

## *Box 52 Association*



## *The Line Box*



*I.F.B.A. Member club since 1955!*

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Vol. 20 No. 3

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### **Welcome!**

To the third issue of this seasons Line Box. We have another terrific jammed packed issue for you to enjoy.

Starting with this issue we will be adding new columnists and features. We think that you will like these new additions..

If you have a story of a fire or unusual incident that you think the membership might enjoy please let someone on the staff know. We can do the writing for you, if you just supply the information about the job. We are also looking to increase the staff in the style of the old Boston newspapers. The plan is to have "City" Desk, North, West and South Bureaus. More information will be in forth coming issues.



**Boston Box 6-6177  
Tuesday April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024  
428 Meridian Street**

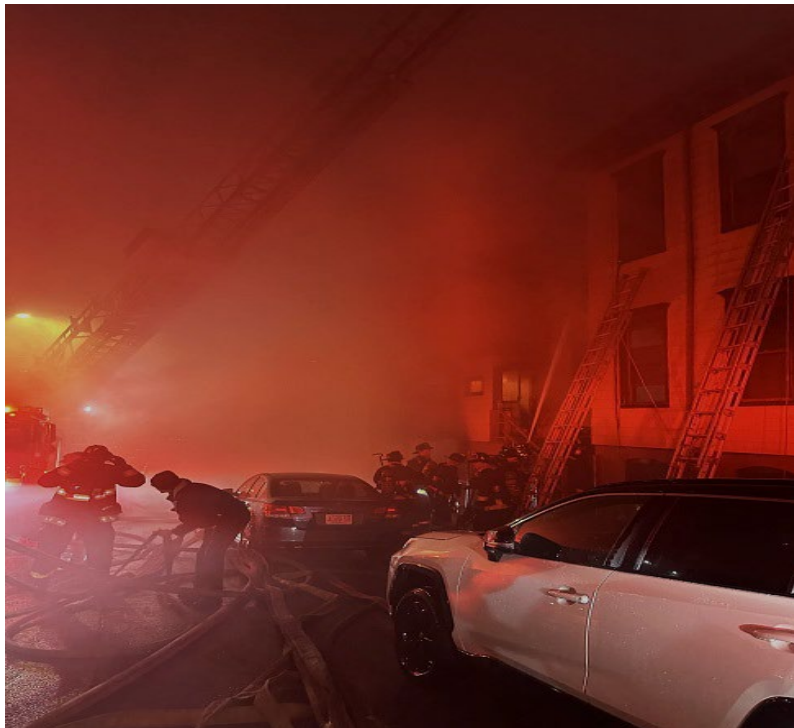
**All photos courtesy of the Boston Fire Department**

The night shift in District 1 had been fairly quiet. Companies did the usual amount of medicals and bells and smells. In fact throughout the BFD it was a pretty routine night.

At 0500 hours Fire Alarm received a call reporting a building fire at the corner of West Eagle and Meridian Streets and immediately transmitted box 6177. The companies turned out and as they were responding Fire Alarm advised the corrected location was 428 Meridian St. On the Boston side Car 3, Engine 8, Ladder 1 and Rescue 1 started for the tunnel. Car 3 with Engine 8 and Ladder 1 were assigned as the RIT companies.

At the quarters of the Marine Unit, the John S. Damrell prepared to cast off and respond on a rare first alarm box. They reported standing by off West Eagle Street at 0514 hrs.

Engine 5 arrived on scene at 0503 hrs and reported fire showing on the first floor of a 3 story wood frame dwelling and they were going into Fast Attack mode. District 1 arrived with them and District Chief Kelly knew he had a serious situation on his hands ordered a second alarm at 0504 and the third alarm a minute later.



Engine 5 reported they needed a big line to back them up and reported heavy fire in the rear extending upwards. Moments later they reported fire through the floor. Engines 9 and 56 were getting their lines into operations and at 0509 hrs. Car 1 reported to Fire Alarm that he had two buildings now involved.

Car 100 reported to Command that he had a report of children on the second floor, this was unfounded. Command reported that he had reports of a missing person on the third floor. Chief Kelly ordered a fourth alarm be transmitted at 0513 hrs.

C6 Division 1 Deputy Chief Schaffer arrived on scene and struck the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> alarms at 0516 hrs. Engine 56 was ordered to take a Blitz gun into the rear of the buildings. Rescue 1 advised that had found the missing person on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and was bringing him down over Ladder 21's stick for EMS.



H1 gave the order to evacuate the main fire building on the corner to evacuate in an orderly manner and report to command in front of the building. Engine 50 reported to Command heavy fire through the roof of the building adjacent to the main fire building.

C1 Chief Burke arrived on scene at 0536 hours. After conferring with Deputy Shaffer, he reported to Fire Alarm that he was assuming Meridian Street Command and that he had fire in three 3 deckers and that C6 is now operations and all companies were working.

The drone was used to check on conditions and H1 reported to Command they still had heavy fire conditions on the B/C corner of the building. Reported that companies were hitting the fire.

At the 90 minute mark Command reported that all companies were still working.

The allout was sounded at 1430 hours. No firefighters were injured and one resident perished in the fire.

### Time Line

Time	Box	Engines	Ladders	Rescue	Chiefs & Other
0500	6177	5, 9, 56, MU-1 8	2, 21 1, TL-3	R1	Dist. 1 Dist 3 – RIT, H1
0504	2-6177	4, 10, 7	17, 24		Div. 1 Dist. 4 Accountability Dist. 6 2 <sup>nd</sup> alarm
0505	3-6177	50, 32	15		
0513	4-6177	33, 3			
0516	5-6177	22, 39	18		K-1
0516	6-6177	2, 14			C1



As always my thanks to Honorary Member Paul Christian for proving information on this fire.



## **Jobs That Don't Make the 6 O'Clock News!**

Welcome to our new addition to the Line Box. In this section we will cover jobs that could be considered any department's bread and butter operations, but seldom if ever make the news.

Our first job featured is from December 1960 and is a Working Fire on Boston box 2417 Wyman St. opposite Bolster St. off Centre Street for an apartment fire on the second floor of 461 Centre Street in Jamaica Plain.

Senior Box 52 member William Cahill was on scene and captured these images of this bread and butter BFD operation.









