

THE SIREN



West Des Moines Fire Department Newsletter

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

Message from the Fire Chief

The West Des Moines Fire Department has been accredited since 2006 by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) through the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE). Accredited agencies are often described as being community-focused, data-driven, outcome-focused, strategic-minded, well organized, properly equipped, and properly staffed and trained.

The West Des Moines Fire Department strives to make sure we are providing state of the art services in a timely manner while planning for future growth within our city. Benchmarking crew and department response times is just one of the many data points that is tracked for the accreditation process.

The moment you call 9-1-1, our job begins. Whether it's a medical emergency, fire, hazardous material incident, rescue situation, or natural disaster, we are ready to respond. When we respond to calls, there are many measurements in place to track our time performance and effectiveness.

These components are:

- Call Processing Time – This indicator measures the amount of time it takes to process a 9-1-1 call and send notification to responders.
- Turnout Time – The time it takes responders to go enroute to the call for service.
- Travel Time – The amount of time from going enroute to arriving at the location.
- 1st Due Total Response Time (TRT) – The time it takes from the 9-1-1 call to the first unit showing up on scene.
- Emergency Response Force TRT- The time it takes all units needed to handle the incident to show up on scene.



These are the benchmarks we follow for emergent deployment:

- Call Processing - 60 seconds or less 90% of the time or greater
- Turnout Time - 2 minutes or less 90% of the time or greater
- Travel Time - First Unit - 6 minutes or less 90% of the time or greater
- 1st Due Total Response Time (TRT) – 8 to 8.5 minutes or less 90% of the time or greater
- Emergency Response Force - Total Response Time (ERF-TRT) - 12 to 16 minutes or less 90% of the time or greater

These benchmarks are set forth by our fire department and city, and they are approved by the accrediting agency. We are always striving to reduce response times, because every second counts. The fire department has built an internal system that allows every firefighter to drill down to find the performance of the crew they are on and how they compare to the rest of the department. By measuring these items in a “live” environment, firefighters and supervisors can monitor crew, shift and department performance as it happens.

The accreditation process is a holistic look at the department and includes 11 categories that cover the span of fire and emergency service operations. Each category is broken down into different criteria with multiple performance indicators. The categories are:

Governance and Administration	Assessment and Planning
Goals and Objectives	Financial Resources
Community Risk Reduction Programs	Physical Resources
Human Resources	Training and Competency
Essential Resources	External Systems Relationship
Health and Safety	

Accreditation is an international recognition of achievement. It shows to your community that your agency continually self-assesses, looks for opportunities for improvement, and is transparent and accountable through third party verification and validation.

Craig Leu, Fire Chief

2022
Total Incident
Count
1251

March Incident Count - 395

Rescue & Medical – 174	Service Call – 34
False Alarm – 80	Hazardous Condition – 26
Good Intent – 49	Overpressure/Rupture – 4
Fire – 25	Other – 3

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$53,466

Total Estimated Dollar Saved - \$6,022,050

Significant Incident Recap

March 10 – Transport Vehicle Fire



Firefighters were dispatched to the 1700 block of 28th Street for a reported vehicle fire. As crews were headed to the scene, they could see a plume of dark smoke from the area of the incident. They arrived to find a single semi-truck with the cab of the engine compartment mostly engulfed in fire. Ladder 215 quickly extinguished the fire. The fire was caused by the vehicle's fuel system and the vehicle is a total loss.

March 30 – Garage Fire



West Des Moines Firefighters were called to 1116 8th Street at 5:02 a.m. this morning on a report of a house fire. As firefighters were responding, [Westcom Emergency Communications](#) advised that flames were visible around the garage door, and all residents were out of the house.

As the first fire apparatus arrived on scene, they observed flames on the exterior of the attached garage extending up to the roof. The fire was quickly brought under control, and firefighters remained on scene for over an hour checking for hot spots. Two adults, a 13-year-old, two dogs and a cat were all able to get out of the house without injuries.

