

The Auckland Fire Brigade 1874-2024 Project

The last 14 Years (2010-2024)

To follow the Auckland Fire Brigade as an entity is a difficult one due to the evolution that has taken place over the last 150 years. Auckland population growth enabled the brigade to grow into what it is today. As brigades struggled to get underway, and stay continuously operational in the early days 1840-1874 it was 1874 where a brigade was formed that continued through to today in its many forms. Fire Brigades can be defined as a unit that provides fire suppression and other services with a defined Fire District. This was a clear function in the early days and the Auckland Fire Brigade could be clearly identified. Over the years up to 1975, this still applied and the brigade had a Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer. The Nationalisation of the Fire Service in 1976 saw some positions were renamed as Area Commanders with the Rank of Chief Fire Officer (to meet the requirements of the Fire Service Act 1975). A Regional Commander Rank was also created to be in charge of a Region with several 'Areas' within it (Regions 1-6). The Regional Commander was also empowered with the same powers under the Act as Chief Fire Officers even though the position was mainly a management/administrative position operating at a strategic level in the new service.

The 1995 restructure brought in a stripping down of the ranks and positions to Area CFO and Assistant Area CFO with a General Manager taking charge of now three Regions (Northern, Central and Southern). Auckland saw 13 Chief Fire Officer Positions as the Fire District was sub-divided into 13 Districts. This change saw the introduction of the Corporate Model of management of the fire service which was doomed to fail. In early 1997, the Northern Region was abolished, Auckland Area became Auckland Region and the appointment of a Region Commander and two Assistants. The Metro Auckland was then reduced to five paid Fire Districts, each with CFO and a DCFO in 1998. This structure still remains (2023), however the ranks of the managers changed to Area Manager, District Manager and Group Managers in 2021.

The New Zealand Fire Service (NZFS) changed to Fire and Emergency NZ (FENZ) and the amalgamation of the Rural Fire Service with NZFS took place in 2017.

To cap off 150 years of Municipal Fire Services in Auckland, the last 14 years (2010-2024) has seen the biggest restructure in the history of the New Zealand Fire Service with the formation of Fire and Emergency NZ (FENZ) and the amalgamation of the New Zealand Fire Service Urban Brigades and the Rural Fire Authorities Rural Units into one organisation.

A 7.1 magnitude earthquake in Christchurch saw a massive support effort from the Auckland region. A second more damaging earthquake followed the following year where 185 people died.

April 17 2010, Saturday, Ross Graham Bay [45] was enthroned as the 11th Anglican Bishop of Auckland at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, corner Parnell Road and St Stephens Avenue, Parnell. Ross was a Station Officer in the Auckland Volunteer Fire Police Unit, had 20 years' service. A Training Officer, later Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Auckland Operational Support Unit, also known as the Auckland Volunteer Fire Brigade. Ross is also the Chaplin for the AFBMHS.

The importance of the recording of the Auckland Fire Brigade's history was recognised on May 19 2010, when the first meeting to form Auckland Fire Brigade Historical Society was held at Fire Region Office, Pitt Street. Name later changed to Auckland Fire Brigades Museum and Historical Society so it could own old fire appliances.

September 4 2010, 04:35, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Christchurch, the first, epicentre 40 km west of the city. One person died of heart attack and three more injured. All three NZFS national

USAR Task Forces mobilised. February 22 2011 at 12:51, second and far more damaging quake hit Christchurch, 185 died.

November 1 2010, Monday, Auckland Super City created by combining the functions of the previous regional council and the region's seven city and district councils. The newly formed Auckland Council took over all rural fire responsibilities. That ended July 1 2017, when forty urban and rural fire services, including NZFS and NRFA, amalgamated as new Fire and Emergency New Zealand [FENZ]. Councils disestablished were Auckland Regional Council, Auckland City Council, Manukau City Council, Waitakere City Council, North Shore City Council, Papakura District Council, Rodney District Council and most of Franklin District Council.