Working fire assignment:

1<sup>st</sup> alarm: Engines 42, 28 Ladders 30, 10 District 9

Working Fire: Engine 14, Division 2.

Thanks to Members Bill Cahill for the photos and Bob Washburn for the information on box 2417.

## TRAGEDY IN WAKEFIELD SQUARE

By David Parr Line Box Staff

All photos DLP/LMY Collection

Monday, March 11, 2024 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a General Alarm fire that ravaged a block of stores in Downtown Wakefield resulting in the tragic line of duty death of Wakefield Fire Lieutenant Robert T. Sullivan.

381-383-385 Main Street was a one-story brick typical taxpayer building located on the west side of Main Street at the corner of Albion Street in the heart of Wakefield Square. The block included three stores; 381 Main was the Ames Rexall Drug Store; 383 was occupied by Florences Women's Fashion Store, and 385 was Ray Parkers Men's Clothing Store. All these stores were long time established Wakefield businesses.

March 11, 1974, which was also a Monday evening, was dry with a temperature hovering around freezing. At 10:55 PM a passerby noticed smoke pushing from the Florences Fashion Store, the middle store in the three-store block, and pulled Box 35 located right in front of the block at Main and Albion Streets. The response to Box 35 was Engine 3, Engine 4, and Ladder 1 from Headquarters just a block away with Captain John M. Riley in charge, and Engine 2 from Greenwood Station with Lieutenant Fred D. Graham in the front seat. It was quickly evident that the pot was boiling as smoke started pushing from all parts of the business block, with the windows to Florence's black and hot!







As companies stretched attack lines Chief Walter V. Maloney arrived and second, and general alarms were ordered. Mutual aid companies including Reading Engine 2 and Ladder 1, Stoneham Engine 5, Melrose Engine 2, Saugus Engine 4, North Reading Engine 2, and Lynnfield Engine 2 raced to the fire. Woburn Engine 4 and Melrose Engine 3 moved up to cover Wakefield Headquarters.

Once hose lines were in position the stores were ventilated, the smoke and fire conditions intensified. Early on an interior attack was attempted but Captain Robert Abraham quickly realized that conditions were untenable and ordered an evacuation. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Robert T. Sullivan, age 36, who had reported back to duty on the multiple alarm, became disorientated in the heavy smoke and did not evacuate. Firefighters re-entered the building on three occasions in search of the Lieutenant, but rapidly intensifying conditions forced them to back out.

The fire quickly spread to the cockloft and throughout the business block. A tin ceiling hampered efforts to expose the fire in the cockloft. Firefighters venting the roof were forced to quickly evacuate their positions, leaving their saws behind. The problem now facing Chief Maloney was the potential of the fire venting from the roof extending to exposure B, a 2 ½ story wood frame building housing the Colonial Spa restaurant on the first floor and apartments above, and a 3-story wood frame commercial / residential building on Albion Street – exposure C. Chief Maloney shifted to an exterior defensive fire attack special calling Malden Tower Ladder 3 and Medford Tower Ladder 1, both Mack aerial scopes.



The fire attack went on for hours, with the business block devastated, but the exposures protected. Lieutenant Sullivan was still missing. It was not until 7:00 AM Tuesday morning that firefighters were able to enter, locate and remove the Lieutenant from the basement where he apparently fell attempting to evacuate. Exhausted firefighters in tears lined the rear alley as the Lieutenant was carried from the building.



The fire devastated the community of Wakefield and the Wakefield Fire Department. Hundreds of firefighters from all over New England and townspeople turned out for the Lieutenants funeral. Led by the Boston Fire Department Honor Guard, firefighters marched from Main Street, up Centre Street to Crescent Street, past Fire Headquarters to Water Street, and Water Street to Butler Avenue to St. Florence Church. Engine 2 and Engine 4 were used as flower cars with Engine 2 staffed by Firefighter Ronald Robbins and Lieutenant Fred D. Graham, Jr, and Engine 4 staffed by Firefighters Ray Pitts, Tom Collins, and Bob Thompson.





Fire Department Chaplain Rev. William Coughlin celebrated the funeral mass at St. Florence Church, followed by burial at Forest Glade Cemetery. Pall bearers were members of Lt. Sullivan's shift, including Captain Donald C. Jacobs, Firefighters William Pepe, Thomas Crusco, Roger Wenzel, William Wenzel, Lee Bayrd, Joseph Tecce, James Greelish, and David Cerullo.

"Bobby" Sullivan was a 12-year WFD veteran from a legendary Wakefield Fire Department family. His father Thomas was a call firefighter, his uncle Daniel was a Lieutenant that died in the line of duty in 1948. His brother John "Dinty" Sullivan was a firefighter who suffered a line of duty fatal heart attack in 1968, and his brother Warren was an active firefighter who led the search for his brother that fateful night. The Sullivan brothers were widely known as tough, aggressive firefighters. The tradition continues today as Bobby's sons Michael and Danny, who were 10 and 8 years old at the time of the fire, both became Wakefield Firefighters. Michael Sullivan, a Box 52 member, is now the Fire Chief and is approaching 40 years on the job. Danny recently retired from the department.

The cause of the fire was never determined, but it was **NOT** associated with the string of arson fires that plagued Wakefield in 1971 / 1972. Coincidentally, just prior to the fire that Monday evening, Wakefield Town Meeting approved \$ 56,000 for the purchase of a Maxim pumper and \$ 96,000 for a Maxim 100-foot tractor trailer aerial ladder truck.



Sons Daniel on left and Michael on the right with their mom Janet.

## Seattle Fire Department CO<sub>2</sub> Vault Response Truck

All photos courtesy of Frontline Communication



Seattle recently placed in service a newly designed Pierce/Frontline CO<sub>2</sub> Vault Fire Response Truck includes an 11,000 lb CO<sub>2</sub> vessel, 600 feet of 1.25-inch hose, and flows 220 lbs of liquid CO<sub>2</sub> per minute with a 34 PSIG pressure drop.

In 2018, the Seattle Fire Department worked with Seattle City Light to take a unique approach to fight electrical vault fires by retrofitting a decommissioned Pierce vehicle and equipping it with CO<sub>2</sub> canisters and 120 feet of hose line. The department's next generation ERU from Frontline Communications incorporates an innovative design addressing the department's previous limitation gaps.

