

T H E C A L I F O R N I A

JANUARY/FEBRUARY ISSUE 2012

FIRE SERVICE

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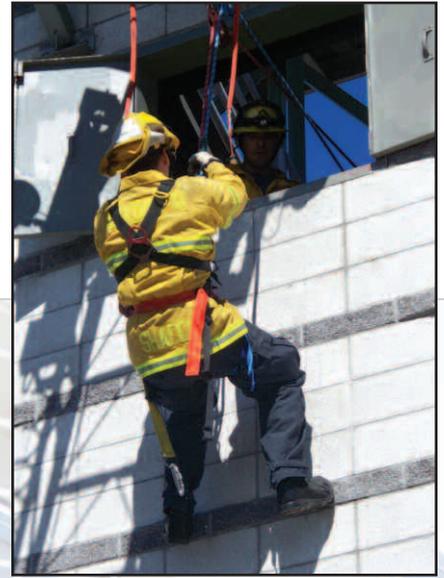
Dixon Fire Department

Driving along the Interstate 80 corridor west of Sacramento, you eventually find yourself surrounded by expansive fields of sunflowers and corn. The Vaca Mountain Range to the west extends gradually toward the sky, and cities begin to spread out along the interstate outside the hustle and bustle of big city life. One of these cities, 23 miles west of Sacramento, is Dixon. Thousands of people pass through Dixon daily, most of them traveling on the freeway, and even some not knowing that they have passed through the city. Those who have passed through Dixon over the years may remember Dixie the Dinosaur which stood 50 feet tall adjacent to the freeway until 1994.

Many may notice the aging Milk Farm Restaurant sign, which while now stands a historical memory since it's closing in 1986, was a pop culture icon of Northern California during World War II even being portrayed in the Saturday Evening Post in 1940. Roughly a mile and a half south of the freeway, on the east side of the city, sits the Dixon Fire Department. As much a part of the history of Dixon the Milk Farm sign and Dixie the Dinosaur represent, the Dixon Fire Department has been an integral part of the community and it's own history for nearly 140 years.

The Dixon Fire Department, originally the Dixon Fire Company, was organized on October 15, 1872. Initial fire suppression was

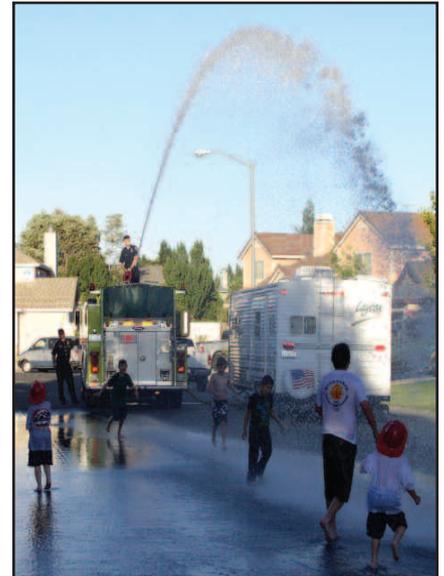
conducted with hand drawn hose carts operated by individual companies serving the town of Dixon. Rural residents, outside of the town limits, were limited to their own techniques of suppression, as it was impractical or impossible to move the hand drawn



equipment long distances to rural fires. Even if they could be moved rurally, there was no municipal water system to supply the hoses. During the turn of the century, the population of Dixon started to grow as well as did rural farming in the region. Increases in population as well as the presence of new farm machinery subsequently increased the amount of fires for the Dixon Fire Department. Fortunately, also during the turn of the century, came the automobile.

In the early 1920's, the local agricultural districts maintained a small truck, which

was equipped with chemical fire extinguishers, buckets, shovels, and other firefighting equipment. This truck was housed in town at a local store and was available for use by any rural resident. In the event of a fire, the property owner would need to go to town or arrange for someone to bring the truck to the fire. During the same period, the Dixon Fire Department also became motorized utilizing a handful of automobiles and in 1921 its first motorized pumper. The 1921 American LaFrance, though worn through its years of service, is still housed at



DIXON FIRE DEPARTMENT STATISTICS

- Dixon Fire Department – 205 Ford Way Dixon, CA 95620 - (707) 678-7060
- 1 Chief, 2 Division Chiefs, 1 Administrative Manager, 15 Career Staff, 22 Volunteer/Reserve
- 3 type I engines, 1 truck with a 105' aerial ladder, 1 type III brush engine, 1 rescue squad, 2 water tenders, 3 command vehicles, 1 utility vehicle, 1 HazMat decontamination trailer.
- Area covered 7.4 sq. miles city, 312.6 sq. miles district.
- 2010 calls for service 1834 calls
- SO rating 5 (city) and 8 (district)
- Annual Budget \$3.4 million

Fire Department in Focus

the Dixon Fire Department today.

