

PROTECTING BARCELONA

The Fire Brigade and fire
prevention, 1833-2022

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The fires which have broken out in Barcelona over the years have shown how well fire prevention is going at any given time. The milestones in the city's history have also shaped fire prevention measures, often following in the wake of its population explosion, urban growth, industrialisation, the addition of the towns on the Barcelona Plain, and political, social and military crises.

This exhibition describes how fire prevention measures have been used in Barcelona since the Barcelona Fire Brigade was set up in 1833 until the present day.

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- 1 Fire in Rosselló Street. 1 July 1963. Photographer: Joan Guitart. ABB
- 2 Barcelona Fire Brigade Technical Office. 1960s. Unknown photographer. ABB
- 3 The Barcelona Fire Brigade inspects the new tunnel at les Glòries Square. 2021. ABB

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PREVENTING, INSPECTING, EXTINGUISHING

These are the Barcelona Fire Brigade's three key roles when dealing with fires: implementing measures to prevent them, monitoring and assessing compliance with these regulations, and putting out fires, which in the end are the outcome of prevention and inspection shortcomings. Over the years, fire prevention efforts have become as important as firefighting and rescue work.



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THE ORIGINS OF FIRE PREVENTION (1833-1920)

From walled Barcelona to the new metropolis

This period coincides with one of the vigorous times in the city's history. The Barcelona Fire Brigade was set up and conditions for preventing and putting out fires steadily improved following the demolition of the city's walls and the rollout of the Cerdà Plan. The first municipal fire regulations were brought in and technological breakthroughs were introduced (extinguishers, firefighting systems in factories and lastly pumps mounted on motor vehicles). However, prevention always took a back seat over all these years. There were no improvements in systems for evacuating people and there was no requirement to make architectural structures fire-resistant. The Barcelona Fire Brigade had no powers to inspect or impose penalties.

Putting out a fire at the Hijos de Pedro Abella paraffin factory at 21, Villarroel Street.
24 February 1913. Photographer: Brangulí. ANC

A CITY AT HIGH RISK OF FIRE

In the first half of the 19th century, Barcelona was a walled city with a growing population, poor public health conditions and a challenging social situation.

At the height of the first industrial revolution, the risk of fire had greatly increased due to the occupation of all developable land, the addition of floors to existing blocks of flats and the introduction of new energy sources (steam engines, which often blew up, and gas lighting).

- 1 Map of the city of Barcelona still with its walled enclosure. 1806. By: Moulinier. AHCB
- 2 Burning of the city's monasteries on the night of 25 July 1835. Print published in Ferran Patxot's book *Las ruinas de mi convento*. 1851. AHCB
- 3 A bird's eye view of Barcelona. In the background, the chimneys of el Raval's factories. 1853. Artist: A. Guesdon. AHCB



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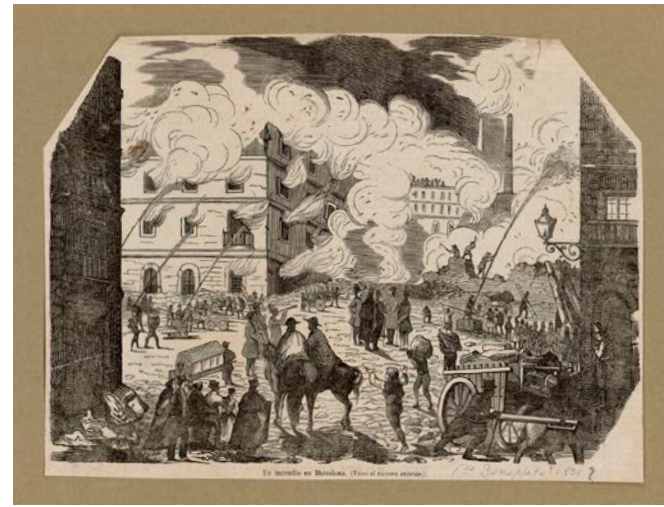
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- 4 Fire at the Vapor Capdevila i Mata factory in La Riereta Street, 18 January 1851. Print published in *La Ilustración Periódico universal* (Madrid), issue 7, 15 February 1851. Unknown artist. AHCB
- 5 Fire at the Gran Teatre del Liceu on the night of 9 April 1861. By: A. Hurtado (lithographer) / A. Sanmartí (illustrator). AHCB.

THE CRISIS IN THE GUILD SYSTEM

The City Council's occasional fire-prevention measures taken since the late 18th century had been completely insufficient. By 1830, the city still had a firefighting system based on the guild structure: workers in the building trades were responsible for putting out fires using only the equipment provided by the tools of their trade. The number of fires in factories and public premises rose and pointed to the need for a fire brigade with the resources and trained crews to tackle them. Barcelona grew from 118,000 inhabitants in 1835 to almost 190,000 in 1845.



de Goyola:
de la Barcelona:
de Jopá:
de Janer:
de Mayo:
Compte:
de Plandolit:
Enito:
Cervia:
Diputados:
Guip:
Salmasés:
Vulcena:
Sindico Procurador:
de Monistrol:
Sindico Penonero:
Palauandamet:

dos, Sindico Procurador y Sindico Penonero notados al margen, teniendo Ayuntamiento ordinario y de tabla, presididos por el Excmo. Sr. D. Francisco Xavier Fernandez, Teniente General de los Reales Ejercitos, Corregidor de esta Ciudad y su tierra, presente el infmo. Ayudante de Escrivano Mayor y Secretario de dicho Excmo. Ayuntamiento.