The new ERU will be housed at Seattle Fire Department's Station 25, where 48 members of an energy response team are trained to safely address the public safety needs resulting from energy hazard incidents. In the event of an electrical vault fire, the team removes the utility hole cover, inserts the hose/metal wand, and injects the vault with CO<sub>2</sub> while covering the opening with a fire-resistant tarp. Once the fire is out and cleared of smoke and CO<sub>2</sub>, Seattle City Light personnel de-energize electrical equipment, making the area safe for crews to begin repairs.



Other features of the Seattle Fire Department's new CO<sub>2</sub> Vault Fire Response Truck include:

- Freightliner M2-114SD crew cab
- Generator power: 35kW PTO (pressure build vaporizer system), 5kW (utility and refrigeration system power)
- TOMCO<sub>2</sub> Systems 5.5-ton DOT steel skid tank on skid, 11,000 lb of CO<sub>2</sub>
- Two CO<sub>2</sub> extinguisher storage compartments
- Aluminum rescue hook compartment and CO<sub>2</sub> deployment pipe compartment on rear of vehicle
- Firecom wireless intercom system



## **TWO FIRES, DIFFERENT CHALLENGES**

### **Revere & Boston Battle Multiple Alarm Fire Nine Hours Apart**

**Saturday February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1960**

**By Line Box Editor Frank San Severino**

The Bay State had been suffering a typical winter with snow and cold temperatures. The weather for Saturday was for temps in the low 30's, dropping into the 20' at night and a forecast for snow on Sunday.

In Revere, a worker at the Lynn Crabmeat & Lobster Company located at 585 Northshore Road lit a wood stove on the first floor of the two story wood frame building. The fire ignited a chimney fire which spread to the second floor of the building. A motorist passing by spotted the smoke and called the Revere Fire Department.

At 8:27 AM the warning blow hit and box 573, a phantom box (*A fire alarm box number assigned to an area without a telegraph box – Editor*) was transmitted for the location.

First arriving companies found heavy smoke pushing from the second floor and an employee reporting his father-in-law was trapped on the second floor. Deputy Chief Ernest Charier ordered Firefighters Pearl and Cook of Ladder Company 1 to throw a ground ladder to the second floor at the rear of the building. The three then climbed the ladder and were able to remove the victim. He was transported to the hospital where he was pronounced dead from smoke inhalation.

Deputy Charier ordered a second alarm on his arrival at 8:34 AM. Lines were quickly laid out and the fire was knocked down with overhaul taking several hours. The recall on box 573 was sounded at 10:45 AM.

Nine hours and two minutes later in downtown Boston, shop clerks were busy getting ready to close the stores at 6:00 PM. Shoppers were heading for the Washington Street MTA subway and the subway trains home. And theater goers were coming into downtown to catch a movie, play or just visit one of the many restaurants in the area.

At 5:36 PM the duty crew in the Central Station of Boston Automatic Fire Alarm Company received signal 222-237-2. The signal was for an activation at 469 Washington Street on the second floor. The signal was relayed to the Fire Alarm Office and Engine 26 and Ladder 17 responded from their quarters on Broadway. One minute later Fire Alarm transmitted box 1461 Washington and West Streets.

The building was a five story second class building that housed Wilson's Shoe Store at 467 which sold high fashion women's shoes and 469 was occupied by the Hudson Wearing Apparel, Inc. manufactures of women's clothing with offices on the upper floors.

Engine 26 and Ladder 17 arrived and found smoke showing from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Ladder 17 forced entry and 26 started a line up to the second floor. The first alarm companies of Engines 25 and 39, Ladder 8, Rescue Company were responding and sirens were echoing off the many large buildings in the area.

As 26 and 17 made the second floor they found fire in numerous offices with fire spreading rapidly to the upper floors. Division 1 Deputy Chief James Flanagan arriving on the box was quick to order additional alarms. Chief of Department John Martin arrived shortly after the third alarm had been



sounded and was faced with heavy fire conditions on the second – fifth floor.



Special calls went out for additional engine companies and Water Tower No. 1.

The fire attracted throngs of people into Washington Street to watch the battle. The crowd was estimated to be over a thousand and the police were overwhelmed. As the fire continued to burn out of control and then burst through the roof, Chief Martin ordered the BPD to move everyone out of the area.

It was estimated that at the height of the fire close to a million gallons of water were used from both the high and low pressure systems. Which flowed right back out on to Washington and Winter Streets.

