

AFR Opens New Fleet Maintenance Facility By Kerry Horton and Herman R. Bishop

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One of the most progressive things that the current Fire Administration has done, is to open the new AFR Fleet Maintenance Facility, located at 7601 Los Volcanes NW. Fleet maintenance is not the most exciting thing to discuss when talking shop in the fire service, but with over 200 vehicles in AFR's care, a new maintenance facility was long overdue.

AFR got its first motorized pumper in 1912, then quickly added a Chiefs car in 1913, and then added another pumper in 1914. The department did not have an official apparatus maintenance shop, so repairs were made by the fire chief or on-duty firefighters who had mechanical skills. By 1918, the department was a motorized department, but not many people knew how to drive back then. World War I was instrumental in teaching young men how to drive and work on vehicles. In 1918, Fire Chief Russell hired W.A. Westerfield, a WW1 Navy veteran and good mechanic to be the department mechanic and apparatus driver. Over the next ten years Westerfield advanced through the ranks to the position of Assistant Fire Chief, all while serving as the department mechanic. While major repairs were sent out to local shops, or even sent back to the American La France factory in New York, most of the daily maintenance and repairs were done at Station One, then located at Second and Tijeras NW.

In 1936, Carl Macaluso was hired as a firefighter and mechanic, working out of Station One until the original Station Four was opened in 1941 at 5th Street and Mountain Road NW. Station Four served as the mechanic shop until a new Station One was opened at 8th and Silver Ave. SW, with a mechanic/maintenance shop in the back of the apparatus bays. In 1956, AFR hired its first official mechanic, Marvin Wafer Sr., who served as the department mechanic for 24 years before retiring in 1980.

In 1979, the department purchased the Rust Tractor/ Caterpillar repair facility located on 4th Street NW. After extensive renovations, that facility became the fire department's maintenance shop, known as 4th Street yards. AFR used this facility for 41 years, even though the facility never had the infrastructure to properly service the heavy pumper and aerial apparatus in AFR's fleet. Many times, the apparatus had to be sent out to better equipped facilities to make repairs, at great expense to the city.

The new facility is a modern, six-bay drive through garage with lifting capability for the heavy apparatus, and with the well-trained mechanic crews servicing AFR's 200 vehicles, the department now has a true in-house service facility.



GRAND OPENING. ALBUQUERQUE FIRE RESCUE FLEET MAINTENANCE SHOP. JUNE 4. 2020 (Photo By. • Kerry Horton)