Acuerda aprobar como aprueba el acta de treinta del ultimo Abril que se ha leído.

Visto un oficio del Excmo. Sr. Capitan General de dos del corriente aprobando las medidas que le propuso el Excmo. Ayuntamiento con oficio de diez y siete de Abril p.º para el establecimiento de la sociedad de seguros mutuos contra incendios nombrando para que presida la comision que se ha de instalar al Excmo. Sr. Gobernador, e incluyendo una memoria sobre incendios.

Acuerda el Excmo. Ayuntamiento que registrandose dicho oficio en el libro y lugar que correspondiera se una dicha memoria al expediente a que hace referencia, nombrando local para la mencionada comision por parte del cuerpo Político al Sr. D. Honorato de Duj.

Acuerda se registre en el libro y lugar correspondiente un oficio fecha dos del corriente del Excmo. Sr. Capitan Genl. aprobando la execucion de la compania de Zapadores bomberos con destino a la pronta estincion de los incendios, cuyo reglamento se le incluyo en oficio de diez y siete del ultimo Abril, y preguntando si los individuos que han de formar la referida compania han de entrar en ella voluntariamente u por eleccion o nombramiento del cuerpo municipal: a cuya pregunta se encarga a la Junta de obras se sirva proponer la contestacion.

Acuerda pase a los S. S. D. Jose Maria de Pensich y Marques de Monistrol un oficio del Sr. Secretario del Real Acuerdo de cuatro del actual previniendo, que en orden a la clarificacion de arientos entre los actuales S. S. Regidores se observe la Real cedula de trece de Octubre de mil setecientos diez y ocho y la costumbre de que se hace merito en el del cuerpo municipal de diez y nueve del mes anterior, a fin de que los

memoria de diez y siete = vale

SETTING UP THE BARCELONA FIRE BRIGADE AND THE FIRST REGULATIONS

The first municipal fire brigade was set up in March 1833, a few months before the death of Ferdinand VII and the final crisis of absolutism. Its first chief was Josep Mas Vila, the municipal architect.

In the following years, dissatisfaction with the economic, social and political situation against the backdrop of the establishment of the Liberal regime and the first Carlist war led to revolts and riots with numerous arson attacks (such as burning monasteries and the Vapor Bonaplata textile mill in 1835) and frequent stoppage of the administrative life of the city. Not enough attention was paid to putting out and preventing fires.

Soon after it was set up, the Barcelona Fire Brigade began to call for measures to lessen the risk of fire such as compulsory water tanks, hoses, extinguishers and hydrants. The first municipal regulations and bylaws were also enacted which included fire prevention standards (1839 and 1857) and in part were the basis for later national legislation.



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1 Decision by Barcelona City Councillors to set up the municipal fire brigade. Minutes book of the plenary session of Barcelona City Council, 29 March 1833. AHCB

2 Print showing the Barcelona Fire Brigade's uniforms and firefighting equipment. 1870. ANC (Pere Grañén collection)

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IMPROVEMENTS IN THE NEW EIXAMPLE DISTRICT AND SERVICE TO THE AGGREGATED TOWNS

Gaining access to fires became easier with the demolition of the city's walls in 1854 and the new orthogonal layout of the Eixample drawn up by Ildefons Cerdà. The design of its buildings meant they were more resistant to the spread of fire along their frontage and to neighbouring properties. However, their timber or metal frame structures did not include any protective measures to make them more fire resistant.

In this period the City Council took a more interventionist approach as in the case of the Universal Exposition of 1888, although the Barcelona Fire Brigade still had no inspection role.

Following the amalgamation of the municipalities on the Barcelona Plain in 1897, the Barcelona Fire Brigade started to operate in the former outlying towns where there were numerous steam-powered factories. Some of these towns had their own fire brigades whose crews and equipment were added to the Barcelona Fire Brigade and their fire stations were closed.



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- 1 Plan of the surroundings of the city of Barcelona and renovation and extension project. 1859. By: Ildefons Cerdà. ICGC
- 2 Carriage equipped with a steam-powered pump in Ciutadella fire station's yard. 1894. Photographer: A.S. Xatart. ABB
- 3 Members of the Barcelona Fire Brigade outside the Palau de Belles Arts. 1907. Unknown photographer. AFB



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- 4 Fire at La Manresana twisting and spinning mill in la Cera Street. 1899. Photographer: Antoni Esplugas. AFB
- 5 The former Sant Antoni monastery and Escola Pia on Ronda de Sant Antoni burning during Tragic Week. 1909. Photographer: Frederic Ballell. AFB
- 6 Inspecting firemen and their equipment on Diagonal Avenue. 1916. Photographer: Frederic Ballell. AFB

ELECTRICITY AND MOTORISATION

The widespread advent of electrical systems in the early 20th century meant steam boilers were gradually phased out. Using electricity reduced fire hazards in buildings, although there was still a high danger of fire in Ciutat Vella and outlying districts with older built-up areas because of accessibility problems and the clustering of industrial plants and workshops. The first general fire extinguishing systems were set up in factories and the fire hydrant grid was completed, yet systems for evacuating people were still no better.

In 1908, the Brigade took delivery of its first motor vehicles and was fully motorised by 1920. Rotary pumps replaced steam pumps. Motorisation made the service faster and more efficient.



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PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE BARCELONA FIRE BRIGADE (1920-1958)

Shift in scale and modernisation of the service

During this period, the Barcelona Fire Brigade's equipment was significantly upgraded and its crews increased and were professionalised. It also began to inspect and take part in awarding licences for business operations and opening premises.