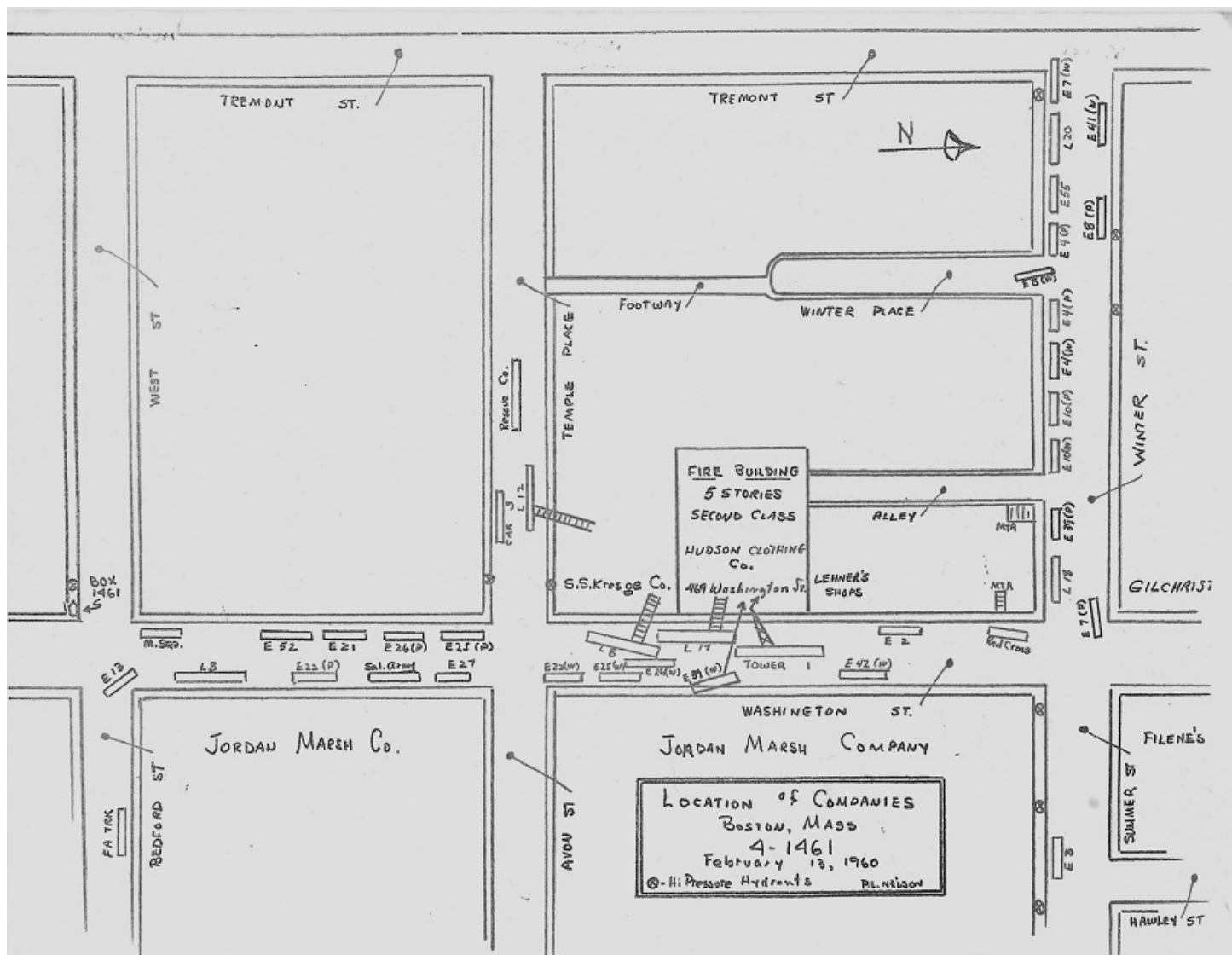


The structure was deep and had intact fire walls between the left and right side buildings. Over 140 firefighters fought this stubborn blaze and the all-out was sounded at 11:23 PM. Five Firefighters suffered minor injuries.

There would be no rest for the men as a mere forty-two minutes after the all-out on 1461. Fire Alarm received a call for an inside fire at 69-71 Dover Street in the South End. Box 1614 Dover and Shawmut Ave. was transmitted at 12:05 AM Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>. The Working Fire was quickly transmitted followed by a second alarm. Damage was listed at \$ 3,500.00 and all occupants were evacuated safely and no



A busy night shift indeed for Boston Jakes!



## Fire Time Lines

### Revere

Time	Box	Engines	Ladder
8:27	571	2, 5, 1	1
8:34	2-571	3, 4, Lynn E4	2

### Boston

Time	Box	Engines	Ladder	Other
5:36	222-237-2	26	17	
5:37	1461	25, 39	8	Rescue
5:51	2-1461	4, 10, 22, 13	18, 3	
6:13	3-1461	21, 27, 8, 52	12	
6:14	Sp. Call			Water Tower 1
6:18	4-1461	42, 2, 41, 55		
6:42	Sp. Call		20	
7:20	Sp. Call	7, 3		
11:23	All-out			

### Boston

Time	Box	Engines	Ladder	Other
12:05	1614	7, 22, 3	17, 13	
12:10	W.F	10		
12:14	2-1614	26, 13, 39, 27	3, 12	
03:52	All-out			



## Apparatus Update

Since Mike Boynton is busy preparing to be the guest speaker at our April meeting, we have given him this issue off. Rest assured his column will be back in the next issue.

**“March, in like a Lion?”**

**Monday, March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1976**

*It is said of the spring that the month of March comes in like a Lion and goes out like a Lamb.*

*The spring of our Bicentennial year, 1976, didn't come in like a lion. Oh no, it came in more like a Dragon. A Big, Flaming, Fire Breathing, Dragon.*

**Part 1**

**The Stoneham Laundry & Linen Company Fire**

**5 Alarms Box 62**

**By Line Box Staff Writer John Pozark Jr.**

**All fire photos collection of member David Parr**

**All apparatus photos collection of late member L. Murray Young scanned by applicant Kevin Boyle for member David Parr**

It was a Monday. The weather, not unseasonal for New England. The day was coming to a close. At the Central Fire Station in Stoneham, the 10-hour Day Platoon was nearing the end of their shift. Chief of Department Ray Sorenson had gone to Melrose to visit a family member who was ill.

At 22 Gould St. in Stoneham, there were about 25 to 30 employees at work at the Stoneham Laundry & Linen Company including the owner, Joseph Corrado Sr.

Stoneham Laundry & Linen, or STOLINCO as it was commonly known, was a large commercial laundry plant serving area hospitals and restaurants. The front of the building, the “Alpha Side”, where the office space was located, faced Gould St., which gave it a Gould St. address. But the building ran the depth of the lot all the way back to Pleasant St. in the rear. There were showroom type windows in front on Gould St. and large service doors to the loading dock in the rear, on the Pleasant Street (or “Charlie Side” as we say today). The building was under constant “reconstruction” and there remained a partial wooden building inside the structure awaiting complete demolition and removal.

Laundry processing took place in the center of the building. The “Bravo Side” had a set of abandoned railroad tracks with houses on the far side of the tracks. The “Delta Side” also had homes for exposures. The building was a bit unusual as it sat on a slope and had been added to and built up over years.

Shortly before 1653 Hours, fire was discovered in the basement and an alarm was sent to Stoneham Fire Headquarters.

At 1653 Hours Stoneham Box #62 was transmitted for Stoneham Laundry & Linen Company. Responding were Engines #2 and #5 and Ladder #1.

Engine #2 was running with a 1972 Pirsch, enclosed Custom Cab, 1000 GpM/ 500 GWT Pumper, with Captain Emery and 3 firefighters.





Engine #5, running a 1956 Seagrave, 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Series with canopy cab 750 GPM/ 200GWT Pumper with the Lieutenant and 2 firefighters.