February 22 2011, 12:51, Tuesday, shallow 6.3 earthquake on Richter Scale struck, epicentre very close to Central Christchurch, 70 people rescued [high compared to other world earthquakes], 185 people died. All three NZFS USAR [Urban Search and Rescue] teams activated together with teams from New South Wales, Queensland and eight other countries. Christchurch already had significant damage to buildings and infrastructure from the magnitude 7.1 earthquake at 04:35, 4 September 4 2010 and its aftershocks. Liquefaction was lot greater in 2011 quake, 80% of the water and sewerage system were severely damaged. More than 361 aftershocks in first week. Canterbury Citation [Dress Distinction] dress ribbon issued to all who attended, worn on right side.

November 29 2011, Tuesday, Auckland Volunteer Fire Police name changed to Auckland Operational Support Unit, also known as the Auckland Volunteer Fire Brigade [national name change]. Became volunteer brigade in own right, Chief Fire Officer Glenn Teal [appointed 2010], Deputy Chief Fire Officer Ross Bay [also Anglican Bishop of Auckland].

June 13 2013, Thursday, Waitemata Station 67 and VFB name changed to West Harbour to avoid confusion with new Waitemata Fire Area. Station at 21 Hobsonville Road.

During 2013 fire helmet colours and rank markings changed. Firefighters in yellow, plain for firefighter, one red stripe for a qualified firefighter, two red stripes for a Senior Firefighter. Station Officers in red helmets one blue stripe [previously yellow helmet with one blue stripe], Senior Station Officers wear red helmets with two blue stripes [previously yellow with two blue stripes]. Chief Fire Officers and deputies wear white helmets; Regional and Area Commanders and their Assistants wear silver helmets; and the National Commander and their Deputies wear black helmets. Trainee and recruit firefighters wear fluro-green helmets [previously red].

September 2014, Auckland Region Commander Brian Butt retired. Replaced by Kerry Gregory, Area Commander, Auckland City Central, had replace Brian Edwards. Mid 2019 Kerry appointed National Commander, National Headquarters, Wellington, replaced Paul McGill who retired.

November 1 2014, Saturday, Waitakere Township VRF incorporated into NZFS. Two bay station, 8 Township Road. Formed in 1984 operating a van from a small shed with local fundraising, later funded by Auckland Council. Waitakere 771 was a 1986 Mitsubishi FP, 6/3 pump NI8283 ex Kamo, in 2017 replaced with new Iveco ML100, registered KYT15. Waitakere 772, 1994 Mitsubishi FK 6/1 pump, registered SN7631 ex Papamoa.

November 1 2014, Saturday, Muriwai VRF incorporated into NZFS. Two bay station [87], 341 Motutara Road, Muriwai. Formed in 1965 operating from a small shed with local fundraising, later funded by Auckland Council. 1992 Mitsubishi FK160F pump, registered RR4002 [871] and 2008 Ford Ranger 4WD ESF325 [8725].

November 1 2014, Saturday, Matakana VRFP incorporated into NZFS. Three bay Station, 102 Omaha Flats Road, Tawharanui Peninsula, Matakana. 1987 Mitsubishi pump NQ5630, 2003 Isuzu and 1997 Volvo FL10 tanker ex Silverdale.

During 2015, the programmed five yearly fire hydrant inspection and water testing was stopped because it did not comply with NZ Transport Agency's code of practice for temporary traffic maintenance. Council owned Watercare had to do any maintenance work, including painting hydrant markings, at night to fit in with traffic management requirements. FENZ still working with the NZ Transport Agency to find workable way to conduct hydrant checks and tests while conforming with the rules and keep personnel safe.

May 2, 2016, Monday, Grey Lynn [26], new two double bay, two floor station occupied, 134 Williamson Avenue corner Northland Street, Grey Lynn. August 12 2016, officially opened by Chairman of the Board of the New Zealand Fire Service Commission, Hon Paul Swain. First pump to Pt Chevalier. Crew moved from old station, corner Ponsonby Road and Lincoln Street. First call in new first pump area, Pt Chevalier, medical cardiac arrest. Old station sold early in 2017 for \$12 million, converted to retail shops, offices above, still there 2023.

