

September 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

As you drive around West Des Moines, you likely have seen one of the massive Microsoft Data Centers that are in our city. There are currently five data center sites with three of those under various stages of construction. The buildings within these sites are huge, and four of the five data center sites have over one million square feet of space.

The West Des Moines Fire Prevention Division spends a considerable amount of time with designers, contractors, and Microsoft staff as each one of the buildings within the sites are designed and constructed. When the buildings are nearing completion, fire inspectors test numerous life safety systems to ensure they are working and ready for Microsoft personnel to begin their operations. The systems that are tested include fire sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, emergency power activations, and shutdowns. The inspections can take several days to complete and involve numerous fire prevention personnel and sub-contractors. Once the inspections are completed, our work is not over. Members of the Prevention Division work with Microsoft staff members on emergency planning for their employees as well as response considerations and plans for emergency services personnel who will respond to calls. We greatly enjoy our partnership with Microsoft and are very glad they have chosen West Des Moines to be their home for these awesome sites!



As always, it is an honor to serve you, and thank you for all the support you continue to give to our firefighters.

Mike Whitsell, Fire Marshal



Microsoft Data Center Site – 11100 Boonville Rd.

2023
Total Incident
Count

3181

August Incident Count - 336	
Rescue & Medical – 155	Service Call – 20
False Alarm – 41	Hazardous Condition (no fire) – 14
Good Intent Call – 38	Overpressure/Rupture – 17
Fire – 10	Special Incident Type – 41
Severe Weather - 0	

Significant Incident Recap

August 26 – Commercial Structure Fire



West Des Moines Firefighters were called to 6515 Mills Civic Parkway (Kohl’s Department Store) at 2:04 p.m. on Saturday, August 26th, 2023, for a report of a fire inside the store. When firefighters arrived on scene, they found a merchandise display rack that had caught fire but was extinguished by the store's fire sprinkler system prior to their arrival.

The cause of the fire was determined to be suspicious, and a joint investigation was conducted between the West Des Moines Fire and West Des Moines Police Departments. Two 15-year-old male juveniles have been charged with first degree arson in connection with the fire.

The store sustained smoke and water damage, but an exact dollar estimate is not available at this time. No injuries were reported.

In the Community

New Firefighters

Please welcome these three firefighters who have worked very hard the past year. They were sworn in by Mayor Russ Trimble at the City Council meeting in August. Congratulations to Allan Busch, Megan Hudson and Maverick McAtee!



Ladder Operations

Crews from Ladder 195 and Ladder 215 trained together on the operations of L215. This is a 62-foot apparatus with an aerial ladder that extends 107 feet. Periodic review with those who potentially could be driving the new “tiller” is vital for efficient and safe work practices. Also, our newest recruit was able to climb the ladder and operate the nozzle while flowing water.

Special Olympics Training Event

Several members from the West Des Moines Fire Department joined with [Krave Gym](#) to participate in a one-hour unified workout with athletes from the Special Olympics. Although the workout was fun, I think everyone enjoyed the post-workout celebration. All proceeds raised will go to the [Special Olympics Iowa](#).



Happy Anniversary!

We have several members of the fire department celebrating milestone anniversaries:

Captain Jim Kirkman – 15 years
Fire Prevention Officer Denise Kinkade – 15 years
Part-Time Firefighter Matt Herring – 10 years



Fire Prevention Week
2023
October 8-14

Keeping You Safe

Home Fire Safety for the Fall Season

As the leaves turn from green to orange, the weather cools, and you start preparing for the cold season ahead, keep in mind fire safety risks that can happen during the fall. Follow these safety tips, and don't let a fire ruin your fall.

- **Change smoke/carbon monoxide alarm batteries and test your alarms.** When Daylight Savings Time ends, it's a good reminder to change your batteries. "Change your clock, change your batteries."
- **Fully check and service your heating devices before cranking up the heat.**
 - Have your HVAC system inspected, cleaned, and serviced by a certified HVAC contractor. Check and replace furnace filters with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters.
 - If you use space heaters, ensure there's at least three feet of space around them. Turn heaters off before going to bed.
 - If you have a fireplace, hire a professional chimney sweep to inspect and clean your chimney. Keep flammable objects at least three feet away from the fireplace and install a mesh metal screen around it.
- **Halloween safety.** Can't wait to decorate your home for Halloween? Dried plants, hay bales and cornstalks catch fire easily. Keep all decorations away from open flames and other heat sources like light bulbs and heaters. Keep exits clear of decorations, so nothing blocks escape routes. Use battery-operated lights instead of candles in jack-o-lanterns and other decorations.
- **Outdoor fire risks.** As leaves and other flammable debris build up around your home, make it a habit to remove them periodically. Prune trees and rake up leaves and twigs. Keep your roof, gutters, and downspouts clear of debris. Remove fuel from lawn mowers before storing them for winter. Don't store fuel in your home or garage.
- **Create a fire escape plan.** If a fire breaks out and your smoke alarms sound, does everyone know what to do? Designate an escape route for each area of your home and establish a meeting place outside. Practice your plan twice a year while staying low to avoid breathing in smoke.



This Month in Fire History

Hamlet Chicken Processing Plant Fire

On September 3, 1991, an industrial fire destroyed the Imperial Food Products chicken processing plant in Hamlet, North Carolina. Despite three previous fires in 11 years of operation, the plant had never received a safety inspection. The fire killed 25 people and injured 54, many of whom were unable to escape due to locked exits. It was the second deadliest industrial disaster in North Carolina's history.

The conveyor of a hydraulic line on one of the plant's cookers burst, which ejected hydraulic fluid that burst into flames because of the plumes of heating gas expelled by a cooking vat. This created a fireball and spread smoke rapidly, confusing those people inside. Many of the exit doors were locked, causing people to hide in a cooler or to seek other exits. The toxic gas killed many of those trying to escape.

The fire prompted OSHA to review 22 state-run enforcement programs and launch a national campaign to alert employers about the necessity of fire safeguards, including alarms, sprinklers, and unlocked exits.



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