

October 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

National Fire Prevention Week is officially upon us. Here at the West Des Moines Fire Department, we like to refer to it as “Fire Prevention Month”. October and early November are historically the time of the year we receive the most requests for public education programs to be delivered at schools, businesses, and community groups. Our firefighters enjoy these visits and meeting the citizens we serve in our city.

This year’s National Fire Prevention Week theme is *Smoke alarms: Make them work for you*. Smoke alarms save lives, but only if they are properly maintained and are in good working condition. If you have smoke alarms in your home, please make sure you test them, and replace them if they no longer work. If you don’t have smoke alarms in your home, please install them. If you need recommendations on where they should be installed, please contact the West Des Moines Fire Department for assistance.

I want to thank all our fire department staff members for their dedication to keeping the community safe. From the calls they respond on, to public education visits and life safety inspections they perform, their efforts are greatly appreciated and make a difference.

I hope everyone has a safe fall, and it is an honor to serve you.

Mike Whitsell Fire Marshal



September Incident Count - 421

2024
Total Incident
Count
3839

Medical – 225	Service Call – 40
Fire – 95	Hazardous Material – 19
Cancelled/Non-Reporting – 39	Technical Rescue – 3

Total Estimated Dollar Loss - \$15,300

Total Estimated Dollar Saved - \$2,162,800

Significant Incident Recap



We were fortunate not to have any significant incidents in September. For the smaller incidents we responded to, we are still seeing that unattended cooking is the leading cause of these fires. Please try to always stay in the kitchen when frying food or cooking with oil or grease. To put out a pan fire, slide a lid over the pan. Turn off the stove and let the pan cool. Do not ever use water on a grease fire. Water can cause the flaming oil to spread. Keep a fire extinguisher in the kitchen and know how to use it.

For the Community

Vehicle Extrication Training

Since the beginning of 2024, the West Des Moines Fire Department has responded to over 290 motor vehicle incidents. These incidents range from accidents with injuries/no injuries to vehicle fires to entrapment of individuals.

Fire crews trained this month on vehicle extrication. Vehicles were stabilized and a collection of rescue tools, like the Jaws of Life, were used to dismantle vehicles and gain access to patients trapped inside. Vehicle extrication is a critical skill for our firefighters so we can safely and quickly remove an entrapped individual involved in a serious crash.

A special thanks to Roy's Towing and Recovery for providing us with vehicles to use.



U.S Flag Display

Ladder 195 B-Shift assisted with flying the U.S. flag over a funeral procession route through West Des Moines. This procession was for 25 unclaimed Iowa veterans, ranging from the Civil War to the Vietnam era. They were laid to rest at the Iowa Veterans Cemetery in Adel.



Firefighter Storytime

Firefighters visited the West Des Moines Library for storytime. Over 40 families with young children learned that firefighters are their friends and to not hide if there is a fire. They saw how our bunker gear keeps us safe and learned about all the different tools on the fire truck. Some of the children showed up in their own firefighter gear and brought their own toy firetrucks.

Congratulations to the following fire department members for their milestone anniversaries with the fire department!

Driver/Operator Jeff Bolton – 25 years

Captain John Carlson – 25 years

Driver/Operator Eric Kozak – 25 years

Captain Josh Schut – 20 years

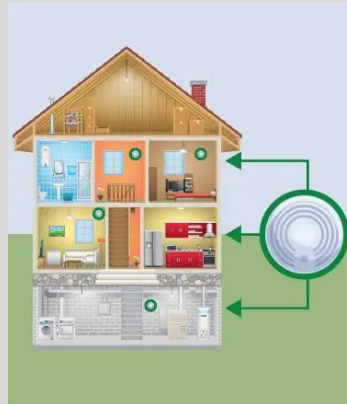


Keeping You Safe

Smoke Alarms: Make Them Work for You!

Fire Prevention Week (FPW) is October 6-12, 2024. This year's FPW campaign, "Smoke alarms: Make them work for you!" strives to educate everyone about the importance of having working smoke alarms in the home. There are three main calls to action that the West Des Moines Fire Department would like to share: INSTALL, TEST, REPLACE.

INSTALL – Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area (like a hallway), and on each level of the home including the basement.



TEST – Test smoke alarms at least once a month by pushing the test button.



REPLACE – Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old or stop responding when tested.



This Month in Fire History

The Great Chicago Fire

Fire Prevention Week is observed each year during the week of October 9th in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire, which began on October 8, 1871, and caused devastating damage. One-third of the city of Chicago—including the entire downtown and surrounding neighborhoods—burned to the ground. This horrific fire killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres of land.

The fire is said to have started at about 8:30 p.m. on October 8, in or around a small barn belonging to the O'Leary family. The shed next to the barn was the first building to be consumed by the fire. City officials never determined the cause of the blaze, but the rapid spread of the fire due to a long drought in that year's summer, strong winds from the southwest, and the rapid destruction of the water pumping system, explain the extensive damage of the mainly wooden city structures.

There has been much speculation over the years on a single start to the fire. The most popular tale blames Mrs. O'Leary's cow, who allegedly knocked over a lantern. Years later, a man named Louis M. Cohn confessed to starting the fire by accidentally knocking over a lantern when running away from an illegal card game.

As a result of this devastating fire, the city began to rewrite its fire standards, building codes were improved, and the city became one of masonry, not wood.



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