

February 2024 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

It's hard to believe we are already one month into 2024. January brought us bitter cold temperatures for the Iowa Caucuses, 28 inches of snow in one week, a blizzard, and then ended with temperatures near 60 degrees.

Construction is already starting to ramp up on numerous projects throughout West Des Moines. Steel has been set for the new Topgolf entertainment venue, work continues at a rapid pace on three Microsoft data center sites, the Iowa National Guard Readiness Center is taking shape on Veterans Parkway, Grimaldi's Pizzeria is opening in West Glen Town Center, West Bank's new corporate headquarters is nearing completion, the Jordan Creek condominium mixed use tower is close to completion, and crews recently broke ground on the first of several large warehouses near Highway 5 and Interstate 35. In addition, Jordan Creek Town Center will welcome Iowa's first LEGO store, the Blue Zoo Aquarium and a KPOT Korean BBQ & Hot Pot restaurant. Several other significant projects are still in the planning stages, so we expect 2024 to continue to be very busy for the Fire Prevention Division.



In 2023, our Fire Inspectors opened numerous new businesses, and here are a few of them:

- Dave and Buster's
- Bix & Co.
- The Tavern Grill
- Putts & Pins
- Ruth's Chris Steak House
- Des Moines University
- Several Microsoft Data Center buildings
- Farmers State Bank headquarters
- Glen Meadows Retirement Community

We are fortunate to live and work in a prosperous city that continues to grow at a rapid pace. Our firefighters and Fire Prevention Division staff are all dedicated to helping keep our citizens, businesses, and visitors safe. It is an honor to serve you and thank you for your continued support.

*Mike Whitsell, Fire Marshal*

### January Incident Count - 481

Medical – 203	Service Call – 47
Fire – 157	Hazardous Material – 22
Cancelled/Non-Reporting – 51	Technical Rescue – 1

2024  
Total Incident  
Count

**481**

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$53,375

Total Estimated Dollar Saved - \$20,770,825

## Significant Incident Recap

### January – Motor Vehicle Accidents



Motor vehicle accidents are one of the many types of incidents firefighters respond to. In January, fire crews responded to over 37 motor vehicle accidents. They provided emergency medical care, stabilized vehicles, extricated trapped victims, contained hazardous material spills, and cleaned up debris.

While there is nothing we can do to stop dangerous weather from affecting us, the [National Weather Service](#) gives us these tips on what we can do to stay safe when the weather turns nasty:

1. Be aware of the hazards that you might face during a weather event.
2. Monitor forecasts and information from your local National Weather Service Forecast Office.
3. Be aware of all watches, warnings, and advisories affecting you.
4. Have a plan to stay safe. Think about it before it happens and be ready to act to survive.

### January 25 – Gas Leak

WDMFD units were dispatched to 210 Jordan Creek Parkway, Suite 190 for a gas leak. While in route, Westcom added that there were 3-4 patients as well as a being a commercial facility.



When crews arrived, they made contact with employees who stated they smelled an odor of sulfur/rotten eggs. They also made contact with Mid-American Energy (who had already been called out for a gas leak).

Firefighters checked all suites with a 4-gas meter. The connecting building, 206 Jordan Creek Parkway, was found to have high levels of gas. The building gas meters were shut down, staff and citizens were evacuated, and the area was ventilated. The affected businesses closed for the day due to the unknown exact location of the leak. Three ambulances transported patients to the hospital.

## For the Community



### Fire Inspector Certification

Firefighters and code officials from across the state of Iowa successfully completed all parts of the Fire Inspector I class to achieve national certification. West Des Moines Fire Marshal Whitsell was one of the instructors who taught students how to detect fire hazards, recommend prevention measures, and ensure compliance with state and local fire codes.

Businesses that stay up to code with regular fire safety inspections help minimize the risk of property loss and destruction and protect the lives of their employees.

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### National Burn Awareness Week – February 4-10

Burn injuries continue to be one of the leading causes of accidental death and injury in our Nation. Tragically, children, the elderly, and the disabled are especially vulnerable to burn injuries. [The American Burn Association](#) strives to bring awareness to the causes of such devastating and costly injuries and encourages everyone to make simple environmental and behavioral changes that can save lives.

This year's theme for National Burn Awareness Week is "Flammable Liquids Burn". A reminder for everyone to handle all flammable liquids with care. Flammable liquids should be stored in approved containers and cabinets that are designed to prevent leaks and spills. Storage areas should be well-ventilated to prevent the buildup of flammable vapors. Storage areas should be located away from ignition sources and heat-producing equipment.



# Keeping You Safe

## Heater Fire Safety Tips

Heaters are working extra hard with the cold weather we have been experiencing. Heating-related fires are the second most common type of fires this time of year. As a reminder, *make sure to give your heating equipment space*, and consider taking these precautions to prevent heating-related fires in your home and place of work.

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from all heat sources including fireplaces, furnaces, wood stoves, radiators, and space heaters. This includes people and pets.
- Never use an extension cord with a portable space heater. Plug the heater directly into a wall outlet.
- Make sure your portable space heater is tested by an independent testing laboratory and has an automatic shut off feature if it tips over.
- Turn portable space heaters off before leaving the room or before going to bed.
- Never permit any item to drape across a heat source.
- Put fireplace ashes in a metal container with a lid, outside, at least 10 feet from your home.
- Never use an oven to heat your home.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected each year by a professional.





# 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 Great White, the headlining band, set off pyrotechnics that spread through the acoustic foam at the back of the stage. The fire quickly engulfed the entire ceiling, sending billows of black smoke across the venue. Soon the only sound anyone could hear was the club's fire alarm system.

Even though The Station had four functioning exits, in their haste to get out, most of the audience chose to leave through the narrow hallway through which they had arrived. The passage soon filled up and became impassable, leaving those in the club to push even harder as the fire spread. Of the 462 nightclub occupants, 100 people lost their lives, either through being trampled or because of smoke inhalation and severe burns. 230 people were injured.

Significant changes to fire and building codes were made for places of assembly because of this tragedy. Among the changes were new requirements for automatic fire sprinkler systems, interior finishes, improved exit strategies, and training employees on evacuation and safety plans for crowd management in larger buildings.



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