

Markham District 2 Firefighters — first line response team, on call

By BILL LANNING
 "Pumper 55 returning to station, in service"; Firefighter Gary Cyr announced into the

hand mike — barely heard above the accelerating roar of the yellow fire truck.
 "Roger Pump 55, Markham

control out," replied an unseen voice from a speaker mounted near the ceiling of the truck's warm cab.

Cyr undid the top catch of his firecoat and for the first time since the shift started at seven that morning, he sat back in the seat, allowed a smile to cross his face and relaxed.

He could relax at the thought that there was a whole 40 minutes left to wash the vehicle and complete the shift report, then turn "55" over to the night squad. Perhaps it was the fact that his shift only had to respond to three minor calls and were able to complete a familiarization course of Union Villa, prepared by one of the squad members.

Maybe it was the recollection of the combined look of awe and apprehension that spread over the face of two-year old David

Coates as he was freed from a locked bedroom and confronted with two uniformed firemen. Or the fortunate young lady that was gently lifted from her ditched, compact car and carried up the embankment to the waiting ambulance.

Whatever the thought, it was abruptly terminated as three of the crew members exited the pumper and guided the fourth, as he backed the long response unit into Unionville Station Two.

The unseen voice of Markham Control, Doreen Thomas, looks down on the returning foursome from her expansive panel of microphones, radio dials, phones and map panels, much like a mother over her brood.

selves — right up the ladder of command.


There is a closeness bred in having to keep house together, eat together, train together and foster the interdependency required in fire suppression.

The closeness becomes sheer crowding as two squads (eight men) occupy the small locker room as the night shift prepares to take over. The day shift departs and the night squad heads for the vehicle bay to check out the equipment — a ritual carried out at the start of each shift.

Personal protective gear is placed near the pumper for a quick retrieval, the air packs and their regulators receive a thorough going over, as do vehicle lights, siren and the radios, fixed and portable.

"Roger Pump 55, Markham Control radio check, Station Two complete"

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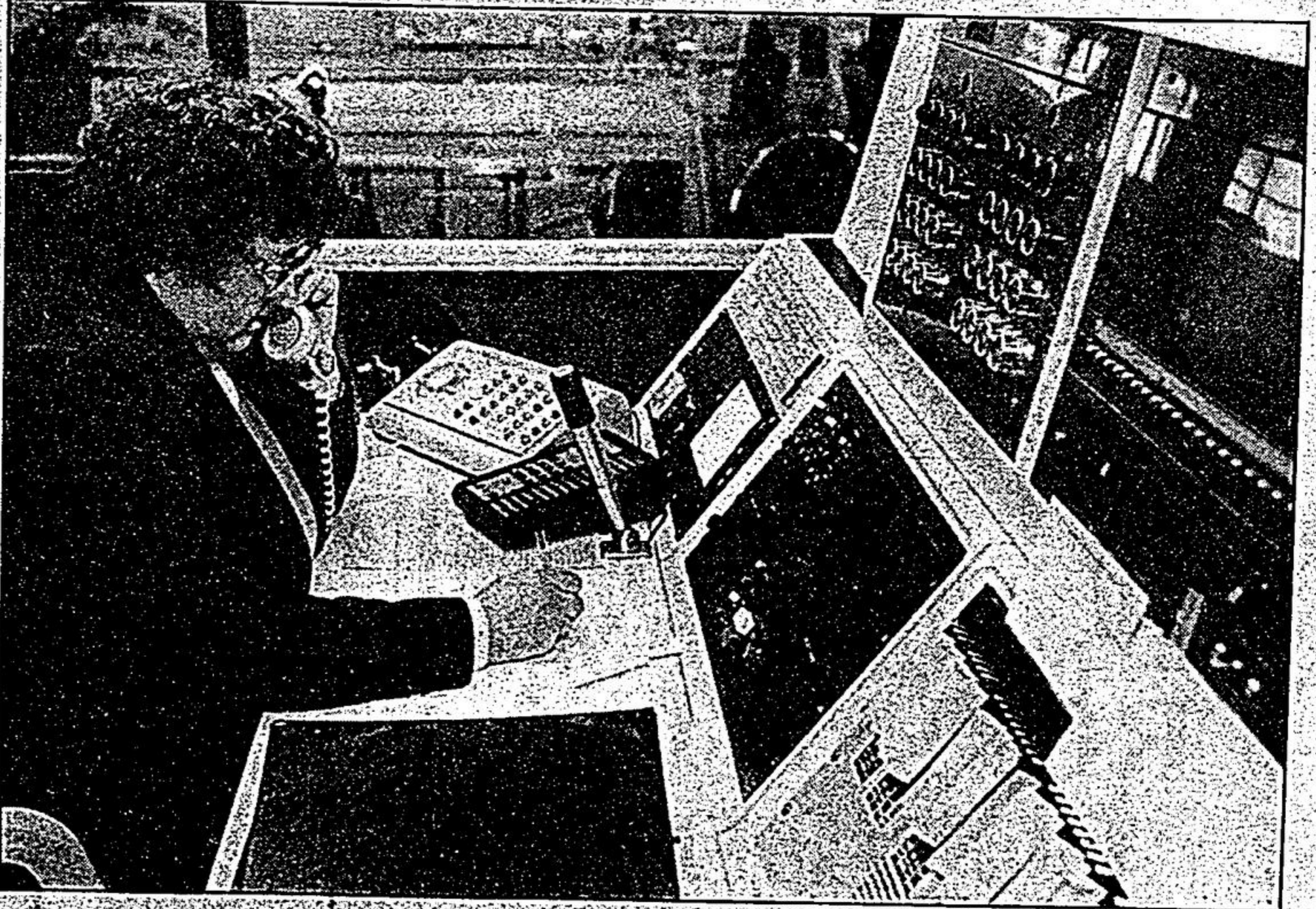
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144 Main St. Markham 471-1772



Doreen Thomas, and four other dispatchers at radio control centre received over 1,900 emergency response calls last year. The station handles Markham waterworks, calls after hours and Stouffville's fire alerts 24-hours a day.

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