

ANNUAL REPORT
of the
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
(CHICAGO CIVIL DEFENSE CORPS)

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Richard J. Daley,
Mayor of Chicago.

Robert J. Quinn,
Acting Director,
Chicago Civil Defense Corps

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HOW DID IT ALL START?

Four years ago, on New Year's Day, 1958, the Fire and Rescue Service was officially "put in service" under the direction of Fire Commissioner Robert J. Quinn, Acting Director of the Chicago Civil Defense Corps. Prior to that, a meeting had been held in 1957 between the Commissioner, ^{Mayor} Richard J. Daley and Mr. ^{the late} Charles J. Johnson, a devoted Chicago 'fire buff'. At that time, it was decided to form an organization of civilians to serve as a trained auxiliary force to assist at disasters and augment the Fire Department with specialized equipment and manpower should the need arise.

After that meeting in the fall of 1957, volunteer citizens joined together to put six heavy duty Civil Defense Rescue Trucks, which had been in "moth balls", into top-notch operating condition. And on that first day of 1958, the newly-formed organization responded to a lengthy 5-11 alarm fire in a cold-storage warehouse in near-zero weather and performed its duties in what was to become 'typical' fashion. Now, four years later, the Chicago Fire and Rescue Service continues to show the Nation that an organization of this type can prove invaluable in its service to the public.

1961 MEANT "COMING OF AGE" TO THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The year 1961 was an important one for the young Fire and Rescue Service of the Chicago Civil Defense Corps for it threw several vital challenges at the organization. 1961 brought with it many tests - including four of the most tragic disasters to hit Chicago in many years -- the Hubbard Street fire in which nine heroic firemen lost their lives - the Tornado that struck Chicago without warning one Saturday night showed the real value of this organization - the crash of the Constellation air plane in Clarendon Hills causing 73 deaths and the jet crash at O'Hare Field taking 37 more lives. At each of these emergencies, the men and equipment of the Fire and Rescue Service stood up to the test and performed their various jobs well, earning praise from many persons in authority.

1961 saw the units of the Fire and Rescue Service respond to a record number of fire and special duty calls - 753 in all - meaning over two per day as the average. And, of course, the corresponding vital statistics went up, working time by members, numbers of men responding and total man-hours expended. The Service met the increased "call to duty" with even more efficient and dedicated service than before.

And finally, 1961 was the year in which President Kennedy issued a call for Americans to face up to the increased importance of Civil Defense. The Service met this challenge by recruiting new members from all age groups and walks of life, trained them into effective volunteer workers and moved onward with more and better equipment and techniques with which to be of service.

This report will attempt to chronicle the 'Coming of Age' in 1961 of the Fire and Rescue Service of the City of Chicago.

WHAT DOES THE SERVICE DO? - A REVIEW OF THE YEAR.

Undoubtedly the quickest and best illustration of the wide scope of activities of the Fire and Rescue Service is to present a brief resume of the year's highlights. The panorama of fires, disasters, special calls, public service jobs and educational functions will explain more clearly the 'mission' of the Fire and Rescue Service.

JANUARY: The tragic Hubbard Street Warehouse fire which cost the lives of nine firemen found Fire and Rescue members digging alongside firemen to save as many buried victims as possible. Beside clearing debris by hand, members utilized their power saws to cut timbers for shoring of tunnels and used their cutting torch to cut through an overturned trailer truck blocking rescue efforts. The Service's Light Wagon provided illumination at the scene as rescue work went on into the evening hours.

At a loop office building fire, members used their Porta-Power tools and cutting torch to remove bars from the burning buildings' rear windows and permit access by firemen. Water from this fire flooded the basements of several other buildings and the Service's Air Compressor pumped water from one charity institution for 18 continuous hours.

The Winch on the heavy-duty rescue truck was used at a southside factory fire to pull a box car out of the way of fire equipment in the rear of the building, thus enabling Snorkels to get in close to the fire.

FEBRUARY: The Winch again proved useful in pulling down the dangerous walls of a burning lumber yard. Here members used bolt cutters to open paths through a wire fence. C. D. sound-powered telephones provided communications between fire officials at the wide-spread premises. Our air hammers were used at a stockyards fire to cut large holes in a brick floor, and our portable resuscitators were used to give oxygen to three workmen at a smoky factory fire.

MARCH: An extra-alarm blaze in Michael Reese Hospital gave our Air Compressor a stiff workout, as air hammers were used to punch holes in both walls and flooring, while the air mover removed smoke from the basement area. Our air pump was utilized at the Congress Hotel fire to pump water from the basement and elevator shaft.

The Tornado that struck Chicago without warning one Saturday night provided the Service with an opportunity to be of real value to the City. Over 80% of the members spent the entire night and part of the next day working at various tasks. All eight trucks of the service were at the scene within minutes of the Tornado's striking and members worked first to clear major streets by chopping trees with power saws and axes and later winched pieces to the side. Then, members checked for dangerous wires down and helped remove hanging cornices, damaged chimneys and other danger obstacles.

Three workmen were trapped in the collapse of a building they were razing and much of the Service's equipment was utilized in the 18 hours before the only living victim was safely removed. Winches pulled out pillars, fire escapes and parked cars; our torch cut metal beams; our generators and floodlights lit up cramped quarters for rescuers; and our saws, Porta-Power units, bolt cutters, air hammers and reciprocating saw were used by firemen and members to aid in the operation.

A tavern explosion just half a mile from Service Headquarters found members removing victims to Ambulances and Squadrols. Later, the Light Wagon provided light for the Police Bomb Squad in making a thorough investigation of the wrecked building.

APRIL: One of several major bowling alley fires during the year found members using the Winch to pull concrete panels from windows, while other members opened floors with the circular saws and some cut ceiling rods with the reciprocating saw.

Many patients were aided to safety by members at an extra-alarm blaze in Grant Hospital, where oxygen was given to 12 people. Our air movers cleared the basement while our air pump drained it of water. Later in the month, trucks were winched to safety from a burning garage by members.

