

# BEYOND Mutual Aid

Mutual aid societies have been in place along the Gulf Coast since 1944. However, the 1980's saw several large scale fire related events (Chalmette, LA Refinery, Baton Rouge, LA Refinery, Valdez Ship Spill) that dramatically changed the way industry thought about Industrial Emergency Response and Fire Fighting — especially along the Gulf Coast.



**October 29, 1997 — a coordinated effort of Hired Gun Gang members records industry's largest documented firewater flow of 29,567 gpm using large volume pumps, guns, and hose.**

Specifically — a trend toward larger storage tanks was affecting the industry on three important fronts:

- Larger tanks were safer for the environment — reducing potential catastrophic structural failures leading to contamination, spill, and emission risks.
- Larger tanks were economically more viable — one large tank was more cost efficient to build, manage and maintain than multiple smaller tanks.
- However, larger tanks were a new challenge for the firefighter, and to date in the late 1980's standard operating procedures were defined for older, smaller tank dimensions and arrays. Tactics had to change and equipment had to change because the nature of these potential large volume fire related events was changing.

This trend toward larger tank construction exposed outdated response procedures ... you don't respond to a 250' tank fire the same way you respond to a 60' tank fire. Manpower, equipment (design and availability), and foam resources needed to be augmented — and in some instances overhauled.

This became all too evident as the decade drew to a close. In 1989 two severe industrial emergencies — a major oil spill at sea, and a large scale refinery fire in Louisiana

taxed resources, firefighting tactics, and tolerance to their limits.

The Louisiana refinery event involved: Fifteen (15) Storage Tanks [two tanks were 134' in diameter with manifold fires and the dikes completely involved in fire], Four (4) API Separators, and Two (2) Pipebands Involving Approximately a Quarter of a Million Sq. Ft. of Fire Area. All fire was extinguished in 14 Hours and 29 Minutes with 48,000 Gallons of 3M ATC.

This and other events would set the stage for new methods and equipment that would confront



these events like nothing had in the past. Williams Fire & Hazard Control Response Teams have crafted a strategy of large-volume water equipment, and unique foam application methods (Patented FootPrint™ Methodology) to extinguish large scale fires that were - and continue to be - "managed" as a controlled burn.

Those responsible for fire & safety in south Louisiana began to scrutinize their S.O.P. as they collectively pondered how to strengthen their mutual aid societies.

South Louisiana fire professionals along with Williams Fire & Hazard Control discussed the loss control needs of the industry:

- Standardized Specialized Equipment
- Standardized Fire Fighting Foam
- A forum of fire professionals to share similar concerns and solutions
- A company of professional fire fighters who designed, and manufactured fire fighting equipment based on the needs of fire professionals.

Following the Baton Rouge event, questions from regulatory bodies, the public, and from within corporate halls

resulted in an in-depth look at the state of industry — its history, its growth, its safety, and its exposures.

A powerful and authoritative presentation resulted from within the firefighting community drawing attention to the ongoing need for specialized training for responders, the need for greater resources to match industry growth and exposures, and the need for an effective response community that could address emergencies across geographic regions and various business sectors.

From this presentation a credo took hold of the firefighting community that would affect them profoundly: "Make your friends before you need them."

It was in this spirit that the "Hired Gun Gang" was borne in 1987.

The Hired Gun Gang — coined by Randy Masters during a discussion between he and long time friends and firefighters Dwight Williams, Jerry Craft, and others — took root in Louisiana as a member organization focused on resource coordination, training, and response to better address the growing challenges facing the Petrochemical: Storage and Refining industries along the Gulf Coast Industrial corridor.

Over the years the Louisiana Resource Supply Network (Hired Gun Gang) has responded to a dozen or more significant events in the industrial corridor of Louisiana.

The original founding companies included: Exxon Refinery and Chemical (Exxon Mobil), Baton Rouge, Marathon Oil, Garyville, Exxon Mobil Oil (formerly Tenneco), Chalmette, LOOP, Cut Off, Shell Oil (Motiva), Norco, American Cyanamid (Cytec), Westwego, Dow, Plaquemine, and Williams Fire & Hazard Control.

Hired Gun Gang meetings - held twice a year - consider each member facility's unique characteristics and exposures. Collectively members address potential worst case scenarios, e.g. marine and dock emergencies, process unit fire with toxic emissions, tank fires and proximity affects, etc

They also formulate preplans for identified concerns and develop training events to prepare for specific emergencies. One such exercise took place in Louisiana — October 29, 1997. This "Big Gun Flow" was a coordinated effort to exhibit the impact of large water flow methods using large volume pumps, guns, and hose. This Hired Gun Gang drill achieved a 29,567 gpm flow — industry's largest documented water flow.

The Hired Gun Gang now consists of seventeen (17) companies in South Louisiana and West Mississippi. Conditions of membership are simple and basic: the company must be an ATC/Williams Blanket Order

Customer, and have at least a 2,000 gpm gun or pump to offer for emergency support to other members. Proprietary information is shared amongst members, prohibiting the participation of other equipment vendors.

The "Hired Gun Gang" has no officers. All decisions are based on a vote of the membership. Williams Fire & Hazard Control was elected to act as the logistics coordinator for all the member companies when the need arises. Each member company provides a list of resources that may be available during an incident while maintaining their own defensive posture. These resources consist of large delivery devices such as Williams' Ambassador and Battler big guns, 4,000 and 6,000 gpm transportable pumps, and compatible foam stores such as 3M and ThunderStorm® ATC.

The Hired Gun Gang concept has been implemented by Williams throughout the United States. The Williams Emergency Foam Network- a direct result of discussions in the Hired Gun Gang meetings - has grown to include strategic foam deployment capabilities across the globe!

It was with the help of this Foam Network that in 1989, the Hired Gun Gang and "friends" along the Texas Gulf Coast region delivered over 72,000 gallons of ATC™ in fourteen (14) hours to Baton Rouge during the worst freeze in years.

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More recently — July of 2004 — this Emergency Foam Network delivered a full re-supply of 30 totes of ThunderStorm® Foam to MAPLLC in under 24 hours.

As industry trends continue to challenge the firefighters' task, it is also affected greatly by global events. Recent terror activities around the world have compelled many facility management personnel to rethink sending vital resources in support to an emergency at a nearby facility. Many are wary to keep their resources onsite in the possibility they might be the next target.

Also, as many are unfortunately all too aware, liability concerns while responding with man and machine to another facility have also exacerbated a reluctance to respond to outside emergencies which might place facility personnel at risk of legal repercussion.

However, as the Hired Gun Gang enters its eighteenth year of association it remains strong because of what members have witnessed, and because of the success they have had in working side by side on some of industry's largest fire emergencies.

With over 150 successful extinguishments, Williams Fire & Hazard Control has strengthened the Mutual Aid community as they engage in support and full service fire response to both land and marine related fires.