

In 1972, Assistant Chief Charlie Peters was promoted to Chief. He set about making several improvements: hired new firefighters, revitalized the volunteer contingent, and furnished tube-type radio monitors to all personnel. The new radio system combined all fire departments on the same radio frequency and was separated from the police department. City units were numbered 1-5, county fire units were 6-8, and ambulances operated by private services under county contract were 10-14. The radio monitors were kept at the firefighter's residence or workplace. Although it was several years before the monitor pagers were made available to both career and volunteer personnel, by the 1980s these completely replaced the radio monitors.

Paris instituted the 911 system for public access to emergency services in 1979. Kentucky would not adopt a statewide 911 system until 1984. A 911 console was installed at the duty desk at Station 1, with the ability to answer the 911 phone lines as well as the new radio frequency. In case of a large-scale emergency, this console could function also as a dispatch center for 911 calls. The Paris Police Department dispatchers were also 911 dispatchers, if the call was for a fire, the police dispatcher could pick up a direct ring-down phone line, which would be answered at PFD. When the second city fire station was built and opened in 1978, that station also had a dispatch center with ring-down phones from 911, and a radio base station.

In the 21st Century, Paris now utilizes a central dispatch system that receives all local 911 calls and can dispatch Fire, EMS, or Law Enforcement in seconds. With recent upgrades to the E911 system citizens can provide information about the number of people in a residence, any medical concerns, and contact information prior to an emergency. If needed in an emergency, the dispatch system can even track a cell phone within 3 feet of its actual location.

Today's technology is far advanced from the early 1800s, but that system lasted over 80 years, which is impressive, even today!



HISTORY OF THE PARIS FIRE DEPARTMENT AND ITS FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

The Paris Fire Department (PFD) was formally organized as a staffed department in 1874 and operated out of Station 1. For 18 years, PFD received notification of a fire from the public by a horseback rider or person running to the fire station and alerting the firefighters on duty. The large bell, which is still hanging in the front of Station 1, was then used to alert additional volunteers. The volunteers would respond to the station and find out where to go. Many fires burned out of control for long periods of time before the fire department could arrive. The fire loss by then was substantial.

On September 9, 1891 Mayor Neely moved to approve the proposed fire alarm system. All the city commissioners agreed, and the system was purchased from the Gamewell Alarm Company of New York. The city needed a way for the citizens to alert PFD of a fire and this system was the top-of-the-line for a community of its size. It took about 1 year to install the equipment, poles, and many miles of wire needed to connect back to Station 1. The system included batteries, chargers, shelving, lightning suppressors, and meters for both detection and grounding. They also purchased 8 miles of #12 insulated wire to connect the system in a series.

The city purchased 28 of the best Gardner Local and non-interfering fire alarm boxes – all made of cast iron with hinged doors and tumbled locks. Each box contained an electromechanical mechanism with a code wheel. The boxes were all numbered and securely fastened to poles with the wires insulated and placed in pipes reaching from the box, directly to Station 1. Each box cost \$125. The total cost of the system was \$3500 and included a 5-year warranty.

The system included an electromechanical bell striker for the large bell mounted on the roof of Station 1 to alert the firefighters of a general alarm. There was a 15-inch electromechanical bell with an indicator at Station 1 that located a fire by identifying the fire alarm box that had been pulled. An 8-inch bell located at the water department let them know to increase the water pressure near the fire. There was also a 6-inch bell located at the fire chief's residence.

On February 9, 1892, the system was put in operation and was in good working order. The city continued to need more advanced fire alarm notification. In 1902, the telephone company installed its first of 400 phones in Paris. With that, notification of a fire could now be transmitted to the fire station by both the alarm boxes and the new operator-assisted telephones; by telling the operator you needed the fire department or the number 31. The city then had to purchase an additional fire alert system that would be able to notify the firefighters and the other agencies when there was a fire, but a fire alarm box wasn't pulled. A new code-wheel system was installed to sound the large rood bell and the other systems around the city. By looking at the connected chart, the firefighters would know the general vicinity of the fire. This was also used when someone would call-in an alarm on the telephone or would come to the station to alert the firefighters.

When the indicator alarm no longer worked, and the firefighters forgot the box number, a joker tape punch system was also purchased from the Gamewell Company. This system operated when a box was pulled, or the code-wheel was activated, and it would punch out the numbers on the tape. This allowed all responding firefighters to know the general location of the fire. The bell was also replaced at that time, with a 10-inch Gamewell bell.

This system continued in use, even as several businesses in town installed their own fire alarm systems, per factory mutual fire insurance company. These systems were directed to PFD via an alarm company like Notifier, Simplex, Gamewell, ADT, or others. These systems would only ring to the fire station and the firefighters on-duty would have to use the code-wheel system to alert other responders to the general location of the automatic alarm from the companies. This was also used at hospitals, nursing homes, and large factories.

The Gamewell system continued in working-order for 80 years, until November 11, 1971, when the system was finally turned off and the boxes were removed from the telephone poles. By then, almost everyone had a telephone and there was no longer a need for the boxes. The automatic alarms still came to the station or to the new dispatch center from many companies and businesses around the city until the 911 phone system was instituted in 1978.