However, it still did not have sufficient inspection powers to ensure compliance with fire regulations. There were also no major changes in measures for evacuation, against the spread of fire and for greater fire resistance in architectural structures.

Fires in factories, theatres and shops continued to be commonplace, showing that prevention was far from being a core aspect of the Barcelona Fire Brigade's work at a time of further major population and urban growth.

THE CITY KEEPS ON GROWING

The second and third decades of the 20th century saw the completion of the urban development of the Eixample's central sector, many of the areas between it and the former towns on the Plain and also Montjuïc, the venue for the 1929 International Expo. By 1930, Barcelona had reached a million inhabitants.

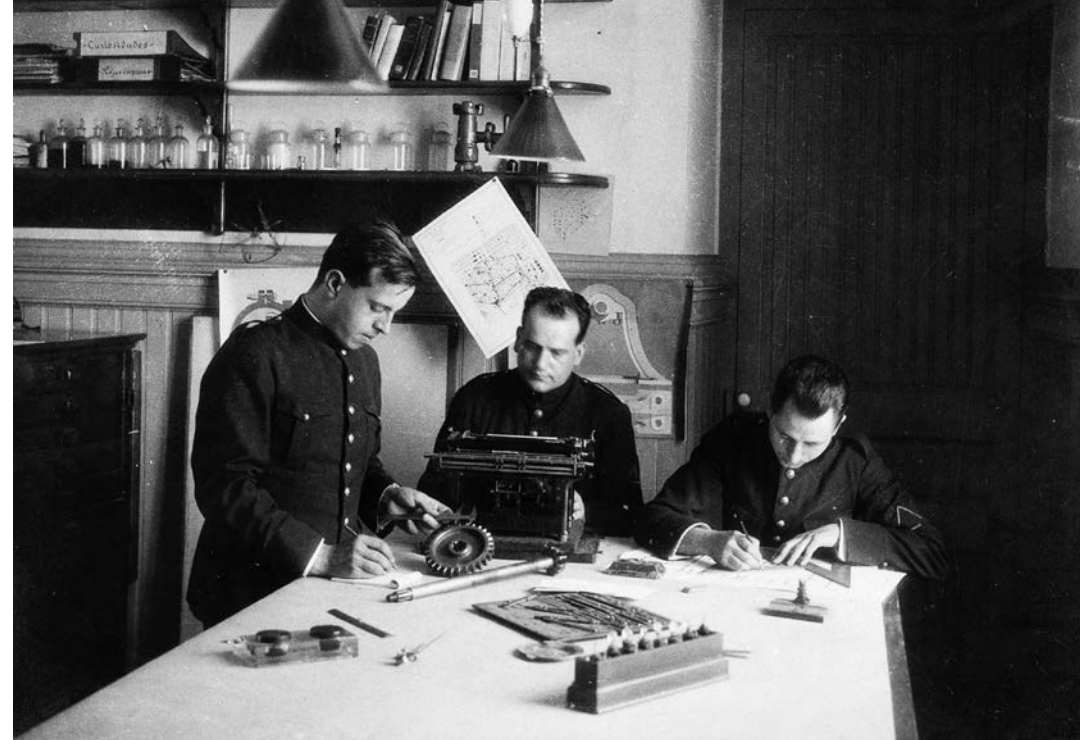
Between 1920 and 1933, Marina de l'Hospitalet was added to the city as the site of a free port (today's Zona Franca) along with Sarrià. They were followed by the Bon Pastor and Baró de Viver neighbourhoods in Santa Coloma de Gramenet after the Civil War. The city grew again after the War to a million and a half inhabitants by 1960.

- 1 Urban development work in Espanya Square. 1927-1928. Photographer: Pérez de Rozas. AFB
- 2 Map of the city of Barcelona, called the Martorell Plan. 1929. By: Vicenç Martorell, head of the City Plan Service office at Barcelona City Council. AHCB



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Barcelona Fire Brigade Technical Office. 1927. Unknown photographer. ABB

THE BRIGADE'S MODERNISATION: PREVENTION GAINS GROUND OVER PUTTING OUT FIRES

In 1913, Fire Brigade crews were professionalised. The service switched to 24/7 availability and the head of the Brigade went full-time. Starting in 1920, its fleet of vehicles and other firefighting equipment were significantly upgraded.

The Brigade's new regulations in 1926 led to the setting up the Technical Office and the start of the Barcelona Fire Brigade's involvement in licensing procedures, inspection and penalties. The Brigade began to conduct risk analyses of premises and required owners to report on their facilities. Attendance at congresses in Europe led to the introduction of technological improvements. Barcelona Fire Brigade chief Emilio Gutiérrez was invited to the 1928 Prague International Fire Brigade Congress hosted by the International Technical Committee for the Prevention and Extinction of Fire.

New protection regulations were issued and general building ordinances were overhauled to improve fire prevention.

To make up for the addition of the Finestrelles sector in l'Hospitalet de Llobregat to Barcelona, in 1933 the Fire Brigade took over this neighbouring municipality's firefighting services until 1975.



1 The Magirus engines bought by the Barcelona Fire Brigade in 1929 in a street in Ulm (Germany) where their manufacturer was based, about to start their journey by road to Barcelona. Unknown photographer. ABB

2 Presentation of the new Magirus vehicles on the Ciutadella Park waterfall esplanade. 1929. ABB

3 Cover of the magazine *Fuego!*, published in Barcelona. March 1930. ABB



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THE 1929 INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION

The new facilities and equipment for the International Exposition were a key milestone in fire prevention measures. In 1929, the first newly built station was opened in Lleida Street next to the trade fair site.

