



"ROLL EVERYTHING" . . . Fireman Ray Flagg, above, on duty in the Watch Office of the Torrance Fire Department, receives a fire call from a citizen. In a matter of moments Engines 1 and 2 from the headquarters station are rolling out of the doors, enroute to aid the troubled caller. Meanwhile Chief J. J. Benner is in constant radio contact with his headquarters and all fire trucks, and can return equipment not needed or ask for more help. The local department, boasting 36 emp loyees, is rated one of the best for its size in the South Bay area. (Herald photos).

...Just Call Torrance 3126



DAY-NIGHT, RAIN-SHINE, FIREMEN READY TO 'ROLL'

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Atom Bomb Like Action Starts When Bell Rings

By DICK FRIEND

"My house is on fire. Come quick!" And in less time than it takes for your TV set to warm up, two fire engines are screaming out of the doors of the fire station, enroute to your burning

Third PCH Crash Injures Woman

The third serious traffic accident on Pacific Coast Highway near Vista del Parque in three weeks resulted in injuries to a 24-year-old Hermosa Beach woman Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Dorothy Busch, 408 1/2 Monterey Rd., was rushed to Harbor General Hospital by Figueroa-Miller ambulance with injuries which were listed as "minor." Earlier reports told that Mrs. Busch possibly suffered from severe internal hurts and shock.

Torrance Traffic Officer Donald Nash stated that witnesses claimed that Mrs. Busch was traveling west on the highway when she collided with another car, also going west, driven by William Chester, 54, of Newport Beach. He was not hurt. The area's first traffic death was recorded on Feb. 10 in a spectacular crash in this same vicinity, which sent five others to the hospital. A week earlier eight were badly injured there.

A telephone call to Torrance 3126, the "watch office" of the Torrance Fire Department, starts a chain of events which resembles in no little way the reaction process of an atom bomb.

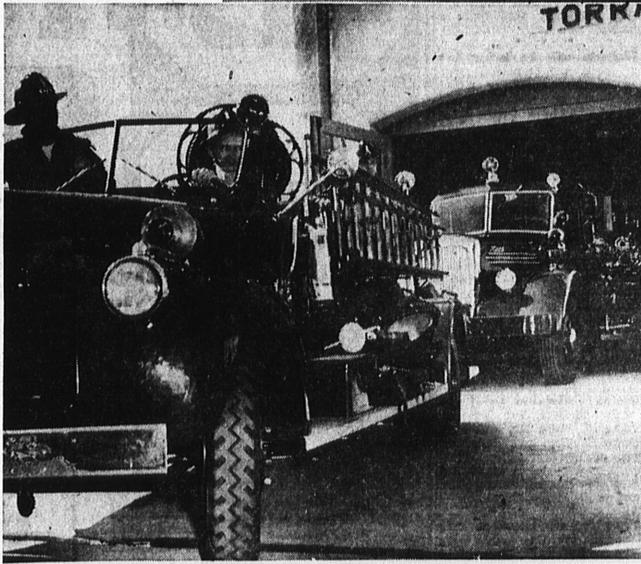
Your call starts an immediate check of the address by the watch firemen to tell him which of Torrance's four engine companies and one "hook and ladder" or truck company, protects your home.

The dispatcher's order to the station to "respond to a house fire at 2 . . . Torrance Blvd., starts another reaction."

What is the nearest cross street? Is the street divided? What serious handicaps will be encountered while driving over the route? Where is the nearest fire hydrant? What type of structures—special fire hazards—surround the district? These problems flash across the mind of the engine company commander when he receives a "respond" order.

Enroute to the blaze a "size-up" process takes place. Each man in charge must determine BEFORE he gets within a block of the fire what method of attack he must take. Shall he "lay a line," lay hose from the nearest hydrant? Maybe two

Or can the fire be knocked down with the 400 gallons of water in the truck tank and special high pressure fog guns car-



ried on three of the four Torrance engine companies.

Does he need help? Will he hold all companies? Only experience and practice can help here.

Yes, as Fire Chief J. J. Benner says, the old days of "pour on a lot of water and break up the place with an axe" are gone. And thank goodness! "Every day, more and more is being required from the man in the fire service," Benner relates. "Our job has become a science—like the science of war!"

Calls are received daily from citizens who have problems: a cat in a tree, an elderly man suffering a heart attack, a lady whose next door neighbor burns trash in the incinerator while clothes are on the line.

Or maybe it is a fire; a rubbish fire, a car fire, a house fire, a bedroom ablaze with two tiny tots trapped inside.

But back to the fire at 2 . . . Torrance Blvd. The first engine commander to arrive has completed his "size-up" and orders his engineer to "lay a line." The driver slows the big red pumper to a near halt opposite the hydrant closest to the burning building.

Out on the running board, a

fireman jumps off, hose line in hand. When he has cleared the truck he gives the go-ahead signal and the truck rolls toward the fire, laying behind a string of cotton-jacket rubber-lined hose. This is the lifeline of the fire putter-outers.

At the fire the entire crew springs into action. Enough hose is removed from the truck to surround the blaze. Correct nozzles are selected, the line is led in to a key point and the water gushes from the nozzle tip.

All this has taken less than 60 seconds.

Everything that has taken place has been done mechanically—like a housewife baking an up-side-down cake. She never looks at the recipe, she knows it from past experience.

Firemen drill for the same reason—at a fire they can't take time to stop and think out their next move.

Practice sessions are held every Monday. Hose drills, ladder street and hydrant memory drills, rescue equipment sessions—all to sharpen up the reactions of the smoke-eating firemen.

After a fire the real work begins. Every foot of hose, which sometimes amounts to half a mile or so, must be picked up, scrubbed clean, hung in the station tower to dry, coiled and stored ready for use.

Hose to a fireman is like a wrench to a mechanic—no tools

and the mechanic's out of business.

For this reason the fire ladders sometimes get real nasty when spectators play over fire lines in their autos. As one captain puts it—not only does hose cost \$1.80 per foot, but the damage caused by heavy cars can mean hose failures—and maybe take a fireman's life.

A fireman's day begins at 8 a.m. when the on-duty platoon comes to work. Firefighters work 24-hours, then are off for a like period. Each morning the station is swept clean, the trucks are dusted and checked over.

If the off-going shift had a fire during the night, considerable scrubbing must take place; hose must be changed, mud wiped off the tires and water-spotted brass work polished brighter than a cop's badge.

On Tuesday all chrome gets the polish treatment. On Wednesday every moving part on the truck gets the once over, plus every piece of fire equipment.

In the meanwhile there are windows to be washed, floors to be mopped and a multitude of records to be kept in ship-shape. But whatever firemen are doing, they always are ready to drop the mops, the buckets, the sandwiches or jump out of bed at 2:15 a.m. and "roll" when the bell rings and the watch office says:

"A house fire at 2 . . . Torrance Blvd.

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Lupin Blooms Cover Hills

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