

July 2024 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

The members of the West Des Moines Fire Department wish you a safe and happy Independence Day!

The city's 4th of July parade will be held on July 3rd beginning at 6:30 p.m. The route begins in front of Fire Station #21 located at Valley West Drive and Ashworth Road and will end on 9th Street by Wilson Park. Due to construction on Vine Street, the parade will turn south from Vine onto 16th Street and go down to Locust Street to head east for the final few blocks. Be sure to plan accordingly and wave to our firefighters who will be on our Tiller Truck (Ladder 215) and our restored 1937 International pumper.

On July 4th, the City of West Des Moines will conduct a free, professional fireworks display at the City Hall Campus located on Mills Civic Parkway. The show will begin at dusk and last approximately 20-25 minutes.

As a reminder, discharging consumer fireworks is not allowed within the City of West Des Moines. Sparklers, snakes, and pops are considered novelty fireworks and are allowed to be used. Your safety is important to us, so please remember to incorporate good safety habits into the activities you take part in during the holiday and remainder of the summer.

Mike Whitsell Fire Marshal



2024
Total Incident
Count

2469

June Incident Count - 488

Medical – 243

Service Call – 42

Fire – 138

Hazardous Material – 16

Cancelled/Non-Reporting – 46 Technical Rescue – 3

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$5,200

Total Estimated Dollar Saved - \$1,107,300

Significant Incident Recap

June 19 – Mass Casualty Incident 88th St.



WDMFD and EMS were dispatched for a motor vehicle collision with entrapment at 88th St. and EP True Pkwy.

Crews arrived and found a head-on vehicle collision between a semi and a large passenger van. Initial on scene reports from PD were that more ambulances were needed and that they had 10 or more patients. Firefighters and medics began treating patients on the scene. The semi's fuel tank was compromised and leaking onto the roadway and into a storm drain.

The incident was upgraded to a mass casualty incident (MCI) and more engines and ambulances were requested from West Des Moines along with Waukee, Clive, Urbandale, and Norwalk Fire Departments. WDM Public Services, Dallas County Emergency Management, Polk County Emergency Management, Des Moines Hazmat, and the Department of National Resources all responded and developed a mitigation plan for the fuel spill and contacted a cleanup company to help flush the storm sewer system.

Nine people were transported to local hospitals.

For the Community

Trench Rescue Collaboration

Members of our technical rescue team took part in the National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA) “Trench Safety Stand Down” on June 21st at Urbandale Fire Station 42. Our team, along with members of the Urbandale Fire Department, spoke with over 200 representatives of underground utility contractors and OSHA representatives about the operations the fire department would perform at a trench rescue.

The technical rescue teams completed a portion of a rescue scenario for the attendees to observe and ask questions. The event also showcased trench safety equipment available to contractors to make their underground work safer.

This event continues to strengthen the collaboration with our neighboring departments on low frequency, high risk rescue incidents that require large amounts of specially trained personnel and equipment.



It’s Never Too Early to Learn Fire Safety

June was a busy month for the crews out in the community. We attended Park Palooza at Raccoon River Park, Preschool Palooza at Valley Community Center and visited several daycares to share our fire safety messages. We also worked with the WDMPD and hosted Safety Town where we spent several days with large groups of soon to be kindergarteners teaching them about fire safety and showing them where we live.

Extrication Training

Fire crews conducted vehicle extrication training for one of our newest probationary firefighters. The training was designed to give basic knowledge and understanding of how the tools work and proper techniques using the tools for quicker and more efficient rescues. We have extrication tools for cutting through materials, helping to open tight spaces like a car door, and lifting and pushing heavy materials out of the way to help us continue working.



Keeping You Safe

National Pet Fire Safety Day – July 15

On National Pet Fire Safety Day, it's important to remember to include your furry family members into your emergency plan should a fire ever occur. Each year, more than 500,000 pets are affected by house fires, with 1,000 house fires started by pets themselves. It's no fun to think about, but it's necessary to take a few minutes and make sure you are doing all you can to ensure your pets get out safely.

Tips to Keep Pets Safe from Home Fires:

- **Extinguish Open Flames** – Pets are generally curious and will investigate cooking appliances, candles, or even a fire in your fireplace. Ensure your pet is not left unattended around an open flame and make sure to thoroughly extinguish any open flame before leaving your home.
- **Pet Proof the Home** – Take a walk around your home and look for areas where pets might start fires inadvertently, such as the stove knobs, loose wires, and other potential hazards. Put covers over or removing stove knobs and discourage climbing in the kitchen to help prevent your pet from bumping up against a dial and accidentally filling your house with gas. When outside, never put a glass bowl on a wooden porch as the sun's rays can heat the bowl, causing a fire on your wooden deck. Try using a ceramic water bowl or stainless-steel dishes instead.
- **Secure Young Pets** – Especially with young puppies, keep them confined away from potential fire-starting hazards when you are away from home.
- **Keep Pets Near Entrances** – When leaving pets home alone, keep them in areas or rooms near entrances where firefighters can easily find them.
- **Practice Your Emergency Plan with Pets** – Keep collars and leashes at the ready in case you must evacuate quickly with your pet or if firefighters need to rescue your pet. Know whose job it is to grab your pet during an emergency.
- **Since Pets Left Alone Can't Escape a Burning Home** – Make sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of the home. Test your smoke alarms at least once a month by pressing the test button.



Four Common Ways Pets Start Fires

1. Turning on the stove
2. Chewing on electrical cords
3. Knocking over space heaters
4. Knocking over candles

This Month in Fire History

University of Northern Iowa Central Hall Fire

On July 22, 1965, Central Hall on the University of Northern Iowa campus burned in a night fire determined later to have been caused by faulty wiring. The building served as the Soldiers' Orphans' Home and housed the first classes taught at UNI (then the Iowa State Normal School).

A newspaper editor discovered the fire as he was leaving the office in Old Gilchrist Hall at 12:40 AM. He informed a campus security officer that he saw smoke coming out of a window. They entered Central Hall in an attempt to investigate but were driven back by smoke and heat. They called the Cedar Falls Fire Department, who were later aided by the Waterloo and Dike Fire Departments. But the blaze could not be controlled. It spread from the first to the second story, then to the third story and the roof. All firefighters could do was to keep the fire from spreading to other nearby buildings. By morning, the building was a total loss.



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