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FIREFIGHTING HISTORY

In the past, fires were very dangerous because cities were crowded and many houses were made of wood and straw. Around the year 6, one of the first fire brigades appeared in Rome, and the firefighters were called Vigiles. They used buckets of water and tools like axes and hooks to stop the fire from spreading. After the fall of the Roman Empire, Europe had no organized firefighting for many years. In the Middle Ages, fires were common because houses were wooden and roofs were often made of straw. In the 17th century, people started using hand pumps, buckets, and hooks to fight fires. Later, new inventions such as fire hoses, fire extinguishers, and fire engines made firefighting much more effective [1].

First attempts at firefighting can be traced as far back as the 2nd century. It was then that an Egyptian from Alexandria named Ctesibius built a basic hand pump that could squirt a jet of water, but the idea was lost until the fire pump was reinvented about AD 1500. After nearly being destroyed by uncontrollable conflagrations, ancient Rome developed a fire department consisting of approximately 7,000 paid firefighters. These fire brigades not only responded to and fight fires, but also patrolled the streets with the authority to impose corporal punishment upon those who violated fire prevention codes.

Catastrophic fires have plagued the United States for almost 400 years. The development of fire fighting forces in the United States, especially in the Northeast, has brought innovations in modern firefighting throughout the world.

The first recorded structure fire in the United States occurred in 1608 in the colony of Jamestown. On January 7, a fire leveled most of the fragile colony which was just barely a year old. Captain John Smith wrote of the fire in his journal: «Most of our apparel, lodging and private provisions were destroyed, I begin to think that it is safer for me to dwell in the wild Indian country than

in this stockade, where fools accidentally discharge their muskets and others burn down their homes at night». Things haven't changed much.

In the early days, most fire companies were volunteer or privately operated. There was some competition for services. Some of the firefighters were actually recruited not only for their strength in fighting fire but also for their fighting abilities to protect the company and its equipment. Insurance companies paid the fire company that put out the fire, so the one that made it to the scene, hooked up to a hydrant and completed the task, got paid. The dogs worked well at this task of protecting not only the horses, but the equipment in the stations and on the fire ground as well. Firefighting equipment in the colonies was rudimentary at best. Leather buckets, hooks and chains, swabs, ladders, and archaic pumps were the tools of the trade in the early days.

Fire buckets in colonial towns had the owners names painted on them. Laws often required residents to purchase them and keep them in repair. In the 1680s, in New York, the number of buckets a home or business needed was determined by the risk of fire. A baker must have three buckets and a brewer had to have six buckets on hand in case of fire. «Bucket Brigades» were used commonly which consisted of two lines of people stretching from the town well to the fire. They passed buckets of water to the fire, and empty buckets back to the well to be refilled. Later, with the invention of the hand pumper, bucket brigades were used to keep the pumper full of water. Hooks and chains were used to make firebreaks by pulling down walls of burning buildings to keep the fire from spreading. Swabs (mops) were used to extinguish embers on thatched roofs. Fire fighting got an edge with the invention of the hand pumper, or Hand tub. The Foreman of the pump companies would use a large «speaking trumpet» to give orders to and urge his crew on.

The first fire extinguisher was created in the early 19th century in England by the inventor George William Manby. It was made of copper and filled with a special pressurized substance to spray onto the fire and put it out more quickly and effectively.

Throughout history, large fires often destroyed entire cities. In Amsterdam in 1421 and 1452, wooden houses caused major fires, and after that people began building stone houses for safety. The Great Fire of London in 1666 destroyed the north and center of the city, and other areas were partially affected. In Copenhagen in 1728, a fire burned for three days, destroying most houses and cultural landmarks. In New York in 1776, part of the city was set on fire during the war against the British, causing major damage. The Moscow fire of 1812 destroyed 75 % of the city and killed

thousands of people. After the strong earthquake in Tokyo in 1923, multiple fires killed about 38,000 people, showing how dangerous the combination of disaster and fire can be [2].

On the evening of September 1, 1666, a fire started because Thomas Farriner carelessly extinguished the oven. The fire quickly spread through his house, and his kitchen assistant, the first victim, died. The next day, the fire spread to neighboring houses and warehouses with flammable materials. Despite people's efforts and earth barriers, the fire covered almost all of London. The fire was only extinguished on September 6, and the city was heavily damaged.

More than 13,000 houses, about 90 churches, and many warehouses were destroyed, and about 100,000 people were left homeless. After the fire, the city began to be rebuilt with brick and stone houses, and the streets became wider. A permanent fire service appeared in London only in the 18th century, and a memorial column was erected in memory of the fire. This fire became an example for the creation of modern fire services and safety measures [3].

Modern ways of putting out fires make it faster and safer. Special sensors help to notice fire right away. Automatic systems spray water or foam on the fire by themselves. Some systems use gases to stop burning. They can work without people, so it is safer. Different types of fire extinguishers help to put out different fires. Water in a stream or fine spray can reach hard-to-get places. Foam covers liquids and stops them from catching fire again. Powders and special substances put out fire quickly. Automatic systems alert people and help them evacuate. Sometimes steam or gas is used indoors to reduce oxygen. Modern methods help save belongings and protect people [4].

In conclusion, in the past, fighting fires was very difficult and dangerous because there were no modern tools or methods. Today, thanks to modern equipment, automatic fire suppression systems, and fire extinguishers, people can quickly and effectively put out fires. This greatly reduces the risk to life and property, making fighting fires much safer than in the past.

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