



# THE LINE BOX

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## BROOKLYN SAT. JAN. 31, 2015 77-77- Box 0103

Saturday January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2015, the Feast of Saint John Bosco, was anything but a feast day for the FDNY. Before the day was over, the Fire Department City of New York would fight one of its biggest battles against both fire and brutal weather conditions.

The Citi-Storage was located at 5 North 11<sup>th</sup> Street at Kent Avenue in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn. The rear of the building was on the East River. The building was a four story 100 X 100 ft. warehouse of ordinary construction. The building was fully sprinklered. Citi-Storage specialized in the storage of hospital, legal and health related documents. The facility had some 17 million cubic feet of climate controlled storage. The temperature was maintained between 64-68 degrees with humidity between 33-48%. At the time of the fire, there were some 4 million boxes of New York State Court records and Hospital records in storage. These were all destroyed.



Citi-Storage photo courtesy of Google Earth.

One of the interesting facts of this fire is that there was a small fire on the first floor that was contained by the sprinkler system. Here is the rundown for the first fire

Time	Response/Comments
0438	<b>Automatic Alarm 5 North 11<sup>th</sup> St. Citi-Storage</b> E-229, L-146, Batt. 35
0440	<b>Per Batt. 35</b> "Transmit the box, we have a smoke condition and sprinkler activation". Box 0103 transmitted E-221, 238, L-106, 104 FAST Truck
0442	<b>E-229 reports</b> "We found the fire, 1 L/S/O, awaiting other companies
0500	<b>Per Batt. 35</b> "Using 2 & 2 for a fire in a commercial warehouse, main body of fire is knocked down, trucks are opening up".
0509	<b>Per Batt. 35</b> "All hand under control, no additional units needed. All workers accounted for, fire is extinguished . Fire was in some shelving on the 1 <sup>st</sup> floor".

Forty seven minutes after clearing the scene. Brooklyn C.O. received a call reporting fire now showing in the same area as before. Brooklyn box 0103 was once again transmitted, the first alarm in a fire that was not placed under control for 5 days, 8 hours, 29 minutes!

The response list is compiled from various sources. By the time the Allout was sent, nearly every FDNY company and numerous Special Units had operated at the fire.



The Fire Fighter II operating. Photo courtesy NY. Daily News



Companies working, photo courtesy of FDNY

Time	Response/Comments
0628	<b>Box 0103 5 North 11<sup>th</sup> St @ Kent Ave</b> E-221, 229, 238,216 L-106, 146, Fast Truck 104 Sq. 252, R2, Marine 6, RAC. 2 Batt. 35, 45 Div. 11
0638	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> alarm box 0103 77-22-0103</b> E-211, 258, 259, 292 L-108, 119 Marine 9, E-207 w/Sat.6 , Field Comm Batt-31 Safety, 57 Resource Unit Leader, 28 FF, Marine, Safety & Rescue Batts.
0642	B-35 rpts "setting up Tower Ladders"
0645	B-35 Special Call 1 additional Tower Ladder L-11 Acting L-146
0646	<b>Orders of Batt 35 transmit 3<sup>rd</sup> alarm 77-33-0103</b> E-210, 217,218, 235 L-115, 102 sp. C, 163 sp.c Mask Service Unit, Thawing Unit 330, Tac. 2 E-9 w/Sat. 1, E-279 w/Comm. Unit B-32 Satging, 43 Air Recon Cars, 7 Brooklyn Boro Command, 12-A Exec Officer Safety, 16 Chief Communications Div., 1-F Comm. Liasion.
0706	D-11 rpts "Fire through out a 4 story comm. w/extension to An exposure. 2 TL's in operation, 2 more being set up, 3 L/S/O. Fire is DWH"
0710	B/O Field Comm. Sp. C 2 additional FAST Trucks L-128, 112
0712	B/O Div. 11 Sp. C 2 more Tower Ladders. L-120, L-36 Acting L-7
0727	Div. 11 "Notify the Shops L-146's Tower is frozen in front of the fire building"
0730	C-7 rpts "5 Tower Ladders operating and Marine 9 is setting up. Fire is still D/W/H"
0812	C-7 rpts: " 5 Tower Ladders and 2 Marine units operating. Sp. C an additional Sat. Unit E-330 w/Sat, 3
0824	FC per C7 "have E-9 & Sat 1 meet up with E-235. There is only 1 working hydrant."