The first firehouse in Dixon was built in 1891 in downtown Dixon and then rebuilt adjacent to the original location in 1929, where it remained in service until 1998. The building (although renovated under new use) still stands today.

Today the City of Dixon spans a modest 7.4 square miles and has a population of

18,315 (2010 census) exclusively served by the Dixon Fire Department. Additionally, under the auspices of the Dixon Fire Protection District, the department serves a rural population of approximately 5500 people established over 312 square miles. Since its construction in 1998, the department has operated from a modern, spacious, and efficient facility. The facility, station 81, houses

three type I engines, a 105' aerial ladder truck, one type III brush engine, one rescue squad, and two; 2000 gallon water tenders. Additionally, the department houses three command vehicles, one utility vehicle, and one of two county hazardous materials decontamination trailers. Currently, the department operates only one station, although has had long standing plans for a





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second station on the west side of Dixon.

The Dixon Fire Department is a combination department that currently employs 15 career firefighters and 22 volunteer/reserve firefighters. The career firefighters work on a 48/96 hour schedule at a minimum staffing level of five on duty. The administration consists of one chief, two division chiefs, and one administrative manager. Two engines are staffed with a staffing pattern of three (Captain, Engineer, Firefighter or Firefighter/Paramedic) on one engine and two (Engineer & Firefighter/Paramedic) on the other. The department provides engine based Advanced Life Support services with ambulance transportation provided by pri-

accidents. Relating to agriculture, there are multiple large storage facilities for hazardous materials including anhydrous ammonia and fertilizer compounds to name a few. Both city and district areas contain light to heavy industrial facilities subject to similar hazards. Several buildings, homes, and occasionally even infrastructure in the city are original to the late 1800's and early 1900's. A portion

of the district also lies under the flight path including the final approach path for nearby Travis Air Force Base. Dixon Fire Department personnel are well trained to mitigate an expanded scope of emergencies with all career firefighters and some volunteer members being trained and certified in vehicle extrication, hazardous materials, confined space

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vate ambulance or neighboring fire agency depending on the incident location. All personnel are trained, and have the ability to cross staff other pieces of apparatus such as the ladder truck or brush engine if needed. The cross staffing of apparatus is rather common in several situations including vehicle accidents requiring extrication, technical rescues, grass fires, and mutual aid requests.

The response area for the Dixon Fire Department contains multiple hazards and challenges. The district contains portions of two interstate highways (I-80 and I-505) and one state highway (Hwy 113). A railroad line crosses completely through the district as well as the City of Dixon. The railroad line is used heavily by both freight and passenger train services. The Dixon area is surrounded heavily by agriculture with associated hazards such as hazardous chemicals, fires, and

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rescue, trench rescue, rescue systems I, as well as multiple other operational certifications. Apparatus and stored resources provide most equipment to start effective handling of most emergencies until additional manpower and resources can arrive.

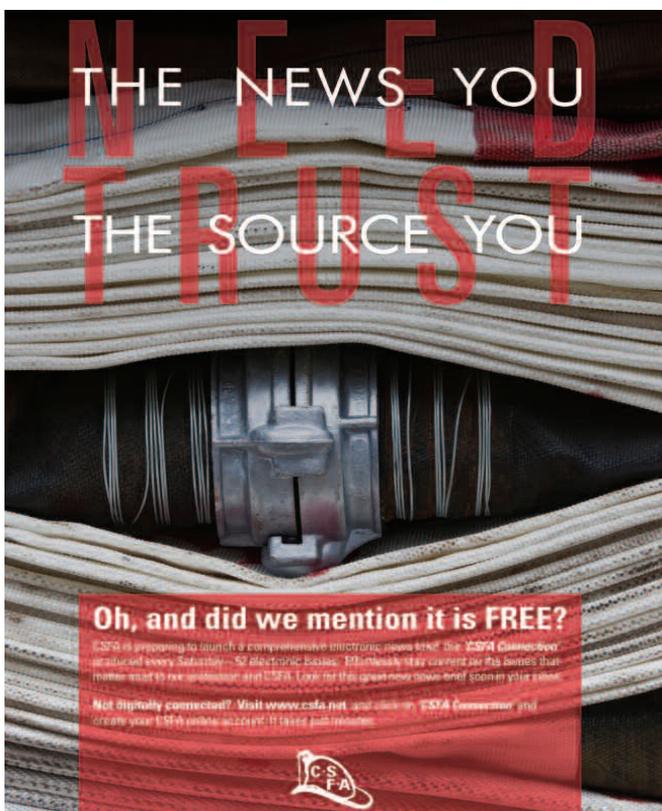
The Dixon Fire Department not only provides and receives mutual aid to and from its neighboring agencies, but also relies heavily on mutual aid agreements during emergencies for manpower and resources. As Dixon is near the eastern border of Solano County, the department receives and provides mutual aid between two different counties (Solano and Yolo). This presents unique challenges in itself such as different communication centers, operational procedures, as well as the need for cooperative training. Of these, cooperative training is often the most difficult due to resource commitments, budget impacts, and scheduling. The department is also active within the state mutual aid response plan for type I and type III resource requests. Operationally, the department has great pride in its relationship with neighboring agencies and overall functions quite well across geographical lines despite the aforementioned challenges.

