



Circa 1924: OPD Fire Truck with hand pumper

Ever since the Town of Olathe was incorporated in 1907, to today, volunteers have handled the firefighting duties for Olathe and its surrounding rural area. In 1924, the first volunteer fire department was officially organized for the town and a Model T Ford truck was purchased. The Fire truck was used to get to the fire and carry all the needed equipment to fire fires. To pump water, a hand pumper was hooked to the fire hydrant and was pumped by two men, one on each side.

As the area grew, there became a need to fight fires also in the rural area around Olathe, so in 1947, the Olathe Rural Fire Protection District was formed and funded by the county. The legal boundaries for the district included the entire north area of Montrose County: north to the Delta County line, east and west to the BLM boundaries and south to Ida Road, where it joins the northern boundary for the Montrose Fire Protection District.

In January 2002, the Olathe fire district took over the operations of the ambulance service from the Montrose district and made it part of the Olathe Rural Fire Protection District's operations, funded by a subsidy from Montrose County. In November 2002, the district's voters approved a one-mill levy to support the ambulance service and therefore, the annual county subsidy was discontinued and the Town of Olathe subsidized \$9,000 annually for several years. Typically, ambulance services struggle to meet budgetary needs, and OFPD is no different. Ambulance Service Charges are capped by current healthcare regulations and contractual obligations with state and federal health insurances, making grant funding essential for capital improvements district-wide.



In 2013, the district was able to secure a grant to help build our new first station located at 406 S. 5th St. in downtown Olathe. The new building is a hallmark building in Olathe and houses most of the district equipment and apparatus. Most medical response dispatched directly from the station, however, Paramedics and EMT's were paid minimally to be available for emergencies. It has been a long-time goal of the district to one day provide full-time EMS and Firefighting personnel at the station to continue improved response times.

This day was realized on January 1, 2021. Now, 9 full-time FF/EMT's serving on rotating shifts, provide response to fires, medical calls, motor vehicle accidents, inter-facility transfers and are also involved in community functions, including: local parades, the annual Mock Car Crash at the Olathe High School (informing local youth of the dangers of drunk driving), water fights with the Boys & Girls Club, and Olathe National Night Out. PRN's and volunteer firefighters supplement response needs, providing the necessary manpower to facilitate the Olathe community needs and are a vital component of the Colorado Emergency Management System on the Western Slope.

The non-profit association, Olathe Firemen, Inc. conducts annual fundraisers that include a golf tournament and Punkin' Chunkin'. They also sponsor a scholarship each year to a qualifying OHS graduate and donate food baskets and presents for families in need at Christmastime.