

March 2022 Edition

THE SIREN



West Des Moines Fire Department Newsletter

3421 Ashworth Road (515) 222-3420 - wdm.iowa.gov/government/fire-department

Message from the Fire Marshal

As discussed in previous editions, the City of West Des Moines (and all Greater Des Moines) is booming. New construction projects are getting announced every few days and now that spring is here, many of them we heard about last year will officially break ground. This generates excitement from the community, along with a lot of questions. One of the most frequently asked to me is *why a project announced several months ago hasn't started construction yet*. This is an outstanding question, and I'd like to take a few moments to answer why.

Even before an official announcement is made, architects, structural engineers and civil engineers are working with our City staff on what infrastructure is needed to serve their proposed development. This involves detailed meetings with City Traffic Engineers, Water Works Engineers and City Planners on street networks, sewers, water main sizes, architectural design standards and zoning requirements. This process also includes the Fire Marshal as the road networks are needed to get our emergency apparatus to the building, and the water mains have to be adequately sized to serve fire sprinkler systems and provide the ability to extinguish a large fire if that system fails. Eventually, a site plan is created and filed which takes City Council approval to move forward. This plan serves as the template for how the building(s) and entire site will be constructed and look like. This approval process can take several weeks, if not months.

During this time, architects have been busy putting together their plans for how the building(s) will be constructed and look like. The City Building Department Plans Examiner and Fire Marshal provide input on code requirements during the design process, and then review the plans when they are submitted for a building permit. Depending upon the size of the project, this review can take up to four weeks (sometimes more, sometimes less) and comments are made for changes that may be required.

Once the building permit is issued and all other City requirements/council actions are approved, the building can begin construction.

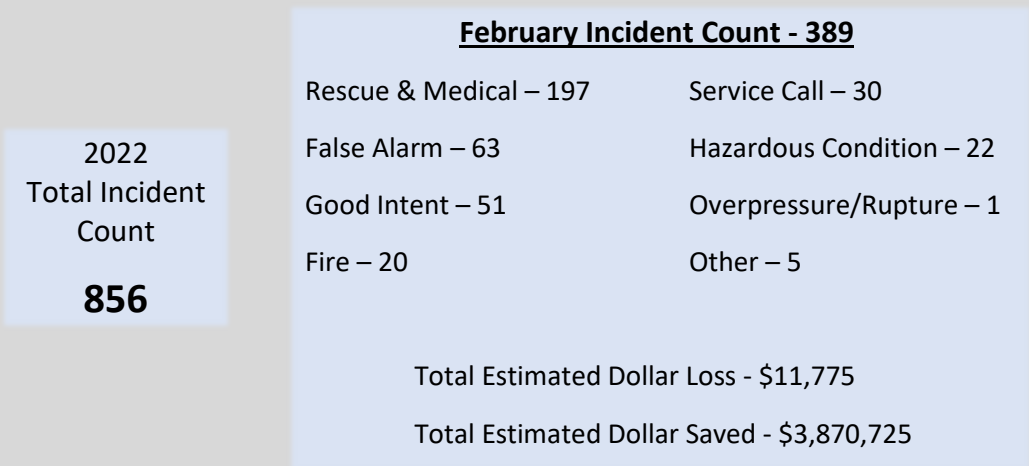


This is when numerous life safety plans start to officially get submitted for approval. Fire sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, fire pumps, and kitchen hood suppression systems all submit engineered drawings that need to be reviewed for code compliance.

Once all plans are reviewed and permits are issued, the real work begins for Fire Inspectors. We will discuss that in upcoming issues. This process is repeated over and over for all the construction projects taking place in our city. I hope this explanation helps give you an understanding of what is required for a project to break ground.

Stay safe, and it is an honor to serve all of you.

Mike Whitsell, Fire Marshal



Significant Incident Recap



February 20 - Residential Structure Fire

Fire crews responded to a residential fire in the 1100 block of Vividell Lane. As the first firefighters made entry to the home, there was heat and light smoke at the top of the stairs. Firefighters initiated fire attack and overhaul extinguishing structural materials and insulation. No injuries were reported. The fire is under investigation with an estimated loss of \$10,000.

