

September 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

Recently, I had the pleasure of watching one of our on-duty fire crews give a station tour to a group of six adults and eight children. This is a request we routinely get from our citizens and seeing the excitement on the kids' faces as they ran into the station was such a joy. What was also rewarding was seeing how much fun our firefighters had. At one point, the tour host opened one of the fire truck compartments that had a stack of traffic cones inside. One of the children asked, "What are those for?" Our quick-witted firefighter immediately answered, "They are hats." and placed one on his head. The tour group busted out laughing so I quickly took a picture to capture the moment. Moments like this are priceless, and all our firefighters do an outstanding job with public relations events for our citizens and businesses.

Soon we will start school visits as part of Fire Prevention Month, in addition to numerous station tours, daycare visits and public education presentations at community groups and businesses. I want to thank our community for requesting us to deliver important fire prevention and safety messages, and I want to also thank our firefighters and Fire Prevention Division staff for doing a great job delivering the information and engaging our audiences. Fires can happen to anyone at any time. The more we can help you prevent and prepare for this, the better off all of us will be. I hope you and your families continue to stay safe, and it is an honor to serve you.



Mike Whitsell Fire Marshal

2024
Total Incident
Count
3418

August Incident Count - 456

Medical – 227	Service Call – 37
Fire – 121	Hazardous Material – 17
Cancelled/Non-Reporting – 47	Technical Rescue – 7

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$15,850

Total Estimated Dollar Saved - \$4,055,850

Significant Incident Recap

August 14 – Structure Fire



The West Des Moines Fire Department was dispatched for a fire alarm to The Fountains apartment complex located at 5011 Hawthorne Drive on Wednesday, August 14th at 7:50 p.m.

Upon arrival, crews found the building's fire sprinkler system had activated and extinguished a fire on a stove top inside one of the apartment units. Crews shut down the fire sprinkler system, cleared smoke from the building and verified that fire had not extended into the ceiling or walls.

One adult was inside the apartment unit at the time of the fire but did not sustain any injuries. Damage is estimated at \$3,000. This fire would likely have caused significantly more damage to the apartment unit and building if a fire sprinkler system had not been installed.

For the Community

Fire Extinguisher Training

Every workplace building or facility in West Des Moines has fire extinguishers. It is required by our local fire code. Fire extinguishers are essential tools for fire safety, but their effectiveness relies on the knowledge and skill of the person using them. That's why with the proper training and education, fire extinguishers can save lives and property.

Employees from West Des Moines Water Works participated in fire extinguisher training with Fire Prevention Officer Kinkade. They reviewed key fire safety tips and were able to practice the steps for discharging a fire extinguisher.



**Fire Prevention Week is
October 6-12, 2024**

SMOKE ALARMS

Make Them WORK For You!™



**FIRE
PREVENTION
WEEK™**

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Smoke Alarms in U.S. Home Fires

Smoke alarms have become so common that it is easy to take them for granted. These devices have alerted countless households to developing fires. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has a research report from February 2021. This report provides the latest information on smoke alarms in home fires reported by local fire departments in the U.S. [Click here](#) to read the key findings of the report. You may be surprised.



Keeping You Safe

Get Ready for Falls Prevention Awareness Week 2024

Falls among older adults continue to be a national public health concern. Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries among seniors. Falls Prevention Awareness Week takes place September 23-27 and is a national health campaign to increase awareness on preventing falls, reducing the risk of falls, and helping older adults live without fear of falling. The good news is that most falls can be prevented. Plan ahead and use these tips.

- **Exercise regularly.** Exercise will help you build strength and improve your balance and coordination. Ask your doctor about the best physical exercise for you.
- **Take your time.** Get out of chairs slowly. Sit a moment before you get out of your bed. Stand and get your balance before you walk. Be aware of your surroundings.
- **Keep stairs and walking areas clear.** Remove electrical cords, shoes, clothing, books, magazines, and other items that may be in the way of foot traffic.
- **Improve the lighting in and outside your home.** Use night lights or a flashlight to light the path between your bedroom and the bathroom. Turn on the lights before using the stairs. See an eye specialist once a year—better vision can help prevent falls.
- **Use non-slip mats.** Non-slip mats increase safety in the bathtub and on shower floors. Have grab bars installed on the wall next to the bathtub, shower, and toilet. Wipe up spilled liquids immediately.
- **Be aware of uneven surfaces.** Make sure indoor flooring is safe. Use only throw rugs that have rubber, non-skid backing. Consider non-skid pads under rugs. Always smooth out wrinkles and folds in carpeting. Be aware of uneven sidewalks and pavement outdoors. Ask a family member, a friend, or a neighbor to clear ice and snow from outdoor stairs and walkways. Always use handrails, if available, and step carefully.
- **Stairways should be well lit.** Lighting from both the top and the bottom of stairways is important. Have easy-to-grip handrails installed along the full length on both sides of the stairs.
- **Wear sturdy, well-fitting shoes.** Low-heeled shoes with non-slip soles are best. These are safer than high heels, thick-soled athletic shoes, slippers, or stocking feet.



This Month in Fire History

Nashville Nursing Home Fire

On September 27, 2003, an overnight fire in a four-story nursing home in Nashville, TN killed 16 residents, including the mother of a Nashville district fire chief. More than 100 firefighters responded to this incident. Most of the 116 residents had to be carried out by firefighters or rolled to safety in wheelchairs because few patients could walk, and the elevators were out of service. Some residents on upper floors were placed on backboards and carried down ladders. Many residents were treated at hospitals for burns and smoke inhalation. Fire officials stated there was zero visibility, flames, and heat.

The nursing home did not have an automatic fire sprinkler system. The facility was built decades ago, and a fire sprinkler system was not required at the time.

The cause of the fire has been ruled unintentional, and the ignition source remains undetermined.



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