Pride and commitment is hallmark in the department's relationship with the community. At its core, aside from the agricultural and industrial aspects, Dixon is largely a bedroom community that strives to retain a small town feel. The Dixon May Fair, the longest running annual fair in California, brings thousands of guests in every Mothers Day weekend to see the finest in local agriculture, carnival fun, and big name entertainment. The Dixon Fire Department participates annually in the May Fair Parade which boasts over 100 displays through downtown Dixon. Additionally, the department enthusiastically participates in community functions such as National Night Out, downtown trick or treating on Halloween, Christmas tree lighting, and annually hosts a large open house in which the community is invited to the station for activities and displays. Fundraisers for charities such

as "fill the boot", Baskin Robins 31cent scoop night, and Relay for Life that raise funds for cancer research, burn victims, fallen firefighters, and muscular dystrophy, as well as being heavily involved in the "Toys for Tots" program for needy families are all activities that the department is proud to be a part of. The department also believes in a strong public education outreach that includes station tours and school presentations including the Every 15 Minutes program, an effective teenage campaign against driving under the influence, sponsored by the California Highway Patrol.

The City of Dixon and the fire department certainly have not been immune to challenges, especially over the last few years. Downturns in the economy have impacted residents and businesses significantly which have decreased city revenues. Planned and anticipated residential growth has slowed or stopped and the number of local business has either leveled or decreased. With the reduction in city revenue, the department has been a victim of heavy budget reduction and an inability to compensate for attrition. Currently through the departure of employees and internal promotions, there are several vacancies within the department that are unable to currently be filled. Engine staffing has been reduced from three on each engine, to three on one engine and two on the other. Even despite engine staffing reductions, employee vacancies remain a factor many days of the month. Plans for a second station are in place, but have been put on hold indefinitely due to reduction in residential growth leaving one station with reduced staffing to still cover a large response area. Many needs of the department that were once easily obtained are now pleaded for through grant and community group funding. Contract negotiations have resulted in many cuts in salary and benefits. Fortunately however, layoffs have not occurred. These problems are certainly not unique to the Dixon Fire Department, as they are shared by many other departments throughout the state. Despite cuts and reduction in spending, the Dixon Fire Department maintains its pride, integrity, and service to the community and is active in pursuing fresh ideas for internal growth.

Currently the Dixon Fire Department is working on several ideas that will allow it to be a better resource to the community, the city, and the surrounding region. Current and future plans include securing training and resources to provide apparatus as a typed medium rescue resource available locally and statewide. The department is a proud host facility for state certified training courses in confined space rescue, trench rescue, and rescue systems I with courses held annually. The Dixon Fire Department was the first in the county to be trained and equipped in Confined Space Rescue. A joint training effort between the Dixon Fire Department and the neighboring UC Davis Fire Department to bring all career staff to the technician level was done to provide a bi-county (Solano and Yolo) confined space rescue team. Additionally, State Fire Marshall level 1 & 2 courses and off site National Fire Academy courses are offered at the facility. A strong commitment to this training remains, and is actually expanding in its scope and availability. The Dixon Fire Department is increasing our community outreach as public education and awareness is an important element in providing understanding to not only the departments operation, but also to the challenges faced. A current campaign of print and social media integration is in place or is planned, as well as increased visibility and availability to the public. Medium to long term goals include restoration of vacant positions, apparatus replacement, and expansion of the department with another station. Progressive growth remains important as a means to improve customer service, meet the growing demands of



the city, and to solidify relationships with neighboring agencies.

The Dixon Fire Department has certainly come a long way over its long standing history in the community. Hand drawn hose carts have

given way to modern engines and towering aerial apparatus. The town siren, now silent, has long since been replaced with modern dispatching and mobile data computers. A town that was once scattered homes amongst expansive fields is now a bedroom community with industrial growth. Amongst all growth remain the simple ideals of doing the right thing for others in a time of need, being an example and an icon of the community, and providing service with integrity and honor. If you are ever driving along Interstate 80 west of Sacramento, and see the famous Milk Farm sign, feel free to drive a mile south and stop by for a visit. Additional information about the department can be viewed on the web at <http://www.dixonfire.org>.



Nick Warren is a career firefighter/paramedic with the Dixon Fire Department. He has been with the department for 7 years and rotates between the two staffed engines. Nick possesses an Associates Degree in Paramedic Training from Palomar College in Southern California, and is currently pursuing a Bachelors Degree in Fire Service Management from California State University, Sacramento. Aside from normal daily functions, Nick maintains the department web site and other various IT and public relations projects.



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