

May 2026 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

Large construction projects are starting or nearing completion across our city. The West Des Moines Fire Prevention Division has been very busy this spring overseeing the following new buildings and remodels/additions that are under construction or close to breaking ground:

-Atlas Building 7001 Westown Parkway: This project includes new office space for Athene, several new office tenants, a new salon, and a new speakeasy in a 7-story building that used to be home to Wells Fargo.

-Microsoft Data Centers on Booneville Road and SE Veterans Parkway: These projects include huge new buildings to the existing data center campuses.

-Dowling High School Addition: This project includes new parking lots, an addition of a student life center to the existing building, a new 4,000 seat fieldhouse and extensive remodeling of several areas of the existing high school.

-Rec Plex Arena: This project includes a 100,000 square foot addition to the Mid-American Energy Rec Plex that will include a 3rd sheet of ice with 3,000 seats, additional conference space and a new quick serve concession area.

-South Branch Warehouse: This project includes a new approximately 78,000 square foot warehouse to compliment an existing warehouse within the site.

-Fire and EMS Station 13: This project includes a new Fire and EMS station that will serve the SE part of our city.

-Yard House Restaurant: This project is a new 9,000 square foot free standing restaurant on the lake at Jordan Creek Town Center.

Numerous other projects are currently going through site plan and building plan reviews, so we will share those with you soon.

Fire Marshal Whitsell



Significant Incident Recap



No Significant Incidents

Last month, our department did not experience any significant incidents. However, our crews still responded to a variety of everyday calls for service, including medical emergencies, fire alarms, and other community needs.

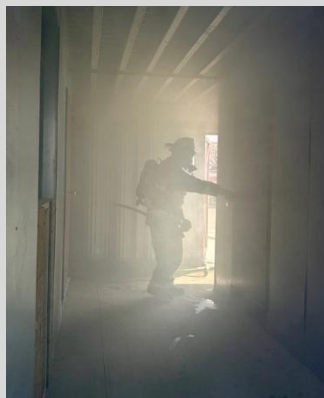
In addition to emergency response, firefighters continued focusing on training, equipment maintenance, fire prevention efforts, and community outreach. Even when large-scale incidents are not occurring, our teams remain prepared to respond at a moment's notice and continue working every day to help keep our community safe.

For the Community

Training for the Moments That Matter Most

Our fire crews recently trained at our new training tower, completing timed drills designed to simulate rescuing a victim during a house fire. These realistic scenarios allow firefighters to practice rapid hose deployment, strengthen teamwork, and sharpen decision-making skills in high-stress situations.

From stretching hose through doorways and stairwells to coordinating search and rescue efforts, every step is designed to prepare crews for real emergencies where every second counts. Training like this helps ensure our firefighters are ready to respond safely and effectively when our community needs them most.



2025 Fire Department Award Recipients

We recently held our annual awards ceremony to recognize the exceptional work and dedication of our personnel. Please join us in congratulating the following members on their well-deserved honors:



Community Service and Prevention Award
Captain Jim Kirkman



Distinguished Service Medal
(Retired) Driver/Operator Scott Aanes



Firefighter of the Year
Firefighter Wes Bier



Fire Officer of the Year
Deputy Chief Scott McFarland



Chief's Excellence Award
Captain Mike Staiert, Firefighter BJ Schumacher, Firefighter Elijah Fertil

Station 13 Groundbreaking Ceremony

The first shovels are in the ground! We are thrilled to announce that we officially broke ground on Station 13. This isn't just a fire and EMS facility; it's a commitment to the growing families and businesses in our community. As our city expands, so does our promise to keep you safe. This new location is a vital investment that will help us maintain the fast, high-quality emergency response our community expects and deserves.

Station 13 is located at 1650 SE Maffitt Lake Road. Stay tuned for progress updates as we build the future of fire safety.



Training Today for a Safer Tomorrow

Our team of fire inspectors recently attended a training seminar, focusing on specialized inspections and site plan reviews. Continuous education is a cornerstone of our department's mission, ensuring that our personnel remain at the front of modern fire prevention techniques.



Keeping You Safe

Fire Safety for Older Adults

May is Older Americans Month. It is a great time to celebrate the seniors in our community and focus on staying safe at home. Use these tips to help prevent fires and prepare for emergencies.

Plan Your Sleeping Area

- **Sleep on the ground floor:** If possible, sleep in a room on the main level to make escaping easier.
- **Have working smoke alarms:** Place alarms inside every bedroom and outside every sleeping area.
- **Keep a phone nearby:** Have a phone and emergency numbers next to your bed so you can call for help quickly.
- **Look for sprinklers:** If you are moving to an apartment or condominium, choose a building with an automatic sprinkler system. These can put out fires faster than the fire department can arrive.

Use Accessible Alarms

Smoke can put you into a deeper sleep instead of waking you up. If you or someone in your home is deaf or hard of hearing, use smoke alarms that features:

- **Flashing lights** (strobe lights)
- **Vibrating pads** (bed shakers)

Conduct Regular Fire Drills

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.

Check Windows and Doors

- **Test your exits:** Make sure all doors and windows open easily from the inside.
- **Open windows:** Check that windows aren't painted or nailed shut. If they are, ask someone to help fix them so they can be used as an exit.

A few minutes of planning can save lives. If you have questions about fire safety, our fire department is always here to help.



This Month in Fire History

The Windsor Apartment Fire

The Windsor Apartments Fire in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, occurred on May 28, 1992. This resulted in the destruction of an entire building within the complex. The fire was sparked by a propane grill being used on an apartment deck.

A significant factor in the total loss of the building was a delay in notifying the fire department, as a tenant initially attempted to extinguish the fire on their own. Over 20 tenants were displaced, and the fire caused an estimated \$3 million in damages.

Following the fire, the city enacted regulations prohibiting the use of any grill on the decks or balconies of multi-family residences.

With grilling season picking up this time of year, this apartment fire is a good reminder to grill safely.



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