Following the closure of the Expo, fire prevention measures were put in place in more industrial plants and public premises.



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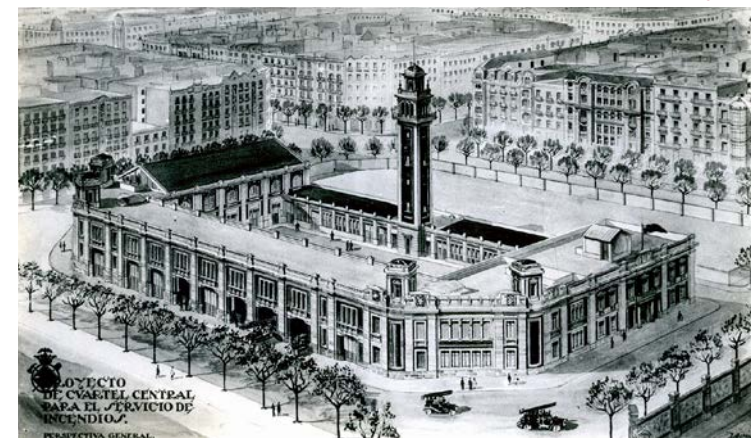
4 Barcelona Fire Brigade training exercises in the Jardinetes de Gràcia. 1929. Arxiu Municipal del Districte de Gràcia

5 Fire station in Lleida Street. 1929. Unknown photographer. ABB

6 Design for the Barcelona Central Fire Station in Provença Street. 1930. By: Emilio Gutiérrez, Chief of the Barcelona Fire Brigade. ABB



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THE SECOND REPUBLIC AND THE CIVIL WAR

During the Second Republic, the Barcelona Fire Brigade had to operate in a turbulent political and social environment. When strikes or other conflicts broke out, firefighters' access to fires was impeded or limited. The Brigade also had serious budgetary problems owing to the financial crisis at the City Council which was heavily in debt.

Nevertheless, the Brigade's previous modernisation and professionalisation made it possible to cope with these restrictions and also the consequences of the Civil War which put its resilience to the test. The Brigade's search and rescue operations brought it great credit, a reputation that was maintained and even enhanced in the post-war period.



1 Front page of newspaper *La Vanguardia*, 6 December 1936. AHCB

2 Militiamen training in the Provença Street fire station yard. 1937. ABB

3 Barcelona firefighters with rescue work after the air raid on 18 March 1938. Unknown photographer. AD / Centre de Documentació del CIARGA and Institut d'Estudis Penedesencs



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4 Putting out a cotton bale fire in the central warehouses on the Espanya quay, 1947. Photographer: Carlos Pérez de Rozas. AFB

5 Testing a new Pegaso fire engine with Josep Sabadell, deputy chief of the fire brigade, in attendance, 1949. Photographer: Carlos Pérez de Rozas. AFB

YEARS OF HARDSHIP

In the post-war period, the investment undertaken in the 1920s offset the shortage of personnel and material resources. The Barcelona Fire Brigade largely reported to the military authorities as it was required to take part in passive defence activities such as attending short technical courses, which often merely amounted to patriotic harangues, and helping to draw up the city's zoning map. The Barcelona Fire Brigade also took orders from the Civil Government. Crews were on standby to be called out at any time.

Until 1955, most of the equipment purchased was second-hand. The city continued to grow and there was a shortage of stations in the outlying areas and the new neighbourhoods. As a result firefighters were often late in getting to fires.

BARCELONA FIRE BRIGADE VEHICLES

The Fire Brigade has an outstanding collection of vehicles which have seen service over the years. Here is a selection of eight photographs of the models on display in *Protecting Barcelona* dating from the time of their purchase. The photograph of the Delahaye 84 PS (Genoveva) engine is a restored example of this model which is on permanent display in the Espai Bombers. Prevention Station.



Delahaye 84 PS - Genoveva engine. Bought in 1923. Made in France. Lightweight fire engine with a 400-litre water tank for self-sufficient firefighting. ABB



MTM 1875 pump. Bought in 1875. Hand fire pump manufactured by Maquinista Terrestre i Marítima based on a French model. For drawing water directly from a pond or canal. It has a tank which can be filled with buckets of water. ABB



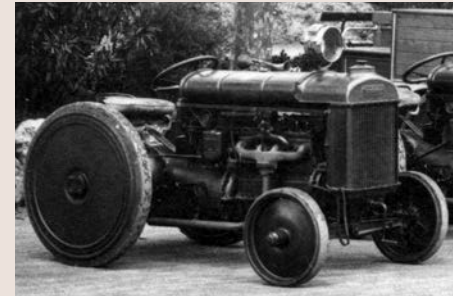
Porta ladder 1879. Bought in 1879. Made in Italy. The Barcelona Fire Brigade's first long ladder. ABB



Merryweather Valiant II 1896. Bought in 1896. Made in the UK. Light steam pump with a 900 l/m flow rate. At least two firefighters were needed to move it around. ABB



Horse-drawn carriage 1892. Bought in 1892. Made in France. Vehicle originally designed for the Paris *Brigade des Sapeurs-Pompiers*. The Barcelona Fire Brigade bought three, one for each of its main fire stations. ABB



Tractor 1922. Bought in 1922. Manufactured at the Ford Hispania factory in Barcelona with parts imported from the United States of America. For carrying ladders and steam pumps following the withdrawal of the horse-drawn carriage service. ABB