At the time of the fire, a lineman for [MidAmerican Energy](#) (later identified as Tom Flanery) was working to fix a streetlight on a pole (directly across the street from the house) that had been hit by lightning during a storm a few weeks ago. He advised that he had been up in the bucket of the truck for about 15-20 minutes when he began to hear a crackling noise nearby. He saw the flames, lowered the bucket, ran across the street calling 911 on a cell phone and then began to knock on the front door. Mr. Flanery indicated that as he got up to the front door, he could hear the smoke alarms sounding inside, but no one came to the door. Mr. Flanery then ran around the single-story house loudly knocking on every window causing the occupants to wake up. Because of his actions, the occupants were able to safely get out and flames did not spread to the inside of the house.

The cause of the fire was ruled accidental due to improperly discarded smoking materials and initial damage estimates are \$7,500.

In the Community

Open Burning and Fire Pits

We would like to remind the residents of West Des Moines that open burning and recreational fires that produce smoke are not allowed within the City limits due to county air quality and West Des Moines Fire Department regulations. This includes fire pits, chimineas and other smoke producing devices.

Smoke from burning leaves, grass, brush, and most plants contain high concentrations of pollutants, such as carbon monoxide, soot, toxic chemicals, and reactive gasses that can contribute to smog formation. The smoke can be an immediate health concern for some people.



Guns N Hoses Charity Hockey Game

On Saturday March 5th, firefighters and police officers from across the Des Moines Metro, joined together to battle in the 17th annual Guns N Hoses charity hockey game. Representing West Des Moines Fire were: Kris Ruskowski, Tyler Wallace, Jason Runge, Jeremy Dietch, Scott Sweetalla and Ben Truetken.

In front of over 1,500 fans, the Guns won the game with a 5 - 2 victory. Although the Hoses lost this one, they still lead the overall series 11 - 6. The true winner was Camp Easter Seals Iowa which was the beneficiary of over \$60,000 in game related donations and proceeds.



Keeping You Safe

Stay on Top of Ladder Safety

Every year the fire department respond to injuries caused by falls from ladders. Ladders are so common that it's easy to forget the risks involved in using them. The National Safety Council notes that over 6,000 people die from falls in and around the home each year and more than 30,000 people are injured each year by falls involving ladders. Most of these accidents occur because basic rules of ladder safety are not followed. Here are five basic rules for ladder safety.

1. Select the right ladder for the job

- Choose a ladder that has the proper load capacity for the job.
- The ladder must be long enough to work from without using the top three feet.

2. Inspect the ladder before you use it

- Check the ladder's stability.
- Ensure all screws, bolts and hinges are tight.
- Look for loose or damaged rungs and side rails.

3. Set the ladder up correctly

- Make sure the ladder is placed on a level surface.
- Protect the base of the ladder with a barricade in high traffic areas.
- Ensure that a stepladder is fully open before use.

4. Climb and descend ladders cautiously

- Face the ladder while holding onto the rails. Use three points of contact.
- Carry your tools on a belt or a hoist.
- Look for overhead powerlines before handling or climbing a ladder.

5. Use common sense when working on a ladder

- Do not lean outside the ladder rails.
- Do not stand on the top step of the ladder.
- Do not place a ladder on boxes, barrels, or other unstable bases.
- Do not try and move the ladder with a person or equipment on it.



This Month in Fire History

Rhythm Club Fire

The Rhythm Club Fire occurred on April 23, 1940 in Natchez, Mississippi. 209 people were killed and over 200 were injured. The club was a long, narrow building with corrugated iron walls and roof. All the windows had been boarded up to prevent people outside the club from entering or watching a performance through the windows. There were only two doors, both near the front of the building; one was locked.

Walter Barnes and his band members were performing to a crowd of over 700 people when the fire broke out near the entrance around 11 p.m. They were among the victims. The club's decorations included Spanish moss hung from the ceiling, which had been sprayed with Flit, a petroleum-based insecticide. The moss quickly ignited, and the building's metal construction prevented the heat from leaving the building. Many people were able to escape through the front door, while others pushed toward the back of the building, where they were unable to escape because there was no exit.

People believed the fire to be accidental, started by a carelessly discarded match or cigarette that then ignited the decorative Spanish moss.

There were no building occupancy restrictions at the time of the fire. Future laws and codes would limit the number of people allowed in a structure and require doors to open outward to prevent people from being trapped.

This tragedy also helped bring forward building requirements that were aimed at making night clubs safer in the event of a fire. Requirements for nightclubs now include the installation of fire protection systems, provisions for safer building finishes and decorations, provisions for better exiting systems, and for clubs to have trained crowd managers on duty.



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