

January 2024 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 Chief



**HAPPY
NEW YEAR!**

From the
West Des Moines
Fire Department



As we celebrate the beginning of a new chapter, let's also make a commitment to prioritize fire safety. As the Fire Chief, I see the dawn of a fresh year as an ideal moment to reassess and reinforce our commitment to preventing fire incidents. Community risk reduction involves a collective effort to identify and mitigate potential hazards, emphasizing proactive measures to enhance overall safety. Fire codes play a pivotal role in this endeavor, providing a comprehensive framework for construction, occupancy, and fire prevention. Embracing and enforcing these codes ensures that communities are well-prepared to face the challenges of fire-related incidents.

This monthly publication is one tool that the West Des Moines Fire Department uses to foster a culture of awareness, education, and compliance. This will not only protect our members but also contribute to the resilience and well-being of the entire community. Let the arrival of the new year serve as a reminder to embrace a steadfast dedication to fire prevention, ensuring that the coming months are marked by security, preparedness, and a commitment to a safer environment for all.

Fire Chief Craig Leu

Significant Incident Recap

December 2 – Residential Fire

Firefighters were called to 1287 16th Street on Saturday, December 2nd at 1:23 p.m. for a report of a grill on fire that was spreading to the house.

When firefighters arrived on scene, smoke was visible from the rear of the house, so they immediately deployed a hose line. The fire was quickly extinguished, and no injuries were reported.

The fire was caused by combustibles being too close to the grill, and damage is estimated at \$3,000.



December 4 – Residential Fire

On Monday, December 4th, at 5:26 a.m., firefighters were called to 2651 Fox Valley Drive for a report of a house on fire.

When firefighters arrived, flames and smoke were visible from the rear of the house that was under construction. The incident was upgraded to a working fire, and crews performed a fast attack from the exterior. The fire was quickly brought under control, and crews remained on scene checking for extension.

No injuries were reported, and the cause of the fire is under investigation. Damage is currently estimated at \$35,000.

For the Community

Adopt-A-Family

Members of the Fire and EMS Union partnered with West Des Moines Human Services to adopt a family for Christmas. Off duty firefighters and medics spent a morning shopping for some fun gifts to assist a family in need for the holidays. Just one way for us to give back to the community.



Christmas at the Fire Station

Firefighters and their families were able to spend some time together at a Christmas potluck at Station 17. This is a tradition that was started many years ago for our families. One of the highlights was Santa Claus arriving on the fire truck and visiting with the families. Interesting that Santa knew a great deal about fire codes.



Holiday Fire Prevention Program

The West Des Moines Fire Department wrapped up our fire prevention program that targeted fires during the holidays. Unfortunately, we had **8 fires** from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day that occurred as a direct result of holiday decorations or holiday related carelessness. It looks like we have more work to do. We ask that everyone in the community continue to always practice fire safety with your families.



Happy Anniversary!

Congratulations to the following fire department members on their 5-year anniversary:

Wes Bier Matt Kingsley Kyle Mikulich Scott Sweetalla

Keeping You Safe

Carbon Monoxide Alarm Information

Although the popularity of carbon monoxide (CO) alarms has been growing in recent years, it cannot be assumed that everyone is familiar with the hazards of carbon monoxide poisoning in the home.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas you cannot see, taste, or smell. It is often called “the invisible killer.” It is created when fossil fuels such as kerosene, gasoline, coal, natural gas, propane, methane, or wood don’t burn completely. CO gas can kill people and pets.

Here are some answers to common questions we receive regarding carbon monoxide alarms.

Why is my carbon monoxide alarm beeping? The alarm has different beep patterns to communicate whether there is an emergency or simply a need to replace the alarm. It is important to know the difference between the beeps or chirps. Refer to your alarm's user manual for your specific model.

- **4 beeps and a pause:** This means that there is carbon monoxide in the air, and you should seek fresh air immediately and call 9-1-1.
- **1 beep every minute:** This means that the alarm has low batteries, and you should replace them.
- **5 beeps every minute:** This means your alarm has reached the end of its life and needs to be replaced with a new carbon monoxide alarm.

Where do I install CO alarms? It is important to install CO alarms on every level of your house and outside each sleeping area so all family members can hear them and be alerted to the emergency.

What height should CO alarms be installed? Refer to the user manual for placement and mounting height. Typically, the wall or the ceiling will work.

How often should I change the batteries in my CO alarm? Change the batteries once a year. Test them at least once a month.

How often should carbon monoxide detectors be replaced? Carbon monoxide alarms don’t last forever. After 5 to 7 years, replace the CO alarm completely. But it is important to refer to your user manual.

Can I run my car in the garage with the door open? No. If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.



This Month in Fire History

St. Elizabeth's Fire

Just past 2:00 a.m. on January 7, 1950, the first calls came in reporting one of the worst fires in Iowa's history at the St. Elizabeth's mental health facility on the Mercy Hospital campus in Davenport. As the flames raged, 41 women lost their lives as the structure burned.

A patient suffering from mental health problems lit the curtains of her room with a cigarette lighter, and the fire quickly jumped to the combustible ceiling tiles used throughout the facility. The staff and patients desperately tried to escape, breaking windows which fed the roaring blaze with fresh oxygen.

As a psychiatric treatment facility, bars on the windows and other precautions to minimize escape routes paired with added flammability from recent construction projects created conditions for a tragic situation.



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