

November 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 fall season is in full swing, and temperatures are finally starting to cool off. This is a great time to get your furnaces and wood burning fireplaces serviced by professionals to ensure they are safe and in good working condition for winter. Our call volumes tend to trend upward this time of year for furnace related issues, chimney fires, carbon monoxide detector activations, and space heater incidents. Please take time to conduct a fire safety inspection inside your home to look for things that could potentially cause a fire or be unsafe.

The hustle and bustle of the holidays is right around the corner which can also lead to unsafe conditions and accidents occurring. As we fall back an hour with the time change, please also remember to change the batteries inside your smoke alarms and test them to ensure they are in good working condition. If you need assistance with batteries or smoke alarms, the West Des Moines Fire Department would be happy to assist. Our citizens are our priority, and it is an honor to serve you.



Mike Whitsell Fire Marshal

October Incident Count - 450

2024
Total Incident
Count
4289

Medical – 206

Fire – 43

Special Incident - 2

Over Pressure/Rupture – 1

Service Call – 38

Hazardous Condition – 15

False Alarm - 92

Good Intent - 53

Significant Incident Recap



October 20 - Structure Fire

WDMFD was dispatched to 6540 Dakota Dr. for a structure fire. When crews arrived, the deck, grass and side of the house was on fire. The incident was upgraded to a working fire.

October 21 - Structure Fire

Crews also responded to 3760 Maffitt Lake Rd. for a structure fire. As crews arrived, smoke was visible from the tree line where an abandon farmhouse sits. The incident was upgraded to a working fire.

For the Community

Fire Prevention Month

For the month of October, members of the West Des Moines Fire Department were out in the community nearly every day helping to raise fire safety awareness and help protect businesses, homes, and people in our community. We visited daycares and schools, businesses, senior living facilities, residential homes and more.

Although this year's theme was making sure you have working smoke alarms, there are still many other fire safety topics that were covered. You are never too young or too old to learn about fire safety.



A Career in the Fire Service

Members of the fire department attended two different career days this month: one at Stilwell Junior High School and one at Valley High School. Students had the opportunity to listen, receive information and ask questions about a career in the fire service. It's exciting to see students have an interest in the fire service at such a young age and give them exposure to all the parts of this career path.



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

Driver/Operator Andrew Carey – 10 years

Driver/Operator Daniel Mosher – 10 years



Keeping You Safe

Change Smoke Alarm Batteries When Changing Your Clocks

Sunday, November 3 marked the end of daylight savings time where clocks were adjusted back one hour. This time of year is also a good time to remind family and friends to change the batteries in their smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. Working smoke alarms save lives.



Thanksgiving Safety – A Few Words About Cooking

The West Des Moines Fire Department reminds residents to be safe while cooking and gathering this holiday season. **Thanksgiving is the leading day for home cooking-related fires in the U.S.** Unattended cooking is by far the leading contributing factor in cooking fires and fire deaths. Other holiday-related home fires involve heating and electrical sources.

How to be safe in the kitchen

- Stay in the kitchen when you are cooking on the stove top so you can keep an eye on the food.
- Stay in the home when cooking your turkey and check on it frequently.
- Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the stove.
- Keep the floor clear so you don't trip over toy, purses, bags, etc.
- Remove flammables such as towels, oven mitts and food packaging from the stove top.
- If a fire starts on the stove top, cover it with a lid or metal cookie sheet and turn the stove off. Do not throw water on a grease fire.
- If you experience a fire beyond the pan that has spread, get outside of the home, and call 9-1-1 immediately.

The use of turkey deep fat fryers

Cooking with deep fat turkey fryers can be very dangerous as they have a high risk of tipping over, overheating, spilling hot oil, and could lead to fires, burns, or other injuries. If you want a fried turkey for your Thanksgiving meal, purchase it from a grocery store, restaurant or buy a fryer that does not use oil.

This Month in Fire History

The Merle Hay Mall Younkers Fire

This month in fire history is an event that hits close to home. Some of you may remember. November 5, 1978, started like a typical Sunday morning at the Younkers department store at Merle Hay Mall in Des Moines, Iowa. As employees prepared to open, there was an explosion, followed by screams, followed by panic. There was black smoke, and people couldn't breathe. Employees could not reach the exits just a few feet away. When firefighters arrived, they headed for the escalators, but the heat was intolerable. Employees had to be rescued from the roof as the fire raged.

The fire killed 11 employees and caused an estimated \$20 million in damage. The fire started from an electrical malfunction caused by wires covered in polyvinyl chloride overheating and giving off hydrochloric acid which led to the explosion. The building was not sprinklered and had no form of electronic fire detection. This is one of the deadliest fires in Iowa.



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