West Des Moines Fire in the Community

CPR Refresher Training for Firefighters

Firefighters are trained to do a lot more than just fight fires. The majority of calls fire departments get are medical emergencies. Our firefighters recently participated in Basic Life Support CPR refresher training. High quality CPR with an automated external defibrator (AED) can make a huge difference when paired with well-trained personnel.

Along with being trained in CPR, all firefighters in West Des Moines are certified to the level of EMT. And, almost 30% are certified to the paramedic level. The process of becoming a paramedic is intensive, requiring hundreds of hours of training.

These are just several ways in which our fire department strives to provide top quality emergency services to our residents, visitors, and businesses.



Building Design for DMACC Students

Many people don't think about fire safety when they are shopping at a mall. That's why when malls are designed, the fire department assists in developing an optimum fire strategy for the building reducing the chances of fire occurring and helping ensure staff and visitors remain safe.

Fire Marshal Whitsell took [DMACC Fire Science](#) students on a field trip to the [Jordan Creek Town Center](#), the state's largest shopping mall. He discussed the unique fire and life safety features protecting this property and its occupants. Students visited the fire control room, riser room, discussed protected corridors, fire codes, standpipes, and the suppression system pump house.



Keeping You Safe

Stay Safe When You Travel

One of the worst fires in West Des Moines history happened in February of 1981. Two teenagers attending the state high school wrestling tournament were killed and 11 other people, including five firefighters, were injured in a fire at a hotel. Most of the injured suffered smoke inhalation. About 134 hotel guests were evacuated from the building and transferred to nearby hotels.

This devastating loss is why fire safety is important when you are away from home. Whether it's a family vacation, tournaments or a business trip to a motel or hotel, you need to be prepared for a fire emergency.

- Read the evacuation plan in your room. Find the closest exits to the outside from your room. Count the number of doors between your room and the exits.
- Find the fire alarm pull stations on your floor.
- Keep your room key near your bed and take it with you if there is a fire.
- If the alarm sounds, leave right away, closing all doors behind you. Use the stairs. Never use elevators during a fire.
- Stay in a hotel/motel that has hardwired smoke alarms and an automatic fire sprinkler system.
- If you must escape through smoke, get low and go under smoke to your exit.



If You Can't Escape

- Shut off fans and air conditioners.
- Stuff wet towels in the crack under the door.
- Call 9-1-1 and let them know your location.
- Wait at the window and signal with a flashlight or light-colored cloth.

Facts

!! On average, one of every 14 hotels or motels reported a structure fire each year.

!! Most hotel fire deaths result from fires that started in the bedroom.

!! Cooking is the leading cause of hotel/motel fires.

This Month in Fire History

[The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire](#)

On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the top floors of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory. Trapped inside because the owners had locked the fire escape doors, 146 workers died. It is remembered as one of the most infamous incidents in American industry history, as the deaths were largely preventable. Most of the victims died because of neglected safety features. The Fire Marshal concluded that the likely cause of the fire was the disposal of an unextinguished match or cigarette butt in the scrap bin.

This tragedy led to fire prevention legislation, factory inspection laws and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union to better protect the safety of workers.



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WEST DES MOINES FIRE DEPARTMENT

To strive toward a safer community for our citizens, businesses and visitors

Join Our Team

FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTER

- 18 Years of Age
- High School Diploma or Equivalent
- Valid Driver's License
- Ability to Move Objects in Excess of 100 lbs.
- Starting Annual Salary \$56,492
- Rotating 24 Hour Shift
- Competitive Benefit Package
- Municipal Police and Fire Retirement System
- Progressive Department that Runs Approximately 4,700 Annual Calls
- Firefighter I and EMT Certification Preferred

LAST DAY TO APPLY IS MARCH 18, 2022

APPLY AT:

<https://www.wdm.iowa.gov/Home/Components/JobPosts/Job/1518/1340>

