

October 2023 Edition

# THE SIREN



West Des Moines Fire Department Newsletter

318 5<sup>th</sup> St. (515) 222-3420 - [wdm.iowa.gov/government/fire-department](http://wdm.iowa.gov/government/fire-department)

## Message from the Fire Marshal

Fire Prevention Week is October 8<sup>th</sup> through the 14<sup>th</sup>. West Des Moines Firefighters will be busy visiting schools, daycares, and businesses across the city delivering programs to keep our citizens safe. In addition, our stations will host dozens of tours from a wide range of community groups and schools. This year's Fire Prevention Week theme is, "*Cooking safety starts with YOU. Pay attention to fire prevention.*" Between 2016 and 2020, firefighters across the country responded to 166,400 home fires caused by improper cooking. Cooking fires are the leading cause of house fires and fire-related injuries in the United States. It is also one of the leading causes of fires here in West Des Moines.

As firefighters, we have the opportunity to interact with our community daily during each fire or EMS call. Our Fire Prevention Week activities take up the entire month of October and stretch into November. During this time, we are grateful that we get to interact with thousands of children and adults and look forward to this time of year. As we move into fall, I encourage all of you to practice fire safety at home and work. If you need assistance with fire prevention questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to our Fire Administration Office.

Thank you for all your continued support and please stay safe!

*Mike Whitsell, Fire Marshal*



2023  
Total Incident  
Count  
**3645**

<b>September Incident Count - 394</b>	
Rescue & Medical – 181	Service Call – 26
False Alarm – 72	Hazardous Condition (no fire) – 23
Good Intent Call – 42	Overpressure/Rupture – 15
Fire – 29	Special Incident Type – 6
Severe Weather - 0	

## Significant Incident Recap



### September Incidents

Although our incident count was up from the previous month, we are glad to report that we did not have any sizeable incidents. We appreciate all your efforts to stay safe, reduce the risk of injury and develop fire-safe habits.

## In the Community

### West Des Moines Public Library Visit

Firefighters from Station 18 joined the [WDM Library](#) for their Family Storytime. The young readers sang songs and read books with firefighter themes. We taught them what firefighters do and about the special gear we use. The children also learned about fire trucks and were able to tour one up close.



## Trench Rescue Training

Last month our technical rescue team, along with crews from [Des Moines](#) and [Urbandale](#) Fire Departments, took part in three days of trench rescue training. The training took place at the Microsoft Ginger East construction site (just east of Veterans Parkway at SE Maffitt Lake Road) and was conducted in coordination with [Weitz Construction](#).

Crews took part in a live simulation with Weitz's safety team to rescue an individual who was unresponsive inside a trench box. Crews also performed evolutions stabilizing unsecured trenches to create a safe working environment for rescuers to recover a victim. These low frequency, high risk incidents are complex and require multiple resources dispatched to the scene.

A special thanks to DMFD and UFD for attending the training and continuing to strengthen our technical rescue collaboration. We are also very appreciative of Weitz Construction for providing the training location, tents for shade and water as well as digging the trenches.





## International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI)

Members of the West Des Moines Fire Investigation Team attended the Iowa Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators Conference in Johnston. Investigators learned about the dangers of vacant dwellings, the challenges of wood construction fires, investigating motor vehicle fires, and studied violent crime cases.

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## Fire Truck & Treat!

Firefighters will be out in West Des Moines neighborhoods Monday, October 30<sup>th</sup> for Beggar's Night handing out candy and visiting with residents in our community. If you see us, stop over and say hi. We can't wait to see all the great costumes! Beggar's Night in West Des Moines is from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.



# Keeping You Safe

## October is Fire Prevention Month

This is a time to focus on the safety measures we can take to prevent fires from occurring in our homes and communities. It's a time to educate ourselves on the potential hazards of fire and to take the necessary steps to help ensure that our homes and communities are safe from the devastating effects of fire.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) announced "[Cooking safety starts with YOU. Pay attention to fire prevention.](#)" as the theme for Fire Prevention Week 2023, to be held Oct. 8-14. According to the NFPA:

- Cooking is the leading cause of home fires, with nearly half of all home fires involving cooking equipment.
- Cooking is the leading cause of home fire injuries.
- Unattended cooking is the leading cause of home cooking fires and related deaths.

These numbers tell us that more public awareness is needed on what cooking hazards are and how to prevent them. So, with this year's focus on cooking safety, we'd like to share with our community some simple but important steps you can take to reduce the risk of fire when cooking at home:

- Always keep a close eye on what you are cooking. For foods with longer cooking times, such as those that are simmering or baking, set a timer to help monitor them carefully.
- Clear the cooking area of combustible items and keep anything that can burn, such as dish towels, oven mitts, food packaging, and paper towels.
- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove. Keep a lid nearby when cooking. If a small grease fire starts, slide the lid over the pan and turn off the burner.
- Create a "kid and pet-free zone" of at least three feet around the cooking area and anywhere else hot food or drink is prepared or carried.

Learn more about Fire Prevention Week at [firepreventionweek.org](https://firepreventionweek.org).



# This Month in Fire History

## The Peshtigo Fire

The most devastating fire in United States history swept through northeast Wisconsin on October 8th, 1871. 1,200+ people lost their lives, and 2 billion trees were consumed by flames. Despite the massive scale of the blaze, it was overshadowed by the Great Chicago Fire, which began the next day about 250 miles away.

The blaze began at an unknown spot in the dense Wisconsin forest. It first spread to the small village of Sugar Bush, where every resident was killed. High winds then sent the 200-foot flames racing northeast toward the neighboring community of Peshtigo. Temperatures reached 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit, causing trees to literally explode in the flames.

The fire reached Peshtigo without warning. Two hundred people died in a single tavern. Others fled to a nearby river, where several people died from drowning. Three people who sought refuge in a water tank died when the fire heated the tank. A mass grave of nearly 350 people was established because extensive burns made it impossible to identify the bodies.



Connect with us!