Ford A1 1929. Bought in 1929. Manufactured at the Ford Hispania factory in Barcelona with parts imported from the United States of America. Barcelona Fire Brigade commanders' car. ABB



Bt7 1948. Bought in 1948. United States Army surplus war equipment. Truck specially designed to fight fuel fires at airfields. ABB



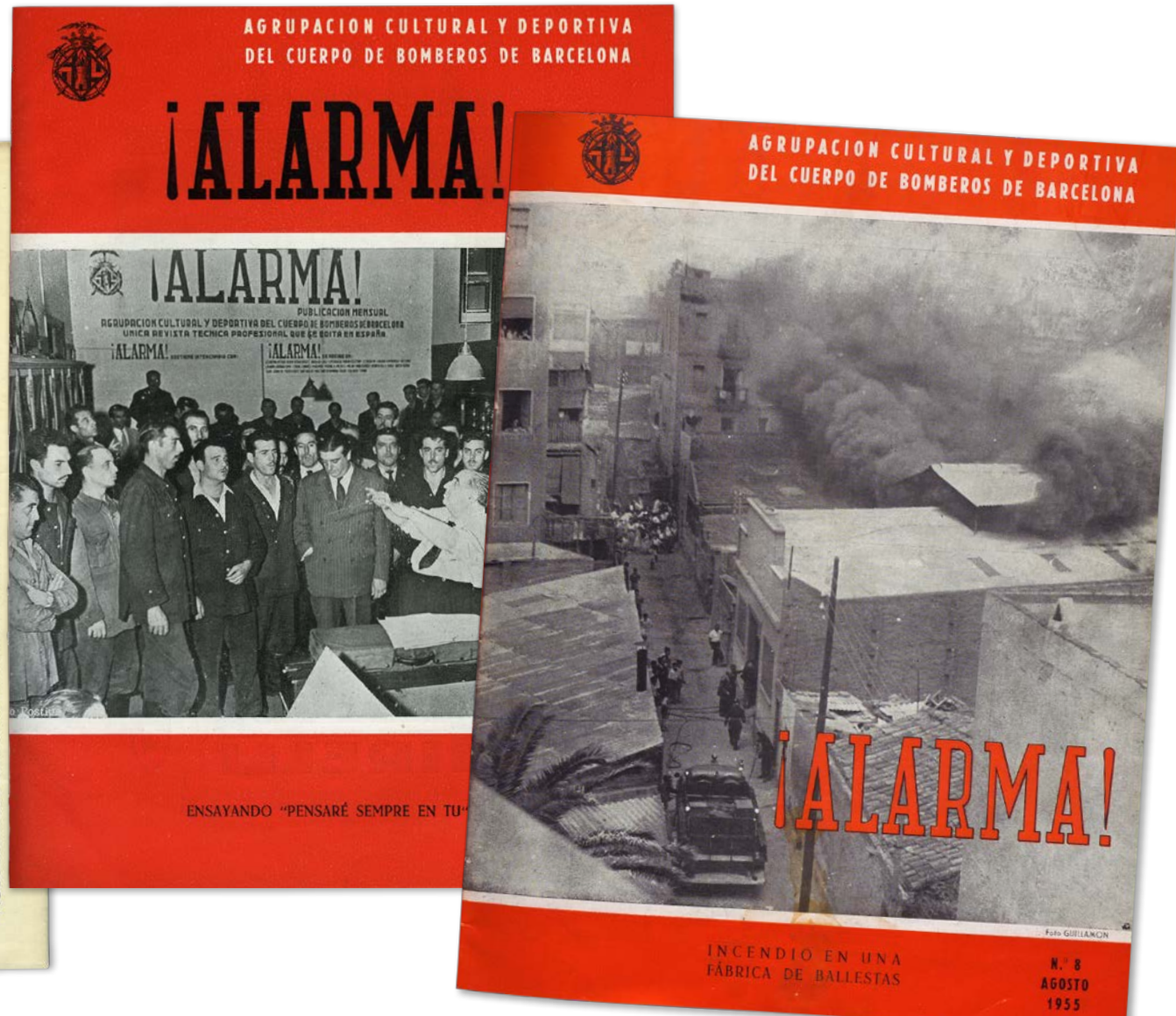
W BT 19 1955. Bought in 1955. Volkswagen T1 van fitted out by Rosembauer with a high-pressure pump to put out small fires. It would be used at the fire station inside the Barcelona Trade Fair facility. ABB. The van at the exhibition belongs to Marcos Navarro's private collection.



Covers of ¡Alarma! magazine. ABB

¡ALARMA! MAGAZINE

The Barcelona Fire Brigade's internal vigour led to the establishment in 1946 of its Cultural and Sports Association, an example of collective cooperation in times of severe oppression, followed by the first issue of ¡Alarma! in 1949. This magazine raised the Barcelona Fire Brigade's profile outside the city by featuring articles about the most significant incidents and others on community and in-house social events which furthered the service's outstanding image.





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THE RISKS OF 'DEVELOPMENTALIST' GROWTH (1958-1974)

The firefighter; help in times of hardship

Against a backdrop of unchecked acceleration of the city's growth and rising numbers of fires, some progress was made in prevention: activities in the same establishment began to be split into separate areas, especially in the Eixample, in order to curb the spread of fire. Evacuation of people also came to be seen as a priority, albeit without a precise regulatory framework. Passive protection products started to be used in the metal frames of newly constructed buildings. However, most industrial, business and other public facilities were not yet equipped with smoke detectors or automatic extinguishing systems. Permission was also given to construct free-standing high-rise buildings with significant shortcomings in systems for preventing fire spreading and evacuating people.

