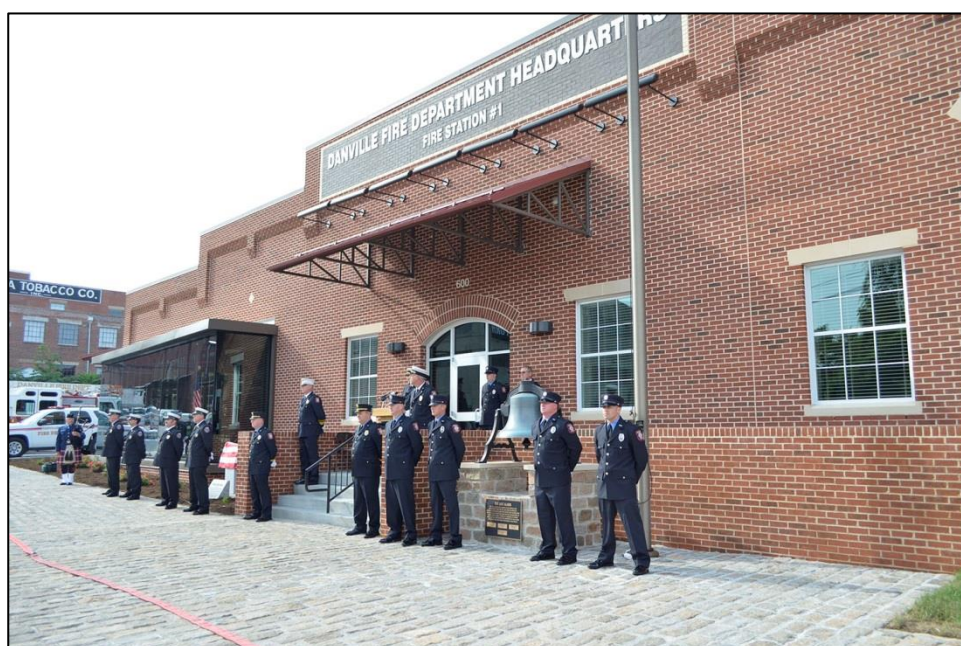
In July of 2012, the City's Emergency Communications and Emergency Management Divisions were merged into the Fire Department, bringing the department's total employees to 144.

In 2014 the City replaced the department's 88-year-old headquarters on Bridge Street and the 911 Emergency Communication Center that had operated in the basement of City Hall. Located at 600 Lynn Street, both facilities were proudly dedicated on September 11, in conjunction with a memorial and remembrance ceremony of the September 11th tragedy of 2001. The new site is a little over 32,000 square feet of new construction and a nearly \$9 million investment in the city's River District.

In 2015 through the collective efforts of many, the department was awarded international accreditation by the Center for Fire Accreditation International. Also in 2015, a new Fire Code Inspector position was authorized for the Fire Department, bringing the total staff to 145.

In January of 2018, following the hard work of fire personnel, 911 dispatchers, and the support of the management team and elected officials, the City of Danville was awarded a Class 1 rating by the Insurance Services Office—an improvement from the previously held Class 2 rating.

The Danville Fire Department continues to be a dynamic, ever-changing organization and is proud of its accomplishments and the services it is capable of providing. Its 145 personnel are prepared and will continue their training to stay prepared for the modern concerns that continue to arise.



Dedication of Lynn Street Fire Station, 9-11-2014