

Boca Raton Army Air Field (BRAAF)

Fire Department & Fire Stations

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The Boca Raton Army Air Field (BRAAF) included most of the lands bordered by Palmetto Park Road to the south, Dixie Highway to the east, Yamato Road to the north and Military Trail to the west. The base totaled 5,820 acres or 9 square miles and was home to about 17,000 soldiers and civilians. There were about 800 structures on the base, which were built by 3,500 construction workers in just four months at a cost of \$12 million in 1942. The full base was in operation from 1942 until 1947. During this time the City of Boca Raton Fire Department operated one volunteer fire station at the Old Town Hall, 71 North Federal Highway. BRAAF operated a total of six fire stations and an ambulance shed within the base as follows:

Bldg. #	Use	Square Feet	Construction	Approximate Location - Current City & FAU Addresses
T-976	Fire Station #1 (FS-1)	4,958	Wood Frame	NW Corner of NW 4 Ave. & NW 7 St.
T-1189	Fire Station #2 (FS-2)	4,224	Wood Frame	West Side - 600 Block of NW 12 Ave.
T-744	Fire Station #3 (FS-3)	3,520	Wood Frame	North Side - 160 Block of NW 20 St.
T-176	Fire Station #4 (FS-4)	4,324	Wood Frame	NW Corner of NW 5 Ave. & NW 35 St.
T-9	Ambulance & Crash Shed (A)	768	Wood Frame	NE of FAU Parking Lot 1, S of NW 20 St.
3000	Crash Fire Station #1 (CFS-1)	4,900	Concrete Block	NE of FAU Parking Lot 1, S of NW 20 St.
2024	Crash Fire Station #2 (CFS-2)	6,370	Concrete Block	NW Corner of NW 8 Ave. & NW 32 St.

Source: The building information was extracted from the Boca Raton Army Airfield - Building Schedule, dated May 1944 and updated on February 15, 1947, and provided by the Boca Raton Historical Society.

On September 17, 1947 a Category 4 hurricane destroyed many of the air field structures, including some fire stations. In 1947 the base was reduced in size to 1,200 acres (1,000 acres eventually became Florida Atlantic University - FAU and 200 acres became the Boca Raton Airport). The land was given to the Town (City) and leased back to the United States Air Force. Between 1947 and 1959 the BRAAF Fire Department staffed crash fire rescue units. The last of the BRAAF fire stations to be occupied was CFS-2, which closed around June 1, 1959. FAU took over the site by July 2, 1962 and the former CFS-2 became the office for the first FAU President Dr. Kenneth Williams and his staff. It was later re-designated as T-2 and it was used for the FAU Ocean Engineering Labs and Shop. T-2 was demolished by Palm Beach State College to make room for their Tennis Courts in 1992.



There were several aircraft crashes at and near BRAAF during the time of its operation. The worst incident occurred on May 12, 1944, when 9 soldiers were killed as their bomber crashed and burned.

Lonnie W. Cook Sr. served as the BRAAF Fire Chief from 6/1942 to 3/1948 and 5/1953 to 6/1959. He was also the first career Delray Beach Fire Chief from 1926 to 1942. John Gregory served as the BRAAF Assistant Fire Chief from 1942 to 1945. He became the Delray Beach Fire Chief in 1945 and served until 1967.

All of the BRAAF fire hydrants installed in 1942 (see date in photo) were replaced by FAU in 1992, on their 50th year of service. At least one of the 1942 BRAAF fire hydrants is still in existence at the pool deck of a single family home in Hidden Valley, Boca Raton.

Note: Some of the material presented here is original research and some is extracted from Small Town, Big Secrets, "Inside the Boca Raton Army Air Field During World War II", by Sally J. Ling, 2005. Rev 2/25/14