The Barcelona Fire Brigade at the collapse of a building under construction. 1973. Unknown photographer. ABB

GREATER POPULATION GROWTH AND URBAN SPRAWL

In the midst of Franco's dictatorship, the city again saw strong demographic growth and by 1970 its population stood at 1,750,000. The housing shortage and spreading shantytowns were a major problem. The City Council and the Spanish government supported the construction of numerous housing estates on the outskirts of the city, including la Verneda, Sant Martí, el Sud-oest del Besòs, Montbau, Ciutat Meridiana, la Pau and Canyelles, in lockstep with others in neighbouring municipalities in the metropolitan region such as la Mina. In all these neighbourhoods, access by the emergency services was a major problem or it was difficult to get into the buildings from the front. Free-standing high-rise buildings were also put up.

There was enormous land and housing speculation during this time. The intention was to build a lot and very quickly with materials which over the years have led to many structural problems.

Map of the city showing the division into districts. 1970. AMCB



THE AGE OF OIL AND NATURAL GAS

The widespread use of petroleum products (plastics, solvents and diesel fuel) in industry led to large-scale fires. Putting out industrial fires often took too long due to a shortage of specific products. The switch to natural gas in the early 1970s brought a new danger of residential explosions and considerably increased service callouts.



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- 1 Fire at the Zona Franca natural gas plant. 17 June 1972. Photographer: Pérez de Rozas. AFB
- 2 The Barcelona Fire Brigade dealing with a fire in a lorry carrying cotton bales. 1960-1966. Photographer: Joan Guitart. ABB



- 1 Collapse of a house at 7, la Unió Street. A pregnant mother and her child wait to be rescued by the Barcelona Fire Brigade. 3 October 1969. Photographer: Pérez de Rozas. AFB
- 2 Fire at the Model Prison. 1970. Photographer: Joan Guitart. ABB
- 3 Rescue of the victims of a gas explosion in Rajolers Street in Sants. 29 October 1972. Photographer: Pérez de Rozas. AFB
- 4 First educational activities in schools. 1960-1970. Unknown photographer. ABB
- 5 Page from *La Vanguardia* of 21 December 1963 reporting the opening of the first Children's Festival. AHCB



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PREVENTION TO THE FORE AT LAST

In 1964, the first municipal bylaw specifically about fire protection for buildings and special premises was enacted. Owners were required to install fire hydrants and take other preventive measures inside facilities where fire-prone products were handled.

The Barcelona Fire Brigade started to put people at the heart of prevention and safety policies and take part in the Children's Fair. In 1970, it began holding open days in fire stations.

Ayer mañana, bajo la presidencia del delegado provincial del Ministerio de Información y Turismo y presidente del certamen, doctor don Jaime Delgado, se celebró la inauguración del I Festival de la Infancia, organizado por la Campaña Benéfica de Radio Nacional de España en Barcelona, e instalado en el Palacio número uno de la Feria de Muestras, en Montjuich. He aquí, en estas fotos de Pérez de Rozas, dos aspectos del acto



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STEPPING UP PREVENTION

Risk analysis: people, technology and regulations

The new fire safety bylaw in 1974 and the policy of democratic town councils from 1979 onwards made prevention a top priority.

As the city's population growth ground to a halt, many of its residents moved out of the centre of the conurbation to the municipalities on the successive metropolitan rings, a widespread trend across Europe. Numerous urban reforms were also undertaken under the 1976 General Metropolitan Plan. Relocation of factories from inside the city to the Zona Franca and the metropolitan region had begun in the 1960s and was now stepped up, which meant one of the main sources of fires disappeared.