October 2016, HSA/TLO [Hazardous Substance Advisor, earlier called Technical Liaison Officer] position disestablished with resignation of Dick [D] Thornton-Grimes. First to hold role created after Parnell Fumes incident was Stuart [SW] Thomas QFSM, 1973 to 1974, second Mike Perkins 1974 to 1979, third Tony [AJ] Haggerty QSM, 1979 to 2005. Post moved to National Headquarters, Dr Trudy Geoghegan appointed National Hazardous Substance Advisor.

January 8 2017, Sunday, Auckland Branch NZPFU "blacked" MAN pump appliances after a pump lost pressure after a fire at Manurewa. Truck software safety system had provision to prevent driving off with the PTO engaged. If it detected "driving type" actions it disengaged PTO, a requirement of Euro safety specs. After fire put out and during overhaul, a firefighter got into driver's seat to get something and applied the foot brake while there. This triggered the shut-down, pump was only idling. Dispute resolved, took a while, all appliances back in service. About two years later MAN's had chassis issues.

May 11 2017, Thursday, Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017 given Royal Assent, came into effect July 1 2107. "The purpose of this Act is to reform the law relating to fire services, including strengthening the role of communities and improving the support for volunteers in the provision of fire services, and, to that end, — etc"

July 1 2017, Saturday, forty urban and rural fire services, including NZFS and NRFA, amalgamated as new Fire and Emergency New Zealand [FENZ]. It was one of the largest public sector amalgamations ever in NZ. The new FENZ had 637 Stations, annual calls 75,142 [2016–17], 2,815 employees [2018] and 11,600 volunteers.

July 1 2017, Saturday, new two bay station [74] opened at 52 Ahuroa Road, Puhoi. Formally a Volunteer Rural Fire Force operated by Auckland City Council, incorporated into Fire Emergency New Zealand on July 1 2017. First Fire Station opened by new FENZ management. Previous shed was at 1 Ahuroa Road.

July 1 2017, Saturday, Great Barrier Island RFF, Station [96], 22 Rosalie Bay Road, Tryphena. Formally a Volunteer Rural Fire Force operated by Auckland City Council, incorporated into Fire Emergency New Zealand on July 1 2017. Three bay station, one level. Also, two bay Kaitoke Fire

Station, 81 Hector Sanderson Road, Okupu Fire Station, 230A Blind Bay Road, and Okiwi Fire Station, 1501 Aotea Road.

October 27 2017 Friday to Sunday October 29 2017, Auckland Operational Support Unit hosted annual United Fire Brigades' Conference, Pullman Hotel, Princes Street and Waterloo Quadrant, City. Theme was Leading Together.

July 1 2018, Sunday, management and permitting of urban fires in the open air formally transitioned to FENZ. Rural fire management and permits transferred to Fire and Emergency New Zealand in 2017. FENZ make the decision on changing the fire season to restricted or prohibited when the weather and other conditions heighten the fire risk. Fire permits are required once the open fire season is closed.

May 31 2019, Friday, Balmoral Station temporarily closed for major earthquake upgrade improvements, pump crew to Avondale, Salvage Tender to Grey Lynn and Canteen to Pitt Street. December 20 2019, Friday, station reopened after strengthening and refurbishment of existing facilities, improvements to heating and lighting, double glazing and division of station into "dirty zone" [soiled uniform and pre-shower area] and "clean zone" [the remainder of the station] to meet current [as at 2019] health and well-being best practice.

August 23 2019, Friday, new radio coded message introduced, K10 - appliance attending traumatic incident or event. This placed the appliance out of commission, crew able to return to station to recommission and debrief, or seek additional help as required, without the appliance being responded to another incident.

Mid 2019, problems found with MAN, Fraser Engineering Lower Hutt built T3 appliances. Problem was cracked rear body mounting fittings to the chassis. Some easily fixed, others off the road for over twelve months. As at January 2021, still no total resolution. Issue over rails in chassis construction. About 36 new MAN chassis parked up, no agreement to build.

January 2020, Glen Eden Station, Glenview Road and Waikumete Road, near Railway line, Glen Eden, closed while having major earthquake upgrade improvements. Crew relocated to Avondale. Built 1980, had structural faults from ground movement.

