

February 2023 Edition

THE SIREN



West Des Moines Fire Department Newsletter

318 5th St. (515) 222-3420 - wdm.iowa.gov/government/fire-department

Message from the Fire Marshal

While the harsh Iowa winters slow down construction sites across our city, planning meetings, site plan reviews, and construction plan reviews begin to ramp up in preparation for construction to start on new projects in the spring and summer. The Fire Prevention Bureau remains very busy managing all the new buildings getting ready to open or set to begin construction, and 2023 is setting up to be another very busy year for us.

The massive Des Moines University Campus will start having final life safety inspections soon so it can open for students this summer. In addition, numerous new Microsoft Data Center buildings will also be opening along with several large multifamily buildings, new office suites, and retail stores in and around Jordan Creek Town Center. The 197-unit upscale apartment building at Jordan Creek Parkway and Ashworth is rapidly taking shape with final life safety inspections tentatively scheduled for early summer. This large building includes a multi-level parking garage, Ruth's Chris Steak House, and room for one or two retailers. The steel has been set for the new Dave & Buster's at Jordan Creek Town Center, and the race is on to get it ready for opening around the start of the 2023 holiday shopping season. As I mentioned, there are numerous large and exciting projects currently in the early planning and review stages, and I will update you in future articles when those officially kick off.

We are very fortunate to live in a growing and prosperous city, and the West Des Moines Fire Department makes our citizens, businesses, and visitors safety our priority every day. Public education is a huge part of our daily workload, and our firefighters and Prevention Bureau staff enjoy teaching our citizens and providing safety related information on our social media sites.

Stay safe, thank you for your continued support, and it is an honor to serve you.

Mike Whitsell, Fire Marshal



2023
Total Incident
Count
395

January Incident Count - 395

Rescue & Medical – 224	Service Call – 26
Fire Alarm – 67	Hazardous Condition – 15
Good Intent – 48	Overpressure/Rupture – 4
Fire – 10	Other – 1

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$47,700

Total Estimated Dollar Saved - \$3,493,600

Significant Incident Recap

January 14 - Residential Fire



At about 6:00 p.m. on January 14, fire crews were dispatched for a structure fire on Jordan Drive. While enroute, Westcom advised one person was still inside the structure and smoke was showing. The incident was upgraded to a working fire 1st alarm.

Upon arrival, the first apparatus reported people standing in the adjacent yard and a shed structure attached to the home showing smoke. Firefighters initiated fire attack and ventilation. Once the fire was under control, it was checked for extension. The home was turned over to the owner after carbon monoxide was at zero levels.

The cause of the fire is under investigation and damages are estimated at \$2,500.



January 24 – Apartment Fire

The West Des Moines Fire Department responded to a report of a fire at 12:45 this morning at Carriage Park Apartments located at 4815 Pleasant Street.

When firefighters arrived, they entered the building and encountered light smoke and a burning smell. Crews began to pull the ceiling in a bedroom of one of the apartment units and found flames in the attic. The fire was quickly extinguished, and firefighters checked the entire attic for fire extension.

A tenant reported he was sleeping and was alerted by his smoke alarm and smelled something burning. He then heard crackling in the ceiling and called 9-1-1. A tenant in another apartment had been burning wood in their fireplace throughout the day, and the initial investigation has determined the fire appears to have started around a chimney flue barrier in the attic.

The exact cause of the fire is still under investigation, and the damage estimate is \$35,000. There were no injuries reported.

For the Community

Visit to the Iowa State Capitol

Members from IAFF Local 3586 attended the Iowa Professional Fire Fighters “Legislative Day” at the Iowa State Capitol on January 19th. They had the opportunity to speak with legislators from across the state about what it takes to protect fire fighters and their communities. This event is a great opportunity to discuss potential legislation while also updating local leaders about the progress of the West Des Moines Fire Department.





HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Congratulations to Deputy Chief Greg Jones for 30 years with the West Des Moines Fire Department! Thank you for your service and dedication to the City of West Des Moines.

Keeping You Safe

Home Candle Fires

There's a special beauty and calmness to candles, but a lighted candle is also an open flame and a potential fire hazard if not carefully monitored. In fact, these fires cause an annual average of 81 civilian fire deaths, 677 civilian fire injuries, and \$278 million in direct property damage according to the National Fire Protection Association.

A study by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission suggests that 85 percent of candle fires could be avoided if consumers followed three basic safety rules:

- Consider using battery-operated flameless candles, which look, smell, and feel like real candles.
- When using candles, place them in sturdy, safe candleholders that will not burn or tip over.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches from anything that can burn.
- Never leave a burning candle unattended.
- Avoid using candles in sleeping areas and bathrooms.
- Extinguish candles when you leave a room or the home or go to bed.
- Never use a candle where medical oxygen is being used. The two can combine to create a large, unexpected fire. Medical oxygen can cause materials to ignite more easily.
- Always use a flashlight, not a candle, for emergency lighting.



This Month in Fire History

Station Nightclub Fire

The Station Nightclub Fire occurred in West Warwick, Rhode Island on February 20, 2003. The fire began when the tour manager of Great White, the headlining band, set off pyrotechnics that spread through the soundproofing foam at the back of the stage. It reached flashover within one minute, causing all combustible materials to burn. Intense black smoke engulfed the club within two minutes and blocked egress further hindered evacuation. Of the 404 nightclub occupants, 100 were killed and 200 were injured.

The club did not have an automatic fire sprinkler system to extinguish the fire, and most of the victims died at the primary entrance where the rush of frantic spectators created a logjam at the front door. Although the club was at capacity, it was not overcrowded, so failed escape attempts were not a result of the overcrowding of the nightclub. Instead, they resulted from the fact that people neglected to use exit routes other than the front door.

Numerous violations of existing codes contributed to the tragedy, triggering an immediate effort to strengthen fire code protections. Within weeks of the disaster, an emergency meeting was called for the National Fire Protection Association committee handling code for "assembly occupancies."



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