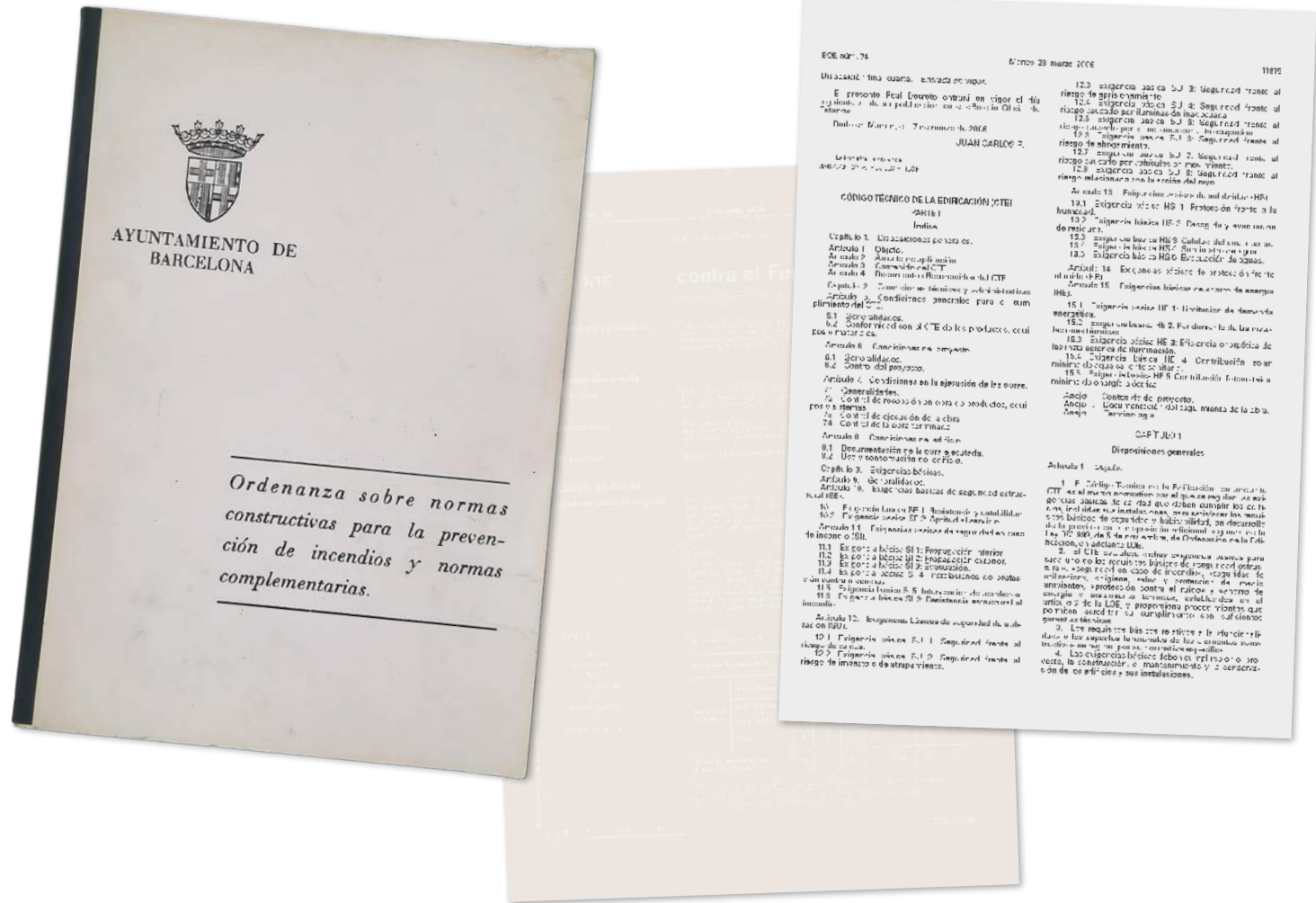
New buildings and infrastructures had to strictly comply with regulations on restricting the spread of fire, evacuation, fire stability of architectural structures and accessibility for firefighters.

Training and information on prevention and safety measures have become one of the main roles of the Barcelona Fire Brigade.

THE NEW 1974 BYLAW: A BIG STEP FORWARD

In 1974, a new municipal bylaw on building regulations for fire prevention was brought in and marked a turning point. From then on, all new build and business licences needed a prior report from the Fire Brigade.

The bylaw became a model for fire prevention regulations all over Spain. The Basic Standards on Fire Protection Conditions (NBE CPI) adopted the core requirements of this bylaw and both were regularly updated until the publication of the Technical Building Code (CTE DB SI) in 2006.



REGULATION EVOLUTION

- BARCELONA
- ESTADO
- MADRID
- ZARAGOZA

1964	1974	1974	1976	1980	1981	1982	1990	1991, 1996	1992, 1996	2006	2008
ORDENANZA DE PROTECCIÓN CONTRA INCENDIOS EN EDIFICIOS Y LOCALES ESPECIALES	NORMA TECNOLÓGICA DE LA EDIFICACIÓN NTE-IPF 74 «INSTALACIONES DE PROTECCIÓN CONTRA EL FUEGO»	ORDENANZA SOBRE NORMAS CONSTRUCTIVAS PARA LA PREVENCIÓN DE INCENDIOS DEL AYUNTAMIENTO DE BARCELONA	ORDENANZA PRIMERA DE PREVENCIÓN DE INCENDIOS DEL AYUNTAMIENTO DE MADRID	ORDENANZA DE PREVENCIÓN DE INCENDIOS DEL TERMINO MUNICIPAL DE ZARAGOZA	NORMA BÁSICA DE LA EDIFICACIÓN NBE-CPI 81. Condiciones de protección contra incendios en los edificios	REGLAMENTO GENERAL DE POLICÍA DE ESPECTÁCULOS PÚBLICOS Y ACTIVIDADES RECREATIVAS	ORDENANZA SOBRE NORMES CONSTRUCTIVAS PER A LA PREVENCIÓ D'INCENDIS DE L'AJUNTAMENT DE BARCELONA	NORMAS BÁSICAS DE LA EDIFICACIÓN	ORDENANCIAS MUNICIPALS	CÓDIGO TÉCNICO DE LA EDIFICACIÓN. DOCUMENTO BÁSICO DE SEGURIDAD DE INCENDIO. CTE DB SI	ORDENANZA REGULADORA DE LES CONDICIONS DE PROTECCIÓ CONTRA INCENDIS

THE PREVENTION DIVISION'S ROLE

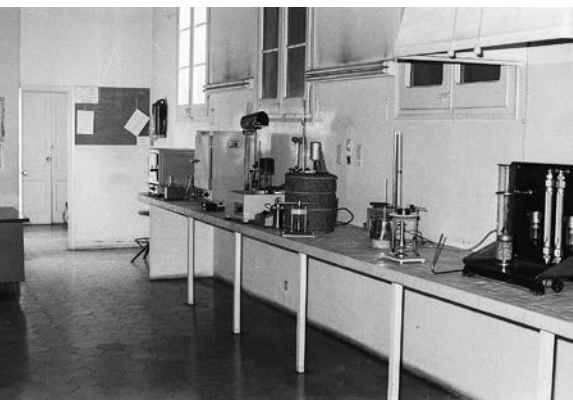
In 1974 and at the same time as the bylaw was enacted, the Prevention Division was set up as the department tasked with ensuring compliance with fire prevention regulations in buildings and infrastructures via reports, inspections and proposals for new regulations. Since then, they have made it a priority to find out the causes of fires and assess the conditions of premises where fires have broken out. The Fire Laboratory had become operational in 1972.