September 14 2020, Monday, Kawakawa Bay [Station 44] two bay station, 6 Banks Road, Kawakawa Bay, Ward Demolition begun clearing site. Old station had opened September 14 1974 by Ken Heley, Auckland Metropolitan Fire Board Chairman. Brigade temporarily relocated to local farmer's barn during rebuild. Construction started October, new one bay station, one floor, on same site, Ignite Architects, N Cole Construction, cost \$1.18 million. Reoccupied April 10 2021, officially opened April 17 2021, Saturday, by Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister Internal Affairs, same day and after new Pokeno which replaced Mercer.

October 5 2020, 06:00, Monday, Northern Communications Centre moved to Police's Harlech House, 482 Great South Road, Otahuhu. Moved from 159 Great North Road, Grey Lynn, lease expired. NorthCom area is the top half of the North Island, extending from Three Sisters on the Desert Road across to Waihau Bay on the East Cape north. Thirty-five people staff NorthCom, over last 12 months handled 47,777 [51%] of 111 calls nationally. Police moved in two weeks later. St John Ambulance redeveloping their own ComCen.

December 7 2020, Monday, new site purchased for new Henderson Fire Station [Station 65], 14 Swanson Road, near Lincoln Road, Henderson. Old house on site demolished, ground works cleared site. December 2023, no building works started, other priorities.

June 15 2021, Tuesday, new three bay, three floor, East Coast Bays Station [83] operational, 984 East Coast Road, near Glamorgan Drive, and just north of Oteha Valley Road and Carlisle Road, North Cross. June 12 2021, Saturday, officially opened. Composite paid and volunteer crews. APG Architects, builder N Cole Construction, cost \$8 million. Officially opened by Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister of Internal Affairs. Replaced Station built 1955 at Beach Road and Knights Road, Rothesay Bay. Provides better 360-degree coverage, away from coast, increased population. more functional and environmentally friendly workplace.

January 9 2023, Monday, Parnell crew temporarily relocated from corner Balfour and Gladstone Roads. Station to be demolished. Daytime base corner of Ronayne Street and The Strand, night from City Station, Pitt Street. By February 22 2023 old Station demolished. Ground testing found contaminated by foam. New Station will be of two floors, two double bays, bedrooms and gym on upper floor. First Balfour Road Station first occupied Wednesday April 13 1960.

April 20 2023, Thursday, building renovations, north wing bedrooms, both floors, City Station. Testing of a 150mm core sample identified asbestos. Thought asbestos either in the paint, lining or between walls. Staff moved to south wing bedrooms, no renovations there. Area decontaminated. Seems drilled core likely contaminated from asbestos lagging in the roof space, cross contaminated. Asbestos been leaking over time from the roof space and present in other areas of the building. Friday, May 12 2023, asbestos contamination found in BA filling filter system in old compressor system used until 2022, intake near sheet asbestos roof. Auckland District had eight BA compressor systems.

As at June 2023. Auckland Region Fire Stations repurposed and still in use by other occupants - East Coast Bays [Beach Road and Knights Road], Devonport [Calliope Road and High Street], Herald Island [57 Ferry Road], Glen Eden is a storeroom for local Drama Club for costumes etc [Valley [now Glendale] Road], Te Atatu [Te Atatu Road opposite Gloria Road, Te Atatu North [now Peninsular], Pt Chevalier plus the first reel Station [Pt Chevalier Road and Tui Street], Mt Albert [516 New North Road, top of McElwain's Hill, Kingsland], Mt Roskill, Greenlane - One Tree Hill [Green Lane Road near Great South Road], Mt Eden [Valley Road], St Marys Road [Ponsonby], Rose Road [Grey Lynn], Ponsonby Road [Ponsonby Road], old and first Pitt Street, Parnell Road, first Remuera [Mews, Remuera Road], St Heliers [Polygon Road], Papatoetoe [St George Street and Mahon Place], Manukau although it looks very different [Kerrs Road and Great South Road, Wiri], P Papakura [Averill Street], Manurewa [Hall [now Halver] Road. Much modified 1941 building there in 2022, gone in 2023. Pukekohe [Edinburgh Street and Massey Avenue], Mercer [17 Roose Road].

Once again, my grateful thanks to Cliff Mears for his dedication to recording important events concerning the brigades in Auckland Region.

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