

October 20,
2025

DFM DISPATCH

Denver
Firefighters
Museum

THE MOST ANTICIPATED ARTICLE EACH MONTH

COLLECTIONS SPOTLIGHT!

DENARGO MARKET FIRE



In 1939, the Denargo Market (officially called the Denver Food Terminal Market) opened at 1800 Denargo Market (29th and Broadway) to satisfy Denver's growing demand for fresh produce arriving on the Union Pacific railroad. Consisting of 300 steel market stalls and a brick office building, the market later expanded to include a poultry and egg market as farmers and growers filled the space. On December 16th, 1952, Denargo Market experienced a two-alarm fire gutting one major distributing company and causing an estimated \$325,000 worth of damage. This fire was started by a portable oil stove overturning and spilling oil which then ignited.

On July 7, 1971, the Denver Fire Department responded to its worst blaze in 9 years. With the original call coming in at 7:12 pm, the fire had escalated to four alarms by 7:37 pm. Smoke filled the evening air, causing thousands of dollars in property damage and bringing thousands of onlookers to the scene. Over 50 Denver Police officers kept curious crowds back while 200 DFD firefighters battled the fire, aided by

the Englewood and Arvada fire departments. Denver's response included:

- 13 engine companies
- 5 truck companies
- 2 squad companies
- Reserve Squad #19

In addition Arvada sent a Snorkle and engine company and Englewood responded with a Snorkle.

The timing of this conflagration could not have been much worse for Denver. Early July was the height of packing season at Denargo Market. Large inventories of boxes and supplies on hand for farmers to pack their produce meant lots of fuel for the unfortunate blaze. Firefighters had additional hazards to contend with, too. Two railroad tank cars filled with carbon dioxide were nearby on the Union Pacific railroad creating a fear that the fire would create enough pressure for the tanks to explode. There were also 50 kegs of black powder in a nearby warehouse that firefighters moved a safe distance from the flames.

As if that wasn't enough to manage already, the Denargo Market had 13,000 volt power lines cut through the area. Luckily Public Service shut those off quickly before they could result in further injury or complications to the emergency.

Fortunately, no one was killed in the Denargo Market fire of 1971. While the blaze was terrible and destroyed lots of property within the market, it could have been much worse for Denver that

day. The Denargo Market tried to rebuild, but by the mid-1970s, Denver's economic engine shifted away from rail and warehousing. The market slipped into decline for several decades.

Now the Denargo Market is getting reimagined as the recent sight of renewed urban development in Denver.



Win the Contest!

Be the first to correctly answer the question below and you will win a free Denver Fire beer glass from the museum gift shop! Email your answer to museum staff at director@denverfirefightersmuseum.org or call us at (303) 892-1436 to give us your answer!

Question: Which neighboring fire departments sent crews to help Denver with the Denargo Market Fire in 1971?