

# Women Firefighters Project Records, 1976-1977

## Overview of the Collection

<b>Creator</b>	Seattle (Wash.). Public Safety Civil Service Commission
<b>Title</b>	Women Firefighters Project Records
<b>Dates</b>	1976-1977 (inclusive) 1976 1977
<b>Quantity</b>	.2 cubic foot, (1 box)
<b>Collection Number</b>	6802-01
<b>Summary</b>	Materials relating to the formation and implementation of a Pre-Recruit Firefighter Program for women, 1976-1977.
<b>Repository</b>	<a href="#">Seattle Municipal Archives</a> Seattle Municipal Archives Office of the City Clerk City of Seattle PO Box 94728 98124-4728 Seattle, WA Telephone: 206-233-7807 Fax: 206-386-9025 <a href="mailto:archives@seattle.gov">archives@seattle.gov</a>
<b>Access Restrictions</b>	Records are open to the public.
<b>Languages</b>	English
<b>Sponsor</b>	Funding for encoding this finding aid was provided through a grant awarded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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## Historical Note

The Civil Service Commission was established in 1896 to oversee the Civil Service Department, which administered the City's personnel system, including the fire and police forces, laborers, inspectors, and clerical, electrical, and library workers. The commissioners classified city services and employees, coordinated and administered physical, medical, and competence examinations, dealt with appointments, promotions, and removals, and conducted investigations in the event of an employee appeal. In 1979, the City's personnel system was reorganized with the creation of a Personnel Department independent of the Commission. The Commission was reorganized with jurisdiction to hear employee appeals relating to demotions, terminations, suspensions, certain lay-offs, and violations of personnel rules.

In 1979, a three-member Public Safety Civil Service Commission was created to deal with personnel issues in the police and fire departments. The Commission's duties include classifying positions in each department, preparing and giving examinations to prospective employees, hearing appeals, and making rules for appointments and discharges.

In 1975, Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman and the City Council ordered the Seattle Fire Department to begin hiring women as firefighters. Seattle Personnel/Civil Service, the Fire Department, and the International Association of Firefighters began recruiting women and minorities for firefighting work. However, of 45 women who applied, only nine were able to pass the physical examination, and none of the seven who entered the recruit class completed the program. Physical ability and mechanical ability were cited as "deficiencies" that made completion of the training difficult for women recruits. Personnel and Civil Service created a Pre-Recruit Firefighter Program which would involve both physical training and mechanical education; the program, beginning in January 1977, was intended to prepare women recruits for further training as firefighters.

The Fire Department administered the program, while Personnel and Civil Service provided support. Dr. T. Lee Doolittle of the University of Washington prepared a physical training program; training took place at YMCA facilities and was supervised by YMCA staff. Covered in the mechanical section of the program were plumbing, electricity, and lumber, as well as hoses, ropes and knots, and ladders. Two of the three women enrolled in the initial pre-recruit training program resigned; the remaining recruit, Bonnie Beers, completed the program in 1977. Beers went on to complete recruit training and became Seattle's first woman firefighter; she became a lieutenant in 1981 and a Battalion Chief in 1996.

Throughout 1977 and 1978, recruitment of women continued and the pre-recruit program was further refined and developed.

## Content Description

Correspondence, memoranda, reports, and news articles relating to the recruitment, training, and physical testing of prospective women firefighters. Includes reports of Dr. T. Lee Doolittle, a consultant from the University of Washington, concerning the effectiveness of a strength development program for women pre-recruits. Some training materials and schedules are included in the records. Also included are some materials relating to the Minority Pre-Recruit Firefighter Program.

## Use of the Collection

### Preferred Citation

[Item and date], Women Firefighters Project, Record Series 6802-01. Box [number], Folder [number]. Seattle Municipal Archives.

## Administrative Information

### Related Materials

See also the Office of Women's Rights Women Firefighters Project Records (Record Series 8402-02).

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## Detailed Description of the Collection

The following section contains a detailed listing of the materials in the collection.

## Women Firefighters Project (PSCSC), 1976-1977

Container(s)	Description	Dates
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Box/Folder		
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1/1	Correspondence and Status Reports	1976-1977
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1/2	Dr. T. Lee Doolittle Report	1977
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1/3	"Women Are Fire Fighters, Too" (Article from <i>Fire Command</i> , February 1976)	1976
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## Names and Subjects

### Geographical Names :

Seattle (Wash.).

### Occupations :

Fire fighters--Physical training--Washington (State)--Seattle

Women fire fighters--Washington (State)--Seattle

### Other Creators :

#### Personal Names :

Doolittle, Dr. T. Lee  
(creator)

#### Corporate Names :

Seattle (Wash.). Fire Dept.  
(creator)

Seattle (Wash.). Civil Service Commission  
(creator)

Seattle (Wash.). Civil Service Dept.  
(creator)

Finding aid prepared by Shannon B. Lynch  
2004