

# Marking a centenary of fire prevention education in Finland

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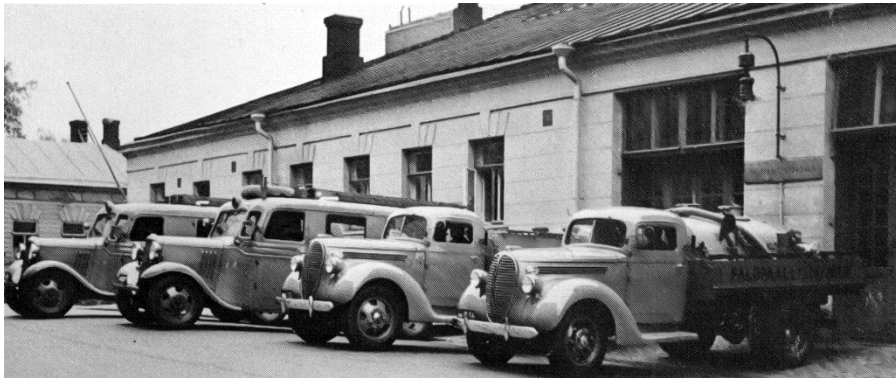
The beginning of fire prevention education in Finland is considered to be the week-long course held in 1914 for the voluntary fire brigade chiefs organised by the Finnish Public Fire Brigade Union.

The Finnish Public Fire Brigade Union started holding week-long training courses for voluntary fire brigade officers in 1914. In these courses the fire officers received instruction on how to teach the basics of fire fighting to their own brigades. At this stage the course did not provide any education on fire officer skills per se.

The Finnish Fire Prevention Association organised the first proper voluntary fire brigade fire officer courses in 1925.

## Fire Officer School

The Fire Act of 1933 laid down that fire officer training be organised by the State. The Council of State assigned this task to the Finnish Fire Prevention Association. The Association founded the Fire Officer School, which started its operations in March, 1935.



The year 1936 was the first year of full-year education. Just prior to the war breaking out in 1939 the State recruited the office of the Fire Prevention Centre, and the instructors at the Fire Officer School were assigned to fire fighting duties, either at the Ministry of the Interior or at the front. The war interrupted the functioning of the School.

The epoch of the Fire Prevention Association as the principal actor responsible for Finland's fire officer education came to an end in 1957. In total, over the course of two decades, more than 4000 men graduated from the Fire Officer School.

## State Fire School

The premises of the State Fire School were built in Espoo, a neighbouring city of Helsinki. The responsibility for fire fighting education was handed over to the State on 1 June, 1958.



The biggest change regarding the transformation of the training involved longer courses. In 1960, the first six-month long fire officer class began its studies in the State Fire School.

An important decision in the beginning of that decade concerned the division of educational duties between the State Fire School, fire associations and fire brigades. The task of educating professional fire officers and sub-officers, and the fire chiefs of all other fire brigades, was assigned to the State Fire School. Due to a lack of training resources, professional fire fighter courses were deemed unachievable at the time.

The State budget for 1969 appropriated the required funds for a new main building.

## State Fire College

In 1970, pursuant to an Act, the State Fire School became the State Fire College. The College primarily concentrated on professional fire personnel education.

By the onset of the 1990s, the State ran the Training Centre of the Rescue Administration, which comprised the State Fire College in Espoo and the State School of Civil Defence in Lohja.

## The State's Fire and Rescue Colleges merged

After several phases it was decided that a new rescue training institution be established in Kuopio. It became operational in 1992. The college was able to take 350 students, and the training of fire officers, rescuers (the new title for fire fighters) and civil defence formations was concentrated at the college. A 23-hectare exercise range was constructed in the vicinity; all practical command and rescue exercises can

be carried out on the range.

At the end of 1992 the Council of State decided that the training institutes operating in Espoo and Lohja be moved to Kuopio, and that all State rescue colleges be combined into one large educational establishment.

## Emergency Services College

The joint educational establishment, i.e. the Emergency Services College as it is known in the 2000s, still operates in Kuopio.



Since the 1990s the College has continually expanded. New buildings, such as dormitories, have been built on the grounds and new exercise structures have been added to the exercise range. Respecting its facilities and increasingly versatile training range, the College is one of Europe's finest.

Educational curricula in 2014:

*Emergency Response Centre Operator diploma (90 study credits).* The 1.5 year-long curriculum provides the qualification of an Emergency Response Centre Operator.

*Fire fighter diploma (90 study credits).* The three-semester curriculum provides the qualification of a fire fighter or a fighter-ambulance technician.

*Sub-Officer diploma (60 study credits).* The professional basic education for rescue sub-officers is given during the two semester-long sub-officer training. The diploma also qualifies the graduate to do sub-officer duties in rescue departments. The students can also continue their studies on the Fire Officer course (Bachelor of Engineering, University of Applied Sciences).

*Fire Officer diploma (Bachelor of Engineering, University of Applied Sciences, 240 study credits)* is the professional diploma for fire officers which qualifies the person for all officer duties in rescue departments.



## Helsinki Rescue School

The Ministry of the Interior can also recognise an educational establishment other than one maintained by the State as a fire and rescue education establishment. One of these is the Helsinki Rescue School, part of the Helsinki City Rescue Department since 1972. In its early decades the School was known as the Fire Department Training Centre.

Helsinki Rescue School trains *fire fighter-ambulance technicians and fire officers* for service in the Helsinki City Rescue Department.

The fire fighter-ambulance technician and fire officer education takes four semesters. During both summers the curriculum includes paid on-the-job training at Helsinki City rescue stations. In all, the Helsinki fire fighter-ambulance technician and fire officer training takes 2.5 years to complete.

