



# Fire Service Fun Facts



**Ben Franklin** commissioned the first fire department in 1736.



**Fire hydrants** originated in Philadelphia, which was the first city to successfully put into service wooden water mains with fireplugs. When a fire occurred, firefighters would bore a hole and collect the outpouring water from the wooden main, which was made from bored-out logs. After the fire was out a plug was hammered into the hole thus originated the fireplug. The fire Hydrant came into the English language about 1828.

**Dalmatians** – In 1360, they appeared in Italy and were called Dalmatian. The black and white spotty dogs were known as English coach dogs around the 1700's. The Dalmatians were used to protect horses that pulled English stagecoaches. Two Dalmatians would run next to the horses as they pulled the coach. When other dogs or wild animals tried to run out and scare the horses, the Dalmatian team would chase them away. During this time, horse theft was very common. Stagecoach drivers would sleep in a hammock strung between the stalls and watch for thieves. The dogs would form a close bond with the horses and would sleep in the stalls with the horses so the drivers did not need to sleep in the barn.

In the early days of the fire service the fire wagons were horse-drawn. Each fire barn had a set of very strong fast horses to pull the hand pump wagon or the steam engine driven pumper. It became common for each fire barn, as they were called then, to have a set of Dalmatians to guard the horses. The Dalmatian was not only a guard dog for the horse team but soon became a companion to the firefighters. The Dalmatian is still found in many firehouses today.



**The badge of the fire service** - Firefighters are some of the few people who still wear a badge. Knights originally wore badges in the days of heraldry. Because of extensive armor that covers their faces and bodies, the knights needed some means of identification. During the crusades, shields used by knights displayed their badge.

**The Maltese Cross** symbolizes the traditions and ideals of the fire service. It represents the fire service ideals of saving lives and extinguishing fires. Originally, the Knights of Malta chose the cross as their symbol because the Crusades were battles fought for a holy cause. The Maltese Cross came to represent the principals of charity, loyalty, gallantry, and generosity to friend and foe, dexterity of service and protection of the weak. Many knights became firefighters out of necessity. Their enemies resorted to using flaming arrows, boiling and sometimes flaming oil. Many knights were called upon to perform heroic deeds by rescuing fellow knights and extinguishing fires. In acknowledgment of these deeds, the cross worn by these knights was decorated and inscribed. To wear this badge was considered a most honorable acclaim, and has been called The Red Badge of Courage.

