



DEPARTMENT IN FOCUS SALEM FIRE DEPARTMENT

by Captain Greg Miller



photography by Andrea Hossley

Originally known as Pond Town by the first settlers (due to several ponds that arise from aquifers that are created by runoff from the nearby mountains). Salem was founded as a city in 1886, being named after Salem, Massachusetts. The name Salem was chosen because of its meaning "The City of Peace". The citizens of Salem have always helped and served each other to promote a place of safety and peace. In addition to being there for each other, the citizens have a history of extending a helping hand to the people of the surrounding areas when times of need have arisen. This spirit of compassion, desire to serve, and love of the area has resonated with those who live in Salem. Even before the fire department was officially organized in 1951, Salem banded together to protect its residences from the dangers of fire and other hazards. Salem Fire Department has been staffed by volunteers from its simple beginnings to its diverse capabilities of today. The heritage of service carries on with those who volunteer with the Salem Fire Department.

Salem City covers an area of 10.2 square miles with 6,500 inhabitants; however, the Salem Fire Department covers the surrounding rural area as well, totaling around 30 square miles within its fire boundaries. The department is often called out to help the surrounding agencies in South-

ern Utah County, thereby increasing the area that it responds in to well over 700 square miles. The response demographics are diverse from businesses with high volumes of chemicals, to residential homes, to farmland, and to mountainous terrain. Salem has mutual agreements with the surrounding agencies to assist on any incidents where manpower and equipment are needed. These other agencies include Spanish Fork Fire & EMS, Payson Fire & EMS, Woodland Hills Fire, Elkridge Fire, and Utah County Fire Departments.

The Emergency Services Department of Salem is split between the fire service side and the EMS side. Though there is a separation, the two entities work closely together in a team effort to cover all the needs of the citizens. There is a great bond between those who serve on both sides of the department, and when they are on the scene at incidents the separation is nowhere to be found. Both the Salem Fire Department and Salem Emergency Medical Association are solely volunteer-based organizations. The Salem Fire Department currently has 18 active members and the Salem Emergency Medical Association has 31 active members. The fire department is organized with a fire chief, an assistant chief, 4 captains, and 12 firefighters. Members currently hold certifications in Firefighter I, Firefighter II, HazMat Awareness, HazMat Operations, Instructor, ADO Pumper, ADO Aerial, and Red Cards in Wildland Firefighter. The members of the fire department all have a strong desire to improve their skills and certify in the areas of the fire service that will better serve the community. Training is ongoing to improve the skills already obtained and to be more proficient in using those traits on scene when needed most. The department members participate annually in the state offered Winter and Summer Fire schools, and

which provide great opportunities to network with our fellow brothers and sisters in the service, as well as to learn new techniques and expand our knowledge within the fire service. Bi-monthly training is offered to all members to maintain skills and learn new methods to better improve the department's performance and build camaraderie with each other.

Salem Fire Department responds to an average of 70 fire calls per year and the Salem Emergency Medical Association responds to an average of 170 medical calls per year. Of the 70 fire calls each year, we will respond to a variety of situations that require us to adapt and work together to see a good outcome. We respond to the typical calls of CO alarms and vehicle accidents with no injuries to the occupants to severe life-threatening injuries requiring extrication. Several structure fires are encountered throughout the year ranging from room and contents to fully involved structures. We also have special considerations where water supplies are not accessible and the use of water tenders are required to accomplish the fire attack. It is not uncommon to respond to barn fires or residential fires in the rural areas where water shuttling is set up to douse the flames. During the summer months we assist Utah County Fire and the surrounding agencies with the wildland fires that are frequent in the nearby mountain ranges as well as in the valley fields. Last year we participated in several of the large wildland fires from the northern end of Utah County all the way down to Cedar City and everything in between. Though our call volume may seem small in number compared to other departments, we always seem to encounter the gambit, requiring us to have a vast fire knowledge base.

The apparatus we use to accomplish our jobs are 2 engines, 1 rescue truck, 1 water tender, 2 brush trucks, and 1 heavy brush truck. The 2 engines are a 1993 Westates 1500 gpm pump and

a 1983 American La France 1750 gpm pump with open seating in the rear of the cab. The rescue truck carries a 300 gallon tank with a 500 gpm pump as well as extrication equipment, a generator, various hand tools, an air pump unit for stabilization bags, and various other tools to assist in most situations. Our 2 brush trucks carry 200-gallon tanks and equipment to assist on any wildland fire. The heavy brush holds 1500 gallons with 2 hose reels and hand tools. The heavy brush is often requested by outside agencies to assist with wildland fires due to its capabilities to be able to go almost anywhere in any type of terrain.

The newest member of the department is our water tender that arrived in August. It is a 2013 Kenworth T370 that holds 3000 gallons of water with a 1000 gpm pump. The tank can be emptied in 80 seconds through a 10-inch dump chute that can be maneuvered to empty on either side of the vehicle or directly behind the vehicle. Its capable of being refilled in 3 minutes. It has the capability to be a great asset in those areas where water supplies are not accessible.

For a small department, Salem is as diverse as they come but ready to handle any type of call that may arise and proud to serve all those with whom we come in contact.