Ladder #1 running a 1969 Pirsch enclosed Custom Cab Service Aerial with 85' Stick. Common at the time for many suburban ladder trucks, Ladder #1 also had a 250 GPM pump and a 200-gallon water tank. While the specific staffing on that day is not available, at the time the Ladder ran with 2-3 firefighters and no officer.



Arriving at the front of building on Gould St., Capt. Emery had smoke showing from a block long deep, single occupancy, 1 ½ and 2 story concrete building with a basement and sub-basement, lacking fire sprinkler protection. The initial report to Capt. Emery was that the fire was located in the basement. Initial attack was by a single 1 ½", 200 foot long, pre-connected hoseline, with combination fog nozzle, stretched off Engine #2. Fire Captain James McDermott, Fire Lieutenant William McGlaughlin and Firefighter Stanton Waite donned their Scott Aviation, Air-Pak IIA Model, demand Type SCBA, checked for a seal on their face masks and made entry from the Alpha Side.

A Second Alarm for Box #62 was struck at 1709 Hours bringing fire companies from Reading, Engine #1, a 1973 Ford Model "C"/Maxim with extended cab and semi-open bench seat, with 1000GpM pump/500GWT and Wakefield Engine #2 running with a spare, Engine #5 a 1956 Mack enclosed cab "B" Model 750GpM/300GWT apparatus)



The interior attack team proceeded to the basement via an interior stairway. At the base of the stairway a sharp "U" turn was required to move onto the floor itself. The hose hung up on the sharp bend and the crew had to pause and work more line to make the corner.

In the street, fire conditions were obviously worsening, and a Third Alarm on Box #62 was struck at 1722 Hours with Melrose Engine #2 and a Winchester Engine Company responding.

As the three firefighters of the interior team worked the line in, they could hear fire right around the corner snap, crackle and popping. They attempted to push in but had run out of hose. Suddenly, the low air alarm bell began to ring on the Air Pak of one of the crew. Without a word, simultaneously, they turned around to head out of the building. Then a dull, powerful explosion shook the building.

In front of the building on Gould St., Chief of Department Sorenson had arrived and assumed command after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm and began directing operations from the Alpha Side on Gould St.

Mutual Aid Fire Companies were arriving and, working with Stoneham Firefighters coming in on the Call-Backs, began stretching additional hoselines. Stoneham Firefighter Dave Hudson had the pipe on a 2 ½" hoseline and was playing a stream into a showroom window from about 20-30 feet across Gould Street. Lighting up on the line, a ways back, was North Reading Firefighter Jimmy Leavey. Reading Engine #1's crew was stretching and setting up an additional hoseline and the crew had just gone back around the corner.

At 1729 Hours, the 4<sup>th</sup> Alarm was transmitted for Stoneham Box #62.

Witnesses reported that a lot of smoke was issuing from the building, then the building suddenly erupted in a ball of fire. The explosion rocked the building, buckling the cement block walls and blowing out the showroom windows. When the explosion occurred, it blew out the front of the building hurling objects into the street. Firefighter Leavey looked over and Firefighter Hudson was gone from where he'd been standing.

The explosion had blown Firefighter Hudson down and sent him tumbling across the street. A metal tank, made missile by the blast, flew across the street, striking Firefighter Hudson in the arm. The tank avulsed a major portion of Hudson's arm at the elbow. Tremendous flames and high radiated heat now pushed from the building and out into the street. Firefighter Hudson lay in the street bleeding with convected heat and flames rolling over him.

Seeing the critically injured firefighter's situation, Chief Sorenson ran to a nearby house and stretched the garden hose from the side of the building and operated a stream to protect Hudson. Firefighter/NREMT's from the Reading Fire Department Ambulance rushed over and went to work on FF Hudson. Rapidly assessing and treating the patient and consistent with protocol at the time, Reading's Ambulance transported to the Winchester Hospital Emergency Room.

Within about 30 seconds after the explosion Chief Ray Sorenson, the Incident Commander, stood in the street and was informed that:

1. Three firefighters were trapped.
2. A plant employee informed him there was gasoline inside the building.
3. A homeowner pointed to his house on Gould St., about 50 feet away, it was smoking.

Okay, "agonizing reappraisal", time for a new "Incident Action Plan".

Chief Sorenson was not worried about the flammable liquid tanks as they were in underground storage tanks and at this point weren't really a threat. He needed to get water on the exposure building though. Suddenly, from around the corner, Wakefield Engine Company #2 staffed by Firefighters Ronald Robbins, Lester LeBlanc and Arthur Dell'Arciprete appeared. There is no evidence to indicate that they were flying a cavalry guidon, but Chief Sorenson may have heard a bugle in his head, playing the call to, CHARGE!

Wakefield Engine #2 dropped feeders into the pump, Firefighter Dave Parr dressed the hydrant. Two lines were made into the deck mounted Morse gun and water was started. This Morse gun was the oldest serving member of the Wakefield Fire Department. When originally received it was mounted on a horse drawn wagon and through the years transferred to sequential motorized apparatus. A handline was then stretched, and a stream played onto the exposures. When water hit the side of the house, the steam oozing off the side of the building turned into a cloud.

Now Chief Sorenson had to find out about his other people. It should be remembered that there were few portable radios available compared to today. Yeah, the Chief of Department had one, probably. The Shift Commanding Line Officer, probably. In advanced departments, each company officer. These portables were physically large, often referred to as "Bricks", because they were about that size and weight. Many communities operated on the VHF Low Band. The antenna either telescoped and could easily be bent, or was a "Rubber Ducky", soooo long, if it sat in a chest pocket on your fire coat it would poke you in the eye (author's personal experience).

In suburban communities, typically, radio communications was a single channel operation in simplex mode, frequently with the frequency shared with other communities near and far. In some communities under what the FCC termed "Local Government Licensing", the frequency was shared with the Police Department and the D.P.W.

At the time of this fire, Stoneham operated on the frequency of 46.06 Mhz, using frequency modulation and sharing with Melrose, Wakefield, Reading, Lynnfield and Middleton. While the limited radios on the fireground reduced radio traffic and congestion, much fireground communication was face to face anyway.

