

# "Badges and Patches"

Source: Don Porth, Brian Johnson

Badges and patches have always been a source of pride and significance for firefighter's in Portland and elsewhere. Many variations have been seen since the department began in 1853. Not always has there been a badge or patch. The best known history of each is shared here.

## BADGES

Portland Fire badges, as we know them today, were not a prominent decoration in the Volunteer era in Portland. From 1853 to 1883, photos do not feature badges on members' uniforms. However, there were small



badges that indicated membership in the Exempt Firemen's Association. To be a part of this organization, one had to serve seven years continuously in the Portland Volunteer Fire Department. Membership entitled

firefighters to exemption from jury duty, free public transit, and some kind of relief on taxation. This was likely very helpful for those giving service to the city with no compensation. An Exempt Firemen's provision was supposedly created by the Oregon state legislature in 1860.



When the department evolved to the Portland Paid Fire Department in 1883, badges that resemble what is known today began to be used. These badges were assigned to the individual companies, which was represented in the number on each badge. For example, the badge pictured here would be an Engine 3 badge, as indicated by the first number of the three. It is followed by 31 which was simply the 31st badge to be issued to that company. These badges remained with the company and would be re-assigned when a member transferred or retired. "PPFD" indicates "Portland Paid Fire Department," which was the department name from 1883 to 1904 when civil service would be instituted in the city.

Truck companies used a similar system except the badge number would begin with 10 for truck 1, 20 for Truck 2, and so on. The following two numbers would indicate the assigned member on that crew. So the fifth member of Truck 3 would be issued badge number 3005. No examples have been found.



By June 1, 1906, the department had reached ten engine companies and it was also a time that coincides with the time when civil service reforms came into being and the department became fully paid. It was then that the name changed to "PFD, or Portland Fire Department." Records (which are

incomplete due to limited personnel files prior to 1904) indicate that badge numbers assigned to individuals would begin about 1904. The lettering stamped or embossed on these badges show "PFD" with a number in the middle, as shown here.



Badges assigned to individuals were issued at the time of hire and expected to be turned in at retirement so they could be reissued to the next new hire. This seems to have been regular practice since many members can be found sharing the same badge number. However, records do not seem to indicate that all numbers (100-999) were used. There are no records of a one or two digit number being used.

The issuing of numbered badges would continue until September of 1977. At this time, generic badges were issued, which included individual rank designations. The firefighter badge is shown here. Rank designations would be as follows:

- Firefighter - traditional silver scramble of helmet, trumpet, nozzle, ladder, pike pole, axe.
- Lieutenant/Fire Inspector - one vertical silver trumpet/bar (and in some cases, axe)
- Captain/Senior Inspector - two vertical silver trumpets/bars (and in some cases, axes)
- Battalion Chief - two crossed gold trumpets
- Deputy Chief - three crossed gold trumpets
- Division/Assistant Chief - four crossed gold trumpets
- Chief/Chief Engineer - five crossed gold trumpets



Other badges were seen at different points in department history. Some of these are shown below:



This badge is that of a Lineman for the Fire Alarm Telegraph function of the Fire Department. It is unclear if all of the Linemen were hired as telegraph specialists or if they were Firefighter's who were assigned. Two recognized firefighter line of duty deaths were that of Fire Alarm Telegraph Linemen. The PPF designations would indicate this is from the 1883-1903 era.



Like the Fire Alarm Telegraph division of the fire department, the Logistics side of the department also had special staff and function. The Superintendent of Apparatus was a title and function given to the person (typically civilian) who oversaw purchasing, care, and maintenance of all fire apparatus. Here is an example of the badge given this person.

## PATCHES

Patches seem to have been around since the fire service began. If they have been, Portland Fire was not on board with the practice. Badges seemed to be the only symbol of affiliation from 1883 until 1976, when the first patch would appear.

The first patch was a small and carried a blue and red color combination. It first appeared in 1976, a year after Chief Gordon Morterud became Chief. It was believed to be an agenda of his to better identify firefighters. The patch was only used on the duty shirt. The dress uniform would remain without a patch until 1986.



1976-1986



1986-1990

In 1984, Portland Fire & Rescue entered into a contractual agreement with Multnomah County Fire District #10. District #10 also had a patch, which was different than the Portland Patch. In 1986, with the addition of an additional contractual agreement with Clackamas County Fire District #1, a new patch was debuted that carried the color scheme and shape of the District #10 patch, accompanied by the content of the Portland patch. This would be used until 1990. It would

be worn on all jackets, duty shirts, and dress uniforms.

In an effort to utilize a more traditional Maltese cross shaped patch, a contest across the fire bureau was held to design the next patch. Many entries were submitted with the winning design being shown here. It was designed by Bobbi Eddy, wife of firefighter Cal Eddy. This patch would span 1990 to 2006 and also be worn on all uniforms, just as its predecessor.

The official name of the bureau would be kicked around from 1990 to 2006. It would go from "Portland Bureau of Fire" to "Portland Bureau of Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services." This was an effort to better articulate the full mission of the organization as budgets would tighten and cutbacks loomed. This proved cumbersome so in 2006, the name would be shortened to "Portland Fire & Rescue." This prompted a new logo that would not only grace the patch, but would also be placed on apparatus and other visible elements of Portland Fire & Rescue. The patch would exist from 2006 until the time this document was published.



