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**MARCH 2025 • VOL. 18 - NO. 1**

**REACHING MORE THAN 6,900 SOUTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTERS EACH MONTH**

The Skyline Fire five miles west of Hermosa was reported Monday, January 27, about 1 p.m. South Dakota Wildland Fire was assisted by BHNF, Rapid City Fire Department Rapid Valley Fire Department, Battle Creek Fire Department, Black Hawk Fire Department and Rockerville Fire Department. See more photos inside.



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# Semi Carrying Potatoes Rolls on 281



By Plankinton South Dakota Mail

A semi carrying a load of potatoes appeared to have failed to negotiate a curve on a dry surfaced Highway 281 at the correction line near 244th Ave. 11 miles north of Plankinton last Friday evening, Feb. 7th. This caused Plankinton first responders to be dispatched to the accident scene at appx. 6:45 p.m.

The truck, which landed on its top in the west ditch, posed a very complex extrication problem, but with the training and expertise of the Plankinton's fire department crew using multi tools, the Jaws of Life, RAM tool, and metal cutters, they had the male driver successfully removed from the truck within an hour and a half. Fire Chief Jeff Briggs said the truck's cab was smashed into the ground, presenting a "many moving parts" challenge, trapping the driver. During the extrication process, a large golden lab retriever popped its head out of the cab and was carefully removed, secured, and taken to a veterinary clinic.

Chief Briggs requested for Avera's Careflight Emergency Air Transport Helicopter to respond, which landed on 281 north of the accident, and transported the male patient with multiple injuries to Sioux Falls.

Keith Overweg of Overweg Auto, Glass and Fuel of Plankinton, and Dan Overweg of Overweg Towing and Repair of Kimball, performed the vehicle removal.

Responding to the scene were Plankinton fire and ambulance departments, Aurora County Sheriff's department, and South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Plankinton firefighters conducted a complex extrication on Feb. 7 after a semi with a load of potatoes failed to negotiate a curve. The truck was on its top. Fire Chief Jeff Briggs said the truck's cab was smashed into the ground, presenting challenges and trapping the driver. Photo from Plankinton Fire Department Facebook page.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Email your Upcoming Event by the 10th of the previous month (ex. Aug. 10 for the September issue) to [jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com). There is no charge.

**MAR. 13-16, 2025:** 2025 SD Wildland Fire Academy, Pierre, six classes, registration closes Feb. 28. Visit <https://wildlandfire.sd.gov>.

**MAR. 29, 2025:** NE District School – Britton, SD.

**MAR. 30, 2025:** MLFTU – Senior Level Instructor class -Britton, SD.

**APR. 12, 2025:** Central District School, Wessington Springs, SD.

**APR. 26, 2025:** Southeast District School, Vermillion, SD.

**JUNE 12-14, 2025:** South Dakota State Fire School, Watertown.

**SEPT. 22-24, 2025:** NVFC Fall Conference and Meeting, Rapid City.

**OCT. 10-12, 2025:** South Dakota Firefighters Association Fall Conference, Spearfish Convention Center, Spearfish.

## CAUSE OF DOWNTOWN SPEARFISH FIRE MAY NOT BE DETERMINED FOR WEEKS

Spearfish Fire Chief Scott Deaver said it might be weeks before the cause of last week's downtown fire is determined. That's because the building at 146 Illinois St., the location of The Cup: All Happiness, was so badly burned that it is not yet safe for investigators to re-enter.

The fire started at 10 p.m. on Feb. 4. Firefighters had to block off the street to fight the flames, and manage traffic control to keep back curious members of the public and traffic that might drive over hoses or slip on the more than inch-thick sheet of ice formed by recirculating water.

Frigid conditions meant some fire hydrants closest to the Illinois Street business couldn't be tapped. They were frozen. Deaver said, that despite that, the fire service has contingency plans; he maintains there was never a shortage of water in the process of fighting the overnight fire. An

unfrozen hydrant a block and a half down the road, and water tender trucks helped make sure firefighters had water when they needed it.

No one was injured, including first responders. The building seems to have been unoccupied when it caught fire.

Deaver said an insurance in-

vestigator will ultimately determine the cause and official point of origin of the fire, but he's eager to learn the outcome of that investigation to bolster prevention efforts in the future.

*(Spearfish Black Hills Pioneer, Spearfish, SD, Feb. 13, 2025; written by Sierra Ferguson, staff writer.)*

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# Beyond Your Firehouse: The Value of Outside Training

By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

If you're reading this, odds are training matters to you. Most firefighters who pick up this column are already looking for ways to sharpen their skills. Is this article topic preaching to the choir? Maybe. But even those who prioritize training could use a reminder once and awhile of why seeking outside training is so valuable. Plus, there's a great resource at the end of this article that makes finding outside training easier than ever.

There's always more to learn and once you get outside the four walls of your fire house, you realize that the fire service has no walls. Fire tactics, strategies, and best practices vary across the country, and exposure to different approaches builds safer, sharper, and more well-rounded firefighters. Consistently engaging in outside training prevents stagnation, enhances skills and knowledge, and ultimately improves emergency response.

Everyone has something to teach, and you can learn something from everybody. However, some of the most valuable insights come from experienced professionals who have dedicated their lives to advancing the fire service. I can personally attest to this, having had the opportunity to learn from fire service legends like Mike Lombardo, Aaron Fields, Bob Pressler, and Dennis LeGear. The knowledge and skills I've gained from their classes have been invaluable.

Beyond the Department's Walls

We've all been there; stuck in a rut, in-house training has become repetitive, uninspiring and everyone is just going through the motions. Outside training can break this cycle, challenge and expand firefighters' skill sets and reinvigorate firefighter's passion for the job. Many firefighters leave outside training feeling motivated and eager to apply and share what they've learned. That said, not everything taught in an outside course will fit neatly into

every department's operations. The key is to take what works, discard what doesn't, and adapt what might be useful down the road.

Another major benefit? Networking. Training outside the department builds connections with firefighters from all over. These relationships create an invaluable network for sharing ideas, troubleshooting challenges, and getting an outside perspective when needed.

## OWNING THE LEARNING PROCESS