At the time, it was common for neighboring Fire Chiefs to respond to adjacent communities or communities where their fire companies had responded to and were operating on Mutual Aid. Lacking the resources of larger departments, there were few or often no Chief's Aide's or even Assistant or Deputy Fire Chiefs. Informally, these Chief Officers would fill in as Sector or Division or Branch Chiefs. Performing the functions though lacking the formal titles that would rise from "The Southwest Coast" with the implementation of the Incident Command System.

Wakefield Fire Department Chief, Walter Maloney had responded to the fire. Also at the fire, but off duty, were Wakefield Fire Lt. Dave Akin and Wakefield Call Firefighters Mike Cummings and Dave Yngeve.



Inside the building, when the fire exploded, Capt. McDermott and FF. Waite had become separated from Lt. McLaughlin. In a later interview Lt. McLaughlin said, "I don't know where it came from. All of a sudden, it was all around us", overhead and below".

Lt. McLaughlin was running out of air. Swallowed by a sea of fire and smoke he was following the hoseline out. Suddenly the hoseline ended. It had been burned through. He was barely able to see a yellow backhoe outside through the wall of fire. Remembering that that was how he had entered, he dove through the wall of flames, the heat so intense it melted a portion of his facepiece to his head. Staggering out, he was approached by firefighters and EMT's, treated and transported to New England Memorial Hospital where the next day he was listed in "Good Condition". He had received 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree burns to the head.

Elsewhere in the building, cutoff from regular exits, Capt. McDermott and FF Waite found themselves behind some windows. Desperately, they began to beat on the windows with their helmets and broke the glass. Outside, passing by, Wakefield Chief Maloney saw the hard-pressed members through the window. With Lt. Akin and Call Firefighters Cummings and Yngve, a Rapid Intervention Team was improvised. This crew obtained a ground ladder, threw the ladder to the window and removed the trapped members. As the men were being removed, fire and smoke filled the window, enveloping them. As they say in the fire service, it was a near run thing. Capt. McDermott and FF. Waite were transported to New England Memorial Hospital for treatment. FF. Waite had burns to the wrist and hand.



With the first Firefighting Strategic Objective, Rescue, complete, it was time to proceed with the next priority, Incident Stabilization.

The fire was burning in a large industrial building of mixed construction filled with hazardous material and with many confined spaces where fires burned intensely beyond the reach of effective hose streams. The heavy fire load of textiles also provided plenty of Class "A" fuel.

Flames were reported to be shooting 50 to 100 feet in the air. Exposures were threatened. Captain Emery on the Charlie Side or Pleasant St. side of the building, had problems, houses were starting to smoke.

Clearly additional resources were required.

The Stoneham Running Card stopped Assignments at a Fourth Alarm. Initially a Special Call was made for 3 additional Engine Companies for relay pumping and also an extra Truck Company. Chelsea Engine #4, one of the few companies in the area, at the time, equipped with 4" large diameter hose was one of these special called companies.

The magnitude of the fire necessitated a large number of additional Special Calls lumped together as the 5<sup>th</sup> Alarm by the media. Stoneham was not yet part of Newton Control although using the common radio channel, Stoneham could call Melrose to make requests from Newton Control. Only one firefighter at a watch desk in the firehouse, FF. James "Red" Bowman, ran the phones and radios. Improvising as a Staging Officer, he established a Staging Area in front of the Stoneham Town Hall.

Among the additional companies special called and coming from its quarters in East Boston, B.F.D. Engine Company #40, with a 1968 Ward LaFrance 1250 GpM Pump and it's Wagon, a 1950 Mack "L" Model hose wagon responded to the fire along with Car #2, the Charlestown District Fire Chief.

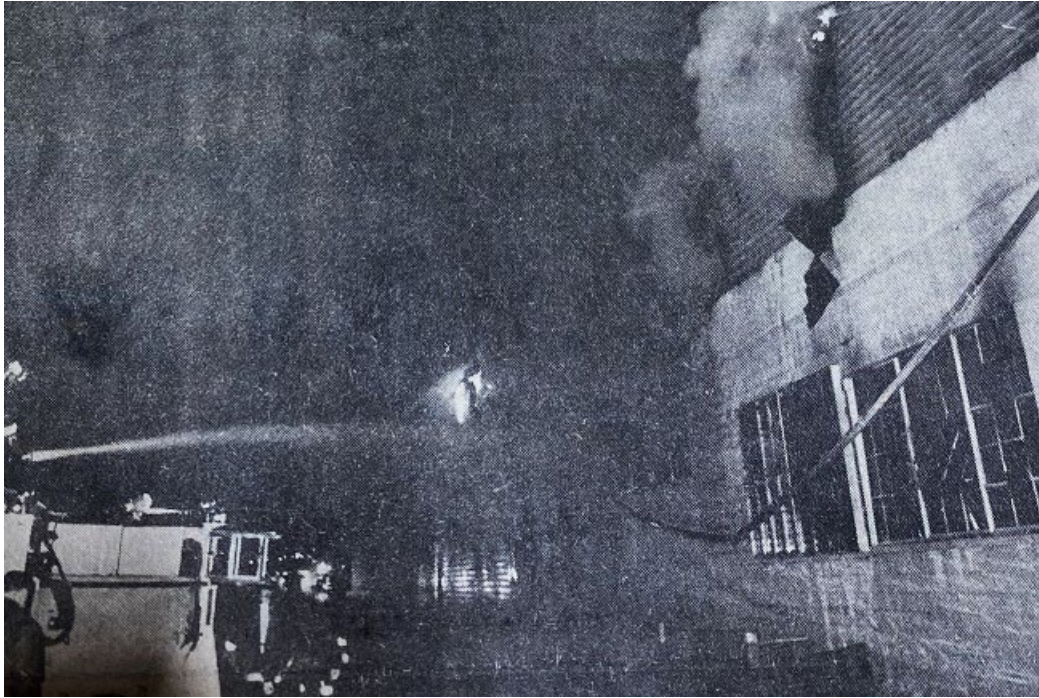
On the Charlie Side, Capt. Emery set up the Stoneham Ladder and Melrose Aerial #1 to operate ladder pipes fed by Special Called Engine Companies. Woburn's Rescue/Snorkle #1 was sent to the Alpha Side for their elevated master stream to play on the fire.