The Division played a key role in drawing up the 1996 Basic Fire Protection Regulation (NBE CPI). Since the 19th century, Barcelona has set the standard for many Spanish fire prevention laws.

WOMEN IN THE BARCELONA FIRE BRIGADE AND FIRE PREVENTION: FIRST PERIOD

The inclusion of women in the fire brigade is relatively recent. The Prevention Division was one of the first to take on female staff in 1985, while Montserrat Radresa became head of the Fire Laboratory in 1990. Women joined the medical team in 1986. After that they gradually made their way into other divisions and services until in 2007 the first woman was assigned to a firefighting role.

Over the last few years, the Barcelona Fire Brigade has striven to increase the number of women in the service. This has included changes to regulations, amendments to entry requirements, remodelling fire station facilities and measures to help balance work and family life.



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5 Barcelona Fire Brigade drill at the Mapfre Tower. Photographer: Mariona Gil. ABB

6 Vall d'Hebron fire station. 2020. Photographer: Laura Guerrero. ABB

1 Fire Laboratory. 1974. Photographer: Joan Guitart. ABB

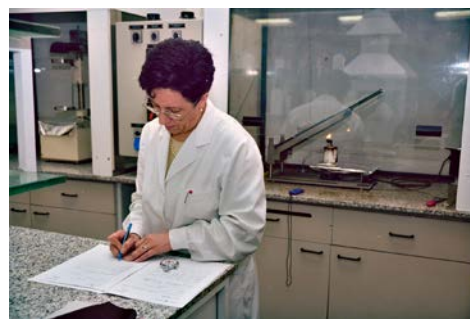
2 First group of fire prevention and safety instructors. 1996. Unknown photographer. ABB

3 The first women to join the Barcelona Fire Brigade's medical team. 1991. Photographer: Ricard Cervantes. ABB

4 Montserrat Radresa, director of the Fire Laboratory. 1991. Photographer: Ricard Cervantes. ABB



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THE RESPONSE TO NEW RISK SCENARIOS

Over the last few decades, the Barcelona Fire Brigade has prioritised the care of people, buildings and infrastructures in that order. The 1998 Municipal Charter included promoting public participation in prevention and safety culture programmes. This has resulted in a comprehensive and high-quality range of options for schools, associations and the social sectors at greatest risk coupled with general prevention campaigns.

In this most recent period, significant progress in developing protection and prevention regulations has led to a considerable reduction in property damage and casualties.

- 1 Fire in the Autopistas (ACESA) building in Gal·la Placidia Square. 27 October 1993. Unknown photographer. Agencia EFE
- 2 Fire in the Torre Urquinaona skyscraper. 27 January 1999. Photographer: Kimpol. ABB
- 3 Educational visit and activities with children. Photographer: Ricard Cervantes. ABB



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- 4 PREvenim! educational vehicle, a B-123 fire engine which can be converted into a mobile classroom to teach the culture of prevention to children and young people. In service since 2021. Unknown photographer. ABB

Fire prevention is the outcome of specific legal regulations, the technology available to firefighters and the training and information people get on what to do in case of danger. The right combination of these three points of the prevention triangle ensures that reasonable safety indicators can be achieved.

Over the last two hundred years, Barcelona has become a safer city because progress has been made on all three fronts: basic statutory fire safety regulation has been introduced and an inspection system put in place to enforce it, a professional, well-equipped fire brigade has been set up, and training and information activities for people have begun to be prioritised. However, there is still a lot of work to be done because regulations and technology alone are not enough; people need to be at the core of prevention.

The prevention triangle



Espai Bombers. Prevention Station on Lleida Street opened in 2016.

A leader in prevention and sharing safety tips in the city.

Photographer: Juan Carlos García (upper photograph) and unknown (lower photograph). ABB



HOW CAN WE PREVENT HOUSE FIRES?

- Never overload multi-plug adaptors.
- Keep matches, lighters, etc., out of reach of children.
- Do not accumulate appliances and substances that are combustible (paints, fuels, gas cylinders, etc.).
- While asleep, do not charge battery-operated electrical devices (bicycles, mobiles, scooters, etc.).
- Always keep a close eye on naked flames (gas hobs, candles, incense burners, etc.) and switch them off or put them out before going out or going to bed.
- Ensure heating appliances are at least one metre away from furniture and clothing.
- Do not tamper with electrical systems: use them properly.
- Avoid using washing machines, tumble dryers and dishwashers whilst sleeping.
- We recommend the use of smoke detectors: they are cheap and effective.
- If you smell gas, do not operate any electrical devices or switches, turn off the gas at the mains, open windows and call 112.

HOW CAN WE PROTECT OURSELVES FROM HOUSE FIRES?

IF THE FIRE IS OUTSIDE YOUR HOME

- Close the door and windows of your home: stay indoors and keep safe.
- Call 112
- Place damp cloths in the gap under the door

IF THE FIRE IS INSIDE YOUR HOME

If you are able to see the way out through the smoke:

- Leave, taking your keys, close the doors behind you and head to the street. Never go up onto the roof.
- Never use the lift
- Call 112

If you are unable to see the way out through the smoke:

- Go to another area and close the doors
- Call 112
- Make yourself visible to people on the street



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