

August 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

We are rapidly approaching the start of a new school year, and soon our streets will be filled with school buses and children walking or riding their bicycles to and from school. I would ask you to please slow down while driving through school zones, pay attention to school busses that are picking up or dropping off children, and also be attentive to our wonderful crossing guards who are posted at several intersections throughout the city.

The West Des Moines Firefighters and Fire Prevention Division are busy conducting annual life safety inspections at all our schools within the city to help ensure they are as safe as possible before classes begin.

For those of you who have children heading off to college, please take some time to discuss fire safety with them if they live in dorms, apartments, houses, or fraternities/sororities.

I hope everyone had a great summer break, and the weather looks to be nearly perfect for the Iowa State Fair!

*Mike Whitsell Fire Marshal*



### July Incident Count - 497

2024  
Total Incident  
Count  
**2962**

Medical – 246	Service Call – 57
Fire – 135	Hazardous Material – 14
Cancelled/Non-Reporting – 42	Technical Rescue – 3

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$5,200

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

# Significant Incident Recap

## July 17 – Structure Fire



WDMFD was dispatched to 7141 Cody Drive for a structure fire. When crews arrived, smoke was visible from the backyard, and the incident was upgraded to a working fire. Firefighters made their way around the back for a fast attack and found a small fire on the deck that was being controlled by a neighbor with a garden hose. Firefighters put out the rest of the fire, began overhaul, and checked for extension inside the home. There was no one home at the time of the fire, and the cause of the fire is undetermined.

# For the Community

## Meeting People in Our Community

July was another busy month for the crews. We enjoy being out in the community and getting to know people. We were able to meet over 400 children and 200 adults last month! We had many visitors to the fire stations, where people learned what it is like living at a fire station. We also stopped into several daycares, summer camp programs and apartment complexes to share our fire safety messages.



## Tender Operation Training

We get asked occasionally what firefighters do for water when there are no fire hydrants close to a fire scene. In areas with weak or no fire hydrants, firefighters must bring the water. One of the apparatuses we use is called a tender. Ours holds 2,000 gallons of water. We can also use portable folding water tanks to draft. Drafting is the process where water is sucked in through pumps built into the tender, which then brings the water back to the fire scene where it is dumped into the portable tanks.

The WDMFD trained together with the Waukee and Van Meter Fire Departments on tender operations. Routine training with our mutual aid departments enables members to bond friendships and share experiences that will benefit each department when called to operate together on future incident scenes in our communities.



**Sunday, Oct 6 – Saturday, Oct 12**

# Keeping You Safe

## National Senior Citizens Day – August 21

National Senior Citizens Day is an opportunity for families, friends, and the community to come together to celebrate and acknowledge the invaluable impact that seniors have made in our lives and society. If there is a special senior in your life, this is the day to let them know how much you care.

We care about all the seniors in our community, so we would like to share a few fire safety tips. Your risk of dying in a home fire is greater as you get older. Knowing what to do in the event of a fire is particularly important for older adults.

**Keep it Low** - If possible, consider sleeping in a room on the ground floor to make emergency escape easier. Make sure that smoke alarms are installed in every sleeping room and outside any sleeping areas. When looking for an apartment, look for one with an automatic sprinkler system. Sprinklers can extinguish a home fire in less time that it takes for the fire department to arrive.

**Sound the Alarm** - Most fatal fires occur when people are sleeping, and because smoke can put you into a deeper sleep rather than waking you, it's important to have early warning of a fire to ensure that you wake up. If anyone in your household is deaf, or if your own hearing is diminished, consider installing a smoke alarm that uses a flashing light or vibration to alert you to a fire emergency.

**Do the Drill** - Conduct your own, or participate in, regular fire drills to make sure you know what to do in the event of a home fire. If you or someone you live with cannot escape alone, designate a member of the household to assist, and decide on backups in case the designee isn't home. Fire drills are also a good opportunity to make sure that everyone can hear and respond to smoke alarms.

**Open Up** - Make sure that you are able to open all doors and windows in your home. Locks should open easily from inside. If you have security bars on doors or windows, they should have emergency release devices inside so that they can be opened easily. These devices won't compromise your safety, but they will enable you to open the window from inside in the event of a fire. Check to be sure that windows haven't been sealed shut with paint or nailed shut; if they have, arrange for someone to break the seals all around your windows or remove the nails.

**Stay Connected**- Keep a telephone nearby, along with emergency phone numbers, so that you can communicate with emergency personnel if you're trapped in your room by fire or smoke.



# This Month in Fire History

## Maui Wildfires

In August of 2023, a series of wildfires broke out in Hawaii, predominantly on the island of Maui. The fire grew from small brush fires to an unstoppable blaze through a combination of drought conditions and heavy winds. The most significant fire was in West Maui near the town of Lahaina, which was almost completely destroyed. More than 100 people lost their lives and over 2,200 structures were destroyed with damages over \$5.5 billion. Even eight months after the event in 2024, over 5,400 people remain displaced in hotels. The official cause of the fire is still under investigation, but hard winds that had toppled utility poles and flying sparks from downed power lines may have started the blaze.



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