Malden Ladder #3's Mack "CF"/Baker Aerialscope and Arlington Ladder #2 also operated.

The fire burned, out of control, for more than two hours. Finally, a major portion of the roof caved in, and streams were able to hit the fire.





For a time, water was insufficient. Stoneham DPW Crews opened a cross connection on the Wakefield System. The connection operated from 2000 Hours on Monday until 2400 Hours on Tuesday to offset the loss of water pressure in the Northeast Section of Stoneham.

As night approached, Special Calls were made for Lighting Plants, seven communities responded.

It should be pointed out that at the time scene lighting on first line apparatus consisted of 4-6 small Unity Type spotlights post mounted on the cab and hose bed corners or trailers of the apparatus. Sometimes maybe a couple of Circle "D" floodlights would be rigged for use from the apparatus powered by a portable generator mounted on the rig. Large scene floodlights were uncommon on engines and trucks. Scene lighting was provided by Lighting Plants, usually operated by Auxiliary Fire or Civil Defense Units. Responding Lighting Plants included Wakefield, Somerville, Burlington, Winchester, Chelsea, Woburn and Saugus.





Fire Mutual Aid came from the communities of Arlington, Boston, Burlington, Chelsea, Everett, Malden, Medford, Melrose, North Reading, Reading, Saugus, Somerville, Wakefield, Wilmington, Winchester and Woburn

At the time of the fire, EMS was in transition. The National EMS Legislation was enacted by the United States Congress in 1973. Administered through the U.S. Department of Transportation, this act provided model structure and requirements and grants to local communities which met the standards to fund modernization of EMS and ambulance service. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts enacted laws and regulations using the national model. All communities were supposed to be compliant by December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1975. The reality was that not everybody could meet the deadline and the legislation had provided a mechanism for extensions. Some communities weren't compliant until the early 80's.

In the majority of communities' police and fire shared "EMS" but the police departments performed the ambulance service. This could be with a limousine style ambulance, the classic "Caddy" or with a "Panel Truck" conversion, the IH Travel-All and Chevrolet "Suburban" being popular choices. A handful of police agencies had acquired the new state of the art Federal Tripe "K" spec ambulances while retaining the older models as back up.

In many cases, the police ambulance was a station wagon with minimal equipment. A combination resuscitator/inhalator/aspirator, usually made by E&J or the Emerson Company, with a first aid kit, some air splints, blankets and a folding stretcher known as a "Bradford" were tossed in the back of a full-size station wagon. These were referred to as "Ambulettes". Occasionally, someone would still be tossed on a "D" Ring Army Litter and laid on the bench or floor of the "Paddy Wagon".

When looking at police resources listed as responding, these variations need to be considered. In some cases, the police ambulance listed in the response was probably an Ambulette, especially where the primary ambulance provider in that community was the fire department.

The fire departments had pretty much the same mix of equipment. Some had "Caddy's", some had modern "Triple K's" but for others it was still into the back of "The Rescue" and do the "Bradford-Bench Seat-Bounce" to the hospital.

Some communities also used private, for profit, contract ambulances for primary or back up. A trend that would grow under the burden of "Proposition 2 ½"

Ambulances were coordinated by the police department communications networks. When the explosion happened, in police stations all over the North Suburban Area, the teletype machines chunkchunkchunked out an urgent message, send ambulances to Stoneham. The glowing vacuum tubes on the VHF radios of the police "Intercity Radio Network" added heat to the radio room in the police station as the calls went out.

The Reading Fire Department ambulance responded. Also, Wakefield Fire Department Captain Abraham and Lieutenant Classen, both NREMT's, responded to the scene in Car 6, the fire department's utility pickup truck. Winchester Fire Department's Rescue 1 also responded.

When the "Disaster Call" went out, a request went to the Melrose Chapter of the American Red Cross for their Disaster Action Team. The Chapter Wagon, equipped as an Ambulette and also carrying equipment for Canteen Service responded with several volunteers. This unit had done yeoman work treating and transporting firefighters from the General Alarm, "Transitron Fire" in Melrose several months before.

The Malden Emergency Center responded with their emergency truck.

Other than the four firefighters and Joseph Corrado Sr. the owner of STOLINCO, who was transported to N.E. Memorial Hospital for treatment there is no record of other casualties.

At Stoneham Police Station, the Officers assigned to the First Half were arriving as the fire came in. When the magnitude of the situation became apparent, the Day Shift men were held over.

In addition to providing EMS and Ambulance Service the police department had to contend with crowd and traffic control.

#### Police Response

City	Patrolmen	Cruisers
Andover	2	1
Lexington	2	4
Malden	2	5
Melrose	2	2
North Reading	5	2
Reading	2	4
Wakefield	5 & Chief of Dept.	2

#### State Law Enforcement

Agency	Patrolmen	Cruisers	Motorcycle's
Metropolitan District Commission	30, 3 Sergeants, 2 Lt's	11	3
Mass. State Police	5	5	
Registry of Motor Vehicles	25	50	

#### Police Staffed Ambulances

City	Ambulances
Andover	1
Chelsea	1
Everett	1
North Reading	1
Reading	1
Revere	1
Wakefield	1
Woburn	1

#### Civil Defense Auxiliary Police

Melrose
Stoneham
Woburn

Police used 119 out of town Patrolmen and 54 Police Cruiser Cars to attempt traffic control.

A full Disaster Activation was made, CD Director Pasquirello and Selectman James McDonough coordinated response.

An Amateur Radio Wireless Communications Network was set up to support responders. Several business and organizations responded or provided supplies and equipment to personnel operating at the scene: Burger King; Dunkin Donuts, McDonough Caterers, Our Place, the Knights of Columbus and the American Legion; along with The Dorcas Society, a local advocacy group.

During the fire covering companies responded to more than one additional incident.

At 1810 Hours, a Medford Company responded to the intersection of Rowe St. and Lindenwood Rd. to investigate a smoke condition.

A Box was transmitted for 220 Central St. at 1834 Hours for a reported fire in an apartment building. Covering companies from Somerville, Malden, Arlington and Everett responded. Alarm caused by steam for smoke.

At 2113 Hours, an Everett Company responded to 79 Pleasant St. for a reported natural gas leak.

On Tuesday morning the remains still steamed and here and there it smoked. A crane was brought in to remove the smokestack which was in a hazardous condition. Strong winds threatened to bring it down. Access was made to the company safe, located in the wreckage. This permitted the firm to retrieve important records. The loss of laundry capacity threatened services at hospitals and restaurants in the area. However, owner Joe Corrado reported arrangements were being made with associated plants.

FF Hudson was transferred to the Mass General Hospital in Boston. Doctors at the M.G.H. surveyed FF Hudson's injury, the arm had been all but amputated. After assessment it was determined that the portion of the arm distal to the elbow was unsalvageable. It took several hours of treatment to stabilize his condition.

Also on Tuesday morning, the Stoneham Savings Bank started a fund for Firefighter Hudson. The Savings Bank made the initial deposit of \$100.00.

Water continued to be poured onto the ruins throughout Tuesday and into Wednesday until the All Out was sounded.

Stoneham Fire Department Chief Sorenson determined the Point of Origin to be in the sub-basement, subsequently extending up through the floors to the roof. With the assistance of the State Fire Marshall's Office the fire was investigated but the cause was not determined.

#### **Score Card:**

All Out Sounded 40 Hours later.

Estimated 200 firefighters from 20 communities responded.

24 Engine Companies and 6 Ladder Companies operated at the fire.

1.5 million gallons of water reportedly were used.

At the time, loss was estimated at \$500,000.00.

Information for this article was taken from Local Newspapers, "Strike a Third Alarm" by Fire Chief Raymond Sorenson.

#### **Part 2**

The Stoneham fire was the first of four major fires in the District that would occur in the next twelve hours. These four fires together would claim 3 lives, numerous injuries to civilians and firefighters and result in over a million dollars combined in property loss and damage. Editor.





## From the Archives

This list of special equipment in use by the Boston Fire Department was published in the Spring newsletter of 1975, 49 years ago

### 1975 Inventory of Special Equipment

#### 9-L Stop Leak Device

**Carried by all Ladder Companies**

#### Acetylene Cutting Torches

Engine: 47

**Ladders: 2, 11, 16, Aerial Tower 2**

Rescue 1 and 2 (note both have large AIRCO cutting outfits)

#### Boats and Trailers

Engines: 11, 48

#### Boston Whaler

Engine 47

#### Work Boats

Engines: 31, 47

#### Combustible Gas Indicators

**Rescues: 1, 2**

All Chief's Cars, Arson Squad Cars

#### Elevator Jacks and Blocks

**Ladders: 2, 6, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29, 30, Aerial Tower 2**

#### Flexi-Cot Body Wrappers

Engines: 11, 14

**Ladders: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30, Aerial Tower 1**

**Rescues: 1, 2**

#### Foam and Foam Applicators

#### High Expansion Foam

Engine: 20, 25, 41. Each carry 4 five gallon cans.

#### 2 ½ - inch Line Foam

Engines: 1, 5, 17, 41, 47

Stockpiled at Engines 1 & 17 are 20 five gallon cans of 3% foam

Stockpiled at Engines 5, 41, 47 are 25 five gallon cans of 3% foam

### **1 ½ - inch Foam Pick-Up**

Engines: 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 20, 25, 26, 31, 33, 37, 37, 40, 41, 42, 47, 48, 50

**Ladders: 10, 13, 21, 25**

Each company carries 3 five-gallon cans

### **Foam Supply**

BFD Stock Room: 100 five-gallon cans 3% foam  
100 five-gallon cans Hi-Ex foam  
6 fifty-five gallon drums for fireboats

Logan Airport: 5,000 gallons 6% foam  
1,300 gallons Purple K  
1,000 gallons on various vehicles  
170 gallons Lite Water  
150 gallons Jet-X

South Weymouth Naval Air Station: Crash truck with foam and water, available twenty four hours.  
400 five-gallon cans in stock.  
Twin Agent Unit equipped with Lite Water and ANSUL Unit

United States Coast Guard: 100 five- gallon cans available. Additional quantities can be airlifted.

United States Air Force: Hanscom and Westover Air Force Bases will supply foam, apparatus and manpower.  
Boston Fire Alarm is to coordinate through the Massachusetts State Police for escort to the scene.

### **Gasoline Chain Saws**

**Rescue 1 and 2**

### **Gas Mask Canisters**

KWIK START: 150 at Training Academy, 500 at Training/Research storage

### **Generators and Lights**

**Ladders: 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 25, 29, 31**

**Homelite model XL-98 12 – inch gasoline powered rotary Saws** *(similar to Partner K-12 saw –Editor)*

**Ladders: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 23, 29, Aerial Tower 1, Aerial Tower 2**

**Rescues 1 and 2 (note both have two each)**

### **Hurst Rescue Tool “Jaws of Life”**

**Rescue 1 and 2**

### **Ladder Pipes**

**Ladders: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30**

### **MBTA Emergency Tools**

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Rail Testers**

Engines: 18

**Ladders: 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 16, 20, 24, 30, Aerial Tower 1, Aerial Tower 2**

### **25-Ton Jacks**

**Ladders: 10, 14, 15, 24, Aerial Tower 2**

### **“T” Wrenches**

Engines: 1, 4, 8, 25, 39, 43

**Ladders: 1, 8, 15, 18, 19, 20, 24**

**Rescues: 1, 2**

### Porter-Ferguson Hydraulic Device

**Ladders: 2, 10, 14, 25, Aerial Tower 1**

**Rescue 1 and 2**

### S.C.B.A.

All Companies except Engines 31, 47, 54 and Ladder 31 carry 2 Chemox and 4 MSA Masks

**Rescues: 1 and 2** each have 6 Chemox and 6 MSA masks

### Smoke Ejectors and Fans

**Ladders: 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 29, 30, Aerial Tower 2**

**Rescues: 1, 2**

### SOLVAY Emergency Kits *(Used for chlorine emergencies-Editor)*

**Rescue 1 "A" Kit (100-150 lbs.), "B" kit (16-30 tons)**

"C" Kit at Chelsea Fire Headquarters

"D" Kit at Chlorox Corporation in Brighton

### Water Main Maps

Cars: Chief of Department, Fire Marshal, Division 1 and 2, Deputy Chief of Research & Training

