

The Oak Valley Volunteer Fire Company of Deptford Township was founded in August 1956 by eleven residents and was formally incorporated by the State of New Jersey in February 1957.

Prior to the creation of the company, the area was protected by several fire companies, Pine Acres, Community Lake Tract (Tanyard Rd. Station), Wenonah and Woodbury Heights.

Charter members are Fire Chief George Frazier, Thomas Johnston, Paul Parenteau, J.A. Strait, Charles Harrison, Leo MaGee, Edward Tallant, John Stolz, James Stolz, Matt Green, Raymond Wycoff.

Five months after the company's incorporation, three residents in the community purchased an old fire pumper to help the company get started. This piece of equipment had to be kept at the chief's house until an engine room could be constructed at its present location at Princeton and Rutgers Ave.

In October 1957, several of the members wives got together to form a ladies auxiliary to help run functions to make money to assist in operating the company. Since the auxiliary's inception, the organization became an integral part of the fire company and one of the more active in Gloucester County. They also responded for assistance at fires, such as making coffee and soup for firefighters at a fire.

The Oak Valley Vol. Fire Company was accepted as the eighth and newest fire company in Deptford Township in November 1958. Since then, the members have put in many hours of training to fight all types of fires and emergencies. They have also spent many hours going to various training schools and seminars to learn the latest techniques in firefighting.

In the 1970's the company operated one 1,250 gallon per minute (gpm) pumper, one 750 gpm pumper and a mobile cascade system which includes other various emergency equipment.

In 1975, the Deptford Township Ambulance and Rescue Squad formed a third squad, which was composed of a group of firefighters and some interested residents of Oak Valley. During that same year, in May, the company expanded its firehouse to include a new social hall and engine room. This was to accommodate the company's new 1975 Hahn pumper and new cascade truck to fit the firehouse. An agreement was made with the township rescue squad to house the ambulance at the Oak Valley firehouse, which added another service to the community.

The fire company's fire district was mostly residential, but included some of the commercial establishments on Route 45. The district's boundaries were Mantua Creek

on the south, Route 45 on the west, the railroad track on the east and Woodbury Heights on the south. There was also a junior firefighter program for the teenagers which was instituted in 1967 by Gerald C. Ryan, who later became chief of the company. During the 1970's the company responded to between 150 and 200 fire alarms each year.

In 1981, the fire company received a new 1981 Pierce 1500 GPM engine to replace a 1968 Thibault engine that was worn out, 1981 was also the 25th anniversary of the company.

In 1984, Dennis Kappler was elected chief of the fire company at the age of 19. When we contacted the state, they could not confirm this. We were told he was the youngest person ever elected chief of a fire company in New Jersey and probably in the United States. Dennis then moved and joined the National Park Fire Company Station 8-1. where he later became the Chief there as well.

In 1989, mother nature was not very nice to the members and citizens of Oak Valley. While out answering many calls due to a storm that rolled into South Jersey, the crew from engine 911 were returning for a short break. Chief Dennis Kappler and his crew were informed that the alarm was going off at the firehouse. When they got back there, they found a 60' X 120' section of the roof had been removed by a tornado. The storm came through Pine Acres into Oak Valley. The fire company lost the use of the hall for almost 3 years.

In the early 1990's, an electrical fire broke out in the fire company's rec room, causing a lot of damage and shutting the room down for almost two years while repairs were done.

In early 1996, the company was told by the Fire Commissioners, that they were forming a new truck committee and Oak Valley was to receive a new engine. On Saturday September 6, 1997 seven new pieces of apparatus were delivered to the Deptford Fire Department. Oak Valley received a 1997 KME, 1750 GPM, 1000 gallon tank and a 10 man cab. The new engine became engine 911 and the '81 Pierce became engine 912. The old engine, a 1975 Hahn became a reserve engine for the department. In October of '97, the fire department hired a full time Department Chief. The 8 station chief's became battalion chiefs.

In 1998, Ron Newman became Battalion of the Oak Valley Fire Company. In 2000, he became the first person to be appointed to the position of Battalion Chief in one of the new Battalions that were set up by the Commission and the Department Chief.

In 2000, the eight fire companies were consolidated into four Battalions, each under command of a Battalion Chief. The stations are known by their geographic locations.

In December 2001, At the annual banquet, the Oak Valley Fire Company had two milestones. The first was the 45th anniversary and the second was they finally got to have a Mortgage Burning. That was pushed back due to the repairs done after the storm of 1989.

In 2004, the fire department informed the Oak Valley Fire Co. may be replacing the valleyservice to the people of Oak Valley and to the Deptford Fire Department.

In 2005 Oak Valley Fire Company received engine 912's new replacement, the Deptford Fire Department purchased 3 new 2005 Spartan Elite Pumpers 1250 GPM pump, and 750 Gallon Tank. One engine for the Oak Valley Fire Company Engine 912, the Tacoma Fire Company Engine 923 and the Almonesson Fire Company Engine 934.

On December 23rd 2007 just two days before Christmas the Fire Company had more unfortunate luck when a electrical fire broke out in the recreation room area. Luckily the companies own members were able to pull all the trucks out of the building and use one of the pumpers hose-lines to help in extinguishing the fire and prevent it from spreading to the apparatus bay where the trucks were kept.

In 2011 life member and Battalion Chief Ron Newman had lost his battle with cancer and passed, than life member and Captain Jim Hooper was appointed to Battalion Chief.

In January 2020 Battalion Chief Jim Hooper retired than Captain Mike Barbato-Buckley was appointed to Battalion Chief.