

March 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

With the arrival of March and warmer weather on the horizon, I would encourage all of you to conduct a fire inspection on your homes to help ensure you and your families are safe. Whether you live in a house, townhome, apartment, etc., the following items should be checked to make sure they are in good working condition:

-**Smoke alarms** to make sure they work, have new batteries and are not past their shelf life.

-**Windows** to make sure they open fully in case you need to use them as an emergency escape route.

-**Doors** to make sure they open fully. This includes rear sliding doors and front doors as concrete can shift over the winter months.

-**Exit corridors in multi-family buildings** should be checked for proper clear widths, illuminated exit signs, and working emergency lights.

-**Fire extinguishers** should be easily accessible, fully charged, and not damaged.

-**Your address numbers** should be visible from the street. If the numbers are faded or blocked by landscaping, make sure to replace them.

-**Furnaces and air conditioners** should be serviced by professionals and kept clear from combustibles and storage.

-**Grills** should be kept a safe distance from your home when in use, routinely cleaned, and in good working condition.

-**General housekeeping** includes improperly discarded cigarettes, outlets that are not overloaded, listed power strips, and storage of hazardous materials like gasoline, cleaning supplies and motor oil.

The West Des Moines Fire Department is always willing to assist our citizens and business owners with fire prevention related questions. Please feel free to contact us on our website, and we will get back to you as quickly as possible with answers. As always, it is an honor to serve you.



*Mike Whitsell, Fire Marshal*

2024  
Total Incident  
Count

**889**

### February Incident Count - 343

Medical – 183

Service Call – 23

Fire – 91

Hazardous Material – 13

Cancelled/Non-Reporting – 30    Technical Rescue – 3

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$129,500

Total Estimated Dollar Saved - \$2,131,800

## Significant Incident Recap

### February 8 - Structure Fire



WDMFD was dispatched to 7425 Wistful Vista Drive on a structure fire.

When crews arrived, they noticed smoke coming from the eaves of a townhome and upgraded to a working fire. Firefighters initiated an interior fire attack in the kitchen. Once the fire was stopped, overhaul and ventilation began.

The cause of the fire was combustibles being stored on top of a stove, and the damage is estimated at \$50,000.

### February 23 – Outside Fire



WDMFD was dispatched to an outside fire at 541 3rd Street.

Crews arrived to find a single-family home with heavy smoke and flames showing from the side of the house, so the incident was upgraded to a working fire. Everyone was out of the home, and firefighters began fire attack. Once the fire was under control, the residence was checked for hazards.

The cause of the fire is undetermined with an estimated loss of around \$3,500.

# For the Community



## Charity Hockey Game

Several members of the West Des Moines Fire Department participated in the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual [Guns N Hoses](#) Charity Hockey Game benefiting [Easterseals Iowa & Camp Sunnyside](#). The firefighters pulled ahead in the 3<sup>rd</sup> period and never gave up the lead. The final score was 4 to 2 with the trophy going to the Hoses!

## Training with Ground Ladders

One type of training last month was working with ground ladders. Ground ladders are one of the most basic firefighting tools, but they still have a major role in the fire service. Not only do they help us gain access into buildings, but they can be used for rescue, roof top operations, ventilation, and fire stream operation. Fire service ladders require coordinated teamwork. The safety of our citizens and firefighters depends on our ability to perform all operations quickly and safely while using proper techniques.



# Keeping You Safe

## Staying Safe in Public Places

Fires in public places have shown to be some of the deadliest. Restaurants, theaters, and auditoriums differ from office buildings because they contain many people in one main space. While a fire might be the last thing you expect when you go out to dinner, a movie, or a sporting event, think about fire safety and how you might react. You can help protect yourself and your family by being aware of your surroundings as you visit public places.

### Before You Enter

- *Take a good look.* Does the building appear to be in a condition that makes you feel safe? Is the main entrance wide, and does it open outward to allow easy exit? Is the outside area clear of materials stored against the building or blocking exits?
- *Have a communication plan.* Identify a relative or friend to contact in case you are separated from family or friends in an emergency.
- *Plan a meeting place.* Pick a meeting place outside to meet family or friends with whom you are attending the function. If there is an emergency, be sure to meet them there.



### When You Enter

- *Locate exits immediately.* When you enter a building, make sure to identify all available exits. Some exits may be in front and some behind you. Be prepared to use your closest exit. You may not be able to use the main exit.
- *Check for clear exit paths.* Make sure aisles are wide enough and not obstructed by chairs or furniture. Check to make sure your exit door is not blocked or chained. If there are not at least two exits or exit paths are blocked, report the violation to management, and leave the building if it is not immediately addressed.
- *Do you feel safe?* Does the building appear to be overcrowded? Are there fire sources such as candles burning, cigarettes or cigars burning, pyrotechnics, or other heat sources that may make you feel unsafe? Are there safety systems in place such as alternative exits, sprinklers, and smoke alarms? If you do not feel safe in the building, leave immediately.

### During an Emergency

- *React immediately.* If an alarm sounds, you see smoke or fire, or other unusual disturbance, immediately exit the building in an orderly fashion.
- *Get out, stay out.* Once you have escaped, stay out. Under no circumstances should you ever go back into a burning building. Let trained firefighters conduct rescue operations.

# This Month in Fire History

## [Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire](#)

The Triangle Shirtwaist Company was a factory in New York City that operated on the top three floors of a 10-story building. A fire broke out on March 25, 1911, and within 18 minutes, the fire claimed the lives of 146 young immigrant workers. A combination of factors led to the devastating fire, including a lack of fire safety training, insufficient stairs and fire exits, poorly designed doors, and combustible materials. This incident is significant to this day because it highlights the inhumane working conditions to which industrial workers can be subjected.

After the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, several new considerations to fire safety codes came to be. These included mandatory fire drills, the inclusion of sprinkler systems, and more guidelines for designing fire escapes.



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