

The History of Palmerdale Fire District

The Palmerdale Fire District was founded in 1972 by members of the community who wanted to provide a helping hand to neighbors in need in the Palmerdale area. When the District began it was an all volunteer operation. The calls for service during the work week were routinely answered by the women of the area while their husbands were at work. Weekends and evenings were covered by all. We have come a long way since those first days, and as the times have changed, so have our responsibilities and the ways we go about meeting them. The following is a brief history of the Palmerdale Fire District from where we came from to where we are today and to where we want to be in 5 -10 or even more years from now.

As stated earlier, the Palmerdale Fire District was established in 1972 as an all volunteer force that only responded to fire calls. They had only one fire truck and just a few sets of firefighting clothes for everyone to share. Fire dues at this time were strictly voluntary and although many paid, there were also many who didn't. It wasn't until 1979 that the District won the right to charge mandatory fire dues in a local election. This was the beginning of the growth of the Fire District.

In the early 1990's the Palmerdale Fire District was asked to increase its' coverage area by over twice its' size at the time. The coverage area went from just the immediate Palmerdale area all of the way to covering the Bradford area to Trafford and Kimberly as well as Morris and Glennwood. The northern boundary is the Blount county line from Clay to Warrior. The size of the District is now over 50 square miles. We are the second largest fire district in the state, right behind our neighbors to the south in the Center Point Fire District. We now also cover a large part of the City of Pinson and a part of the City of Clay.

Palmerdale hired its first paid employee in the early 1980's and he only worked Monday through Friday from 8-5, which was the time when the least amount of volunteers in the area were available to respond to emergencies. Palmerdale was fortunate enough to have some of the first licensed paramedics in the state as part of its history. Somewhere during the early to mid 1980's Palmerdale began responding to emergency medical calls along with fires. This was a foretelling time for the future of the area and the Palmerdale Fire District of today.

Today, the Palmerdale Fire District operates two full time-stations that are manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There are two men on duty at the Bradford Station which is Station #3. Station #1 in Palmerdale is also manned by two men on a fire truck. In the spring of 2010 we began offering an ambulance transport service as part of our capabilities. So along with the two men and the fire truck at Station #1 there is an Advanced Life Support Ambulance with a driver assigned to it. For now, when someone is transported to the emergency room, one of the paramedics off of the fire trucks rides in the back of the ambulance to provide medical aid to the patient.

The Palmerdale Fire District Transport service was not established as a way to make money. There was really a two-fold reason for offering the service. First, having to rely on a private ambulance service to

transport medical patients to the hospital can put you as the patient at a disadvantage. The District cannot control the type or quality of personnel that respond to calls for transport that work for a private company. There is also no control over the time it takes for a private ambulance to show up on the scene. When dealing with life or death situations on medical or trauma calls, time is absolutely of the essence. As the saying goes in our field, time is muscle. Whether it be heart muscle in the patient having a heart attack or brain tissue from the stroke or head trauma patient. Being able to rapidly load and transport these patients to the appropriate definitive care facility really does mean the difference in either a positive or negative outcome in a patient's health. The second reason for placing this transport in service is to gain additional trained personnel on house fires and other emergencies. The job we do is inherently dangerous, having additional people to spread the load to on large incidents gives you more eyes on the situation that can react and keep each other as safe as possible. The transport and the income that comes along with it, gives us the ability to pay for these extra people on duty.

This year we were able to purchase our first ladder truck. This apparatus will provide us with the means to have an elevated stream of water to fight and contain large fires. We will also be able to access the roofs of many structures, including schools and churches that we would not be able to reach in the past.

Today there are plans in the mix to construct and open a third fire station on the southern end of our coverage on Hwy 79 which will actually be a centralized location to the southern and western ends of the fire district.

I am very proud of what we have been able to accomplish as a department and as members of this community. None of which could be done without the large amount of assistance and backing of the majority of the Palmerdale and Bradford Communities through the years. For this, we as a group, and myself personally would like to say Thank You!

Jason Howell

Fire Chief

Palmerdale Fire District

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