0840	<b>Orders of C7 transmit 4<sup>th</sup> alarm 77-44-0103</b> E-277, 237, 226, 224 L-18, 135 E-262 w/Planning Unit E-230 w/MCC Batt 4 (planning), Batt 37 & 48 special called Cars 4 Chief of Operations, C-12 Chief of Safety
1036	<b>Orders of Car 4 transmit 5<sup>th</sup> alarm 77-55-0103</b> E-233 Acting 239, 234 Acting 216, 271, 260 L-105, 9, 117 Spec. called E-330 w/ Sat. 3 Spec. called E-324 w/ Sat. 4, Thawing Unit 265 Car 3 Chief of Department
1100	Car rpts "3 Tower Ladders and 2 fire boats operating still a heavy volume of fire, Fire is still DWH."
1105	Per Field Comm: :Spec. Call 2 additional Batt. Chiefs" ****Fall Back Step 3 in effect****
1219	Per MCC-1, "Transmit the 6 <sup>th</sup> alarm 77-66-0103, no chiefs just Tower Ladders." E-238, 216, 211, 258 E-24 spec. called to relieve E-207 L-152 Acting 115, 146, L-124, 111, 119, 114, 161, 7, 14 all special called L-108, 102 special called as FAST Trucks Batt 40, 58, 53, 13 and Div. 1 all special called Fire Science Unit
1442	MCC-1 "Car 3 6 Towers, 1 Satilite unit & 1 Marine unit operating. Partial collapse fo the fire bldg, extended operations. Transmit a 7 <sup>th</sup> alarm 4 engines, 1 being the back up for the Sat. Unit , 3 Towers, 1 Rearmount to replace the FAST Truck and 1 Batt. Chief <b>7<sup>th</sup> alarm 77-77-0103</b> E-240, 243, 236 E152 Spec. Call Sat. back up L-15, 17, 45, L-3 as FAST Truck Batt 14
1800	MCC-1 Per Car 16 "Conditons of the fire remain un-changes. The fire is Proable will hold. Special call 8 engines, 3 will back up the Sat. Companies, 6 Towers, 1 Rearmount as the new FAST Truck, Marine 1, 4 Battalion Chiefs 1 to be Safety and 1 Thawing Unit." E-206, 42, 97,159 TL-120, 124, 58, 50, 23,22 L-102 FAST Truck Marine 1, Thawing Units 64, 61 Spec. Called Batt. 48, 20, 1, 57 as Safety
2130	MCC-1 "Special call 7 engines 1 being a Sat Company, 6 Towers, 1 Rearmount as the FAST Truck, 2 Batts. All into staging. Have only the Officers report to the Command Post." E-281, 233, 73, 284, 324, 283, 26, 76 L-144, 107, 12, 105, 159, 161 L-156 FAST Truck Batt

**Sunday Feb. 1, 2015**

0030	Relief E-47, 218 L-31, 119,163, 14 L-8 FAST Truck Sat. Units E-207 w/ Sat.6, E-9 w/Sat.1, E-72 w/ Sat. 2, Marine 9 B-18, 51, 7, 9, 31 as Safety
0117	MCC-1 "6 Tower Ladders, 3 Sat, and 1 Boat still operating, fire is PWH duration of fire 17 hrs 54 mins."
0300	MCC-1 "Relief of companies will be every 3 hours, for 5 engines, 3 Towers, 1 Rearmount for FAST Truck and 3 Batts .
0600	Reliefs to staging
0900	Reliefs to staging
1100	MCC-1 " No public access to area die to safety"
1500	Reliefs to staging

1650	MCC-1 "Special call the Shops for Fuel Truck"
1800	Reliefs to staging, "Special call R-2 w/Rescue Collapse Unit 2 and Marine 1" R2 w/RC-2, Marine 1
1815	MCC-1 "Special Call E-207 to return Sat. 6 to quarters" E-207
2215	MCC-1 "Special call the Shops for Fuel Truck"
2400	Reliefs to staging

#### Monday Feb, 2, 2015

0100	Reliefs to staging
0300	Reliefs to staging
0600	Reliefs to staging
0850	MCC-1 " Notify all in coming relief companies not to come down North 10 <sup>th</sup> Street due to LDH in the road
0900,1200, 1500,1800	Reliefs to staging E-217, 234 L-107, 172, 161, 124 Thawing Unit 97 Batt. 52, 28 (Safety)
2100	Reliefs to staging E-238, 205, 33, 294,202 E-72 w/Sat. 2 L-1 Batt 7, 52
2400	Reliefs to staging E-92, 225, 219, 312 E-9 w.Sat. 1 L-35,41, 121, 166 FAST Truck Batt 9, 19, 23, 37

#### Tuesday Feb. 3, 2015

0300	Reliefs to staging E-22, 89, 201, 245, 309 TL-7, 51, 153, L-148 FAST Truck Batt. 8, 14, 33, 40
0600	Reliefs to staging
0900	Reliefs to staging E-83, 10, 226 L-51 Marine 1, Thawing Unit 61 Batt, 20, 26, 19
1200, 1800 2100, 2400	Reliefs to staging

#### Wednesday Feb. 4, 2015

0300	Reliefs to staging E- 8, 46, 76, 155, 242 TL-15, 33, 163, T-106 FAST Truck Batt 1, 3, 42, 49
0600	Reliefs to staging E-1, 206, 226, 230, 218 TL-18, 114, 152, L-113 FAST Truck Batt 13, 32, 46, 48
0900	Reliefs to staging E-14, 239, 240, 307 TL-107, 120, L-112 FAST Truck Batt 2, 4, 57
1200	Reliefs to staging E-53, 247, 28, 286, 290 TL-15, 44, 146, L-109 FAST Truck Batt 19, 33, 38, 45
1500	Reliefs to staging E-21, 211, 221, 246, 305

	TL-117, 131, 160, L-176 FAST Truck Batt. 20, 51, 58
1800	Reliefs to staging E-97, 217, 220, 231, 238, 292 TL-85, 111, 161, L-103 FAST Truck R-2 Batt. 14, 35, 41, 50
2100	Reliefs to staging E-64, 201, 236, 260, 321 TL 107, 124, 163, L-104 FAST Truck Batt. 28, 39, 43, 52
2400	Reliefs to staging E-161, 235, 243, 318 TL- 51, 54, 164, L-108 FAST Truck Batt. 3, 8, 31, 40

**Thursday Feb. 5, 2015**

0103	MCC-1 "Per Car 7 Fire is under control!"
0300	Reliefs to staging E-46, 65, 66, 84 TL-51, 54, 164, L-108 FAST Truck Batt. 16, 26, 37, 53
0600	Reliefs to staging E-28, 210, 285, 309 TL-12, 14, 149, L-132 FAST Truck Batt. 11, 38, 42, 48
0900	Reliefs to staging E-74, 94, 228, 236 TL-13, 161, 163, L-122 FAST Truck Batt. 6, 18, 44, 54
1200	Reliefs to staging E-10, 214, 218, 253 TL-17, 107, L-109 FAST Truck Batt. 1, 32, 52
1457	MCC-1 " Fire under control" Initial Alarm - 1/31/2015 @ 0628 hrs. Under Control - 2/5/2015 @1457 hrs. Duration = 5 days, 8 hours, 29 minutes

***(MCC-1 Is one of the mobile command centers. It is a tractor trailer unit. It is quartered with Engine 233. Editor)***

## The Beacon Oil Company Fire of 1928

By John Pozark Jr.

About 100 years ago the transition from coal to oil began in earnest. Coal had been the fuel that fed the Industrial Revolution. It fed the steam engines of factories and ships. It fed the locomotives that moved freight across the country. In the fire service we learned an acronym to teach us the important points in sizing up a fire. COAL WAS WEALTH, was taught to firemen to remind them what to look for.

The introduction of the automobile changed all that. It introduced a new fuel that would replace coal. Petroleum, oil, became the critical product of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the end of World War I the expansion of the use of petroleum products accelerated.

Everett Massachusetts was found to be one of the ideal spots on the Atlantic Coast for a refinery. The Beacon Oil Company was formed and a state of the art facility was built. In the early 1920s it was one of only a few refineries using a new cracking process. Organized in 1919, the company was headquartered at 111 Devonshire St. in Boston Mass. Along the banks of the Mystic River, a site was selected, near the plants of the New England Fuel & Transportation Co., the Merrimac Chemical Company and a plant of the Boston Consolidated Gas Company. The initial capacity of the plant was 10,000 to 20,000 barrels a day. There were railroad connections to the Boston and Albany Railroad, the Boston and Maine Railroad and the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad. The company manufactured gasoline, kerosene, gas oil, lubricating and road oils and asphalt. In 1920 the company successfully won a contract to produce Bunker "C" Fuel for the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Fleet. By 1922 the Beacon Oil Company had 105 rail tank cars in service.

The Beacon Oil Company's property in Everett covered 100 acres with 1500 linear feet of deep water frontage on the Island End and Mystic Rivers. Two large steamers and one large barge by could be handled simultaneously in this dock. There was expansion room for four additional large vessel, deep water berths. Storage tanks were connected by pipelines 3500 feet long to the fuel loading docks. One 12 inch pipeline for crude oil, two 10 inch pipelines for fuel oil, 2 pipelines of 8 inches one for gas oil and one for gasoline, and one 6 inch kerosene pipeline. There was also pipeline to carry water for condensing purposes.

While designed to receive crude oil the plant could also make Marine shipments of fuel oil, gasoline, and kerosene and gas oil. Ships could be bunkered in dock or, with the company's own Marine equipment, at berth or anchor in the harbor. There were 11 underground concrete storage tanks with a combined capacity of 750,000 barrels. For distillation the plant used 2 pipe stills and 15 cylindrical stills. The distilling plant used 45 steel tanks of various sizes and capacity in the refining process. There were four large agitators for treating and filtering gasoline and kerosene along with a plant to treat acid sludge. About 60 pumping stations transferred product around the plant. The tank farm contained 18 steel storage tanks with a total capacity of 200,000 barrels. Adjacent to the tank farm were the railcar loading racks with a double track steel bridge and the capacity of 18 rail tank cars per hour. Power for the plant came from six 500HP boilers which burned residual product from the refinery. The boiler house also contained two generators for furnishing electricity at the plant. For fire protection there was a 250 man fire brigade. Fixed systems included a high pressure water system with three independent sources, safety steam lines and a complete Foamite system. There were also portable Foamite engines and hose carts. Hazardous operations have emergencies. On February 10, 1928 one of the worst emergencies, a disaster, happened. An explosion occurred, probably due to the failure of a low-pressure still.

About 3 O'clock in the afternoon a blast was heard in cities for miles around. A column of smoke rose into the sky with flames 200 feet in the air. The blast leveled the boiler and machine shops and fire threatened the storage tanks. Panic gripped the employees of the office building. People stormed the exits.

Every day people became heroes. In the control room of the valve house John Thompson was thinking about going home when the explosion occurred. He was knocked to the floor as the door blew open. Quickly he got to his feet and shut the door. Surrounded by flames he went about the work of shutting off the flow of product to the damaged stills. Fire like the inferno of hell threatened to burn through the door and melt the glass. Thompson closed valves and threw emergency levers. After he did everything he could, he sat on the floor and waited to meet his maker.

In the office building the switchboard operator, Miss Mary English attempted to call the fire department but found the company's switchboard dead. Thinking quickly, while the other girls rushed from the building, Miss English took a Nickel from her purse, went downstairs to the pay telephone and called the fire department. After that notification she told the Telephone Company

Exchange Operator to call the hospitals and get doctors and clergy to the scene.

The Beacon Oil Co. Plant Fire Brigade gathered themselves and set to work fighting the fire. They had had special training in fighting this, at the time, uncommon blaze. It was obvious that another emergency valve had to be operated. An unidentified member of the brigade edged toward the inferno and shut off the feed line before running back to join his fellow Beacon Oil firefighters.

The Everett Fire Department responded and quickly transmitted five alarms. Mutual Aid from fire departments of the cities of Malden, Medford, Chelsea, and Boston was called to the scene. Other people rushed to help the injured and remove the dead. Physicians responded and set up an emergency hospital at the scene to treat the slightly injured. More serious cases were sent to the hospital, principally the Massachusetts General Hospital. Priests risk their lives to give absolution to the victims. As the fire was knocked down the secondary search began. John Thompson was found in the valve control room, miraculously surviving the firestorm. In the office building, one young woman was found unconscious. She had been trampled in the stampede. She was taken to a hospital and was revived. The terrible work of search and recovery went on through the night.

Most of the dead and injured worked in the boiler machine shops adjacent to the first still to explode. Initially 12 were reported killed. Some of the injured would linger for a few days in the hospital before succumbing raising the total to 14. Thirty five more people were seriously injured. The State Fire Marshal sent a fire investigator immediately.

On duty at the Massachusetts General Hospital was a fourth year student of the Harvard Medical School. This student was frustrated by the inadequate treatment of the burn victims. He was so impressed he made the treatment of burn injuries a focus of his medical career. That medical student became Doctor, Oliver Cope M. D. Fourteen years later Dr. Cope would use his experience from the treatment of Beacon Oil burn patients to care for victims of another metropolitan disaster, the Cocoanut Grove Nightclub Fire.

Along with residents of Everett, the victims included people from Malden, Boston, Cambridge, Winchester and Wakefield. The Workmen's Compensation Agency would pay out more than \$100,000 in benefits. Despite this benefit many of the victims and their families were still devastated.

To help alleviate the suffering arrangements were made for an exhibition baseball game to raise funds for the victims. The game was held at Glendale Park on August 9, 1928 between a local team, the Knights of Columbus Blues and 16 rookies of the Boston Red Sox. But the Everett K. of C. Blues had a couple of ringers. You see, the Yankees were in Boston for a four game set against the Red Sox. After the regular game at Fenway Park the players took a bus to Everett. Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig suited up and played with the Everett boys. The Red Sox won but Babe Ruth hit a home run clear out of the park. It landed somewhere on Ferry St.

After the fire the Beacon Oil Company would become the Beacon-Colonial Oil Co. known for their unique filling stations. A dome shaped pumping spot with a service area attached to the side. If you drive up Route 28 into Stoneham you'll see one of the last survivors of this style station converted to an ice cream store. It's on the National Register of Historic Places. When I drive through the foggy roads of my memory I seem to remember one of these at the intersection of Massachusetts Ave. and Southampton St. in Boston. Right on the edge of "The Lot".

Photos Courtesy of the Boston Public Library, Leslie Jones Collection