1990-2006

2006-Present



## PARAMEDIC PATCHES

In addition to the official patch of Portland Fire & Rescue, Portland Firefighters would also wear an Emergency Medical Technician patch. It would indicate the level of certification (EMT I, EMT II, EMT III, EMT IV, EMT Basic, EMT Intermediate, Paramedic). These patches were originally supplied by Portland Fire and took different forms. In 1984, when all firefighters were mandated to become a minimum of EMT I/Basic, a certification from the State of Oregon would become mandatory, therefore an EMT patch designed and issued by the State became the default.

The first paramedic patch was designed by Portland Firefighter Doug Greene. He related the story as follows:

*"Between 1980 and 1983 were my EMS (Emergency Medical System) coordinator years. It was a great job. Basically Chief Melvin Brink had an in-basket full of EMS related issues. I got promoted to Lieutenant and he gave me his EMS in-basket and told me to make a job out of it. Soon after, the Fire Bureau switched from American Red Cross first aid training to the Orthopedic Surgeon's EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) I course. We standardized each apparatus' EMS kit. Bob Annas, the mask man, corralled all the oxygen units from the police cars. He converted them all to adjustable liter flow. Those were amazing years of change. Portland Fire went straight to the top of EMS and we have never looked back. No longer was there timidity with firefighter first response. Our confidence went sky high. Rescue units would be sent home early because engine and truck companies who arrived first on the scene knew their business so well they would let the rescue units go back in service. That was a sign to everyone that Portland Fire was really committed to quality EMS."*

First Paramedic Patch





Paramedic Patch Circa 2000



Paramedic Patch Circa 1984

**PORTLAND CIVIL DEFENSE BADGES - 1950 to 1963**

By Brian K. Johnson, Portland Assistant City Archivist

In response to perceived Cold War threats, on February 20, 1950, Mayor Dorothy McCullough Lee appointed Charles Pray as Portland’s first director of Civil Defense (CD) in accordance with Chapter 434, Oregon Laws 1949. Within a few years, the department had become a national model; and in 1956, Portland opened the first completely underground CD facility in the country. Just seven years later, Portland achieved another CD milestone when it became the first city in the nation to dissolve its program.

Like many cities and towns in the United States, Portland had a civil defense program beginning in the late 1930s, set up largely as a reaction to the aerial bombings of cities in Europe and Asia. Those efforts were enhanced markedly after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The enhancements included recruiting large numbers of auxiliary emergency response personnel and organizing emergency preparedness of citizens. Portland’s plan was unique in that it used existing emergency services as its framework rather than setting up a parallel agency.

Under the Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950, local governments were responsible for raising funds that state and federal governments would match. In 1952, Portland citizens passed a \$600,000 special levy “for the purpose of obtaining emergency supplies, equipment and facilities.” The CD program staff developed infrastructure to coordinate the city’s Engineering, Police, Fire, Medical, Welfare, and Warden Departments during enemy attacks. Each department was charged with using its own personnel during emergencies, supplemented by auxiliary volunteer forces.

As a key component of their work, Portland’s CD staff members educated the public about the dangers of nuclear war and how to respond to an attack, including first aid and survival techniques. They did so

using brochures, bulletins, movies, and school visits and by setting up CD displays at venues such as auto and home shows.

The first major demonstration of Portland's program was Operation Green Light, an exercise in evacuating a thousand blocks of Portland's downtown core. The name referred to a new traffic signal pattern Portland officials developed. Green lights on main exit routes and red lights at intersections prevented cars from crossing exit routes; cars approaching a red light were only allowed to proceed with the traffic; and amber lights flashed in all four directions as a visual supplement to the sirens.

On September 27, 1955, at 3:05 in the afternoon, sirens signaled the start of the exercise. By 3:59, 29,423 vehicles and 101,074 people had evacuated the test area; the majority of downtown had been cleared within thirty minutes. The exercise, the largest evacuation in the nation to date, received national attention because of its efficiency. Based on the success of Operation Green Light, in 1957 CBS filmed a documentary, *A Day Called X*, highlighting Portland's program. Actor Glen Ford narrated the documentary, and Portland Mayor Terry Schrunk and other city officials starred.

Portland also developed a plan to continue government operations in the event of a major disaster or attack. The first component was a plan of succession in response to death or disability of three or more City Council members. The second component was to construct a control center to serve as the seat of government. In 1956, Portland opened Kelly Butte Civil Defense Center, the first completely underground self-sustaining CD facility in the country. The third component required the Auditor's Office to reproduce vital city records, microfilmed copies of which were stored in the Kelly Butte facility.

Despite these successes, Portland voters refused to fund the program further, and on May 21, 1963, the City Council eliminated Portland's CD program. The CD program had lost the support of the majority of City Council, led by Commissioner Stanley Earl, who argued that the new hydrogen bomb made such preparations meaningless and gave Portland's citizens false hope. On July 1, 1963, Portland became the first city to disaffiliate with the national Civil Defense Program.

The Civil Fire Defense badge pictured on the right was acquired by Portland Firefighter Mike O'Keeffe and donated to the city collection. This would seem to be an early badge, perhaps from the 1940s. The significance of the number is not known.

The badge on the left may be from the cold war era. Its design and construction is more consistent



with later badges. Civil Defense efforts in Portland were officially laid to rest by Mayor Stanley Earl in 1963, so this badge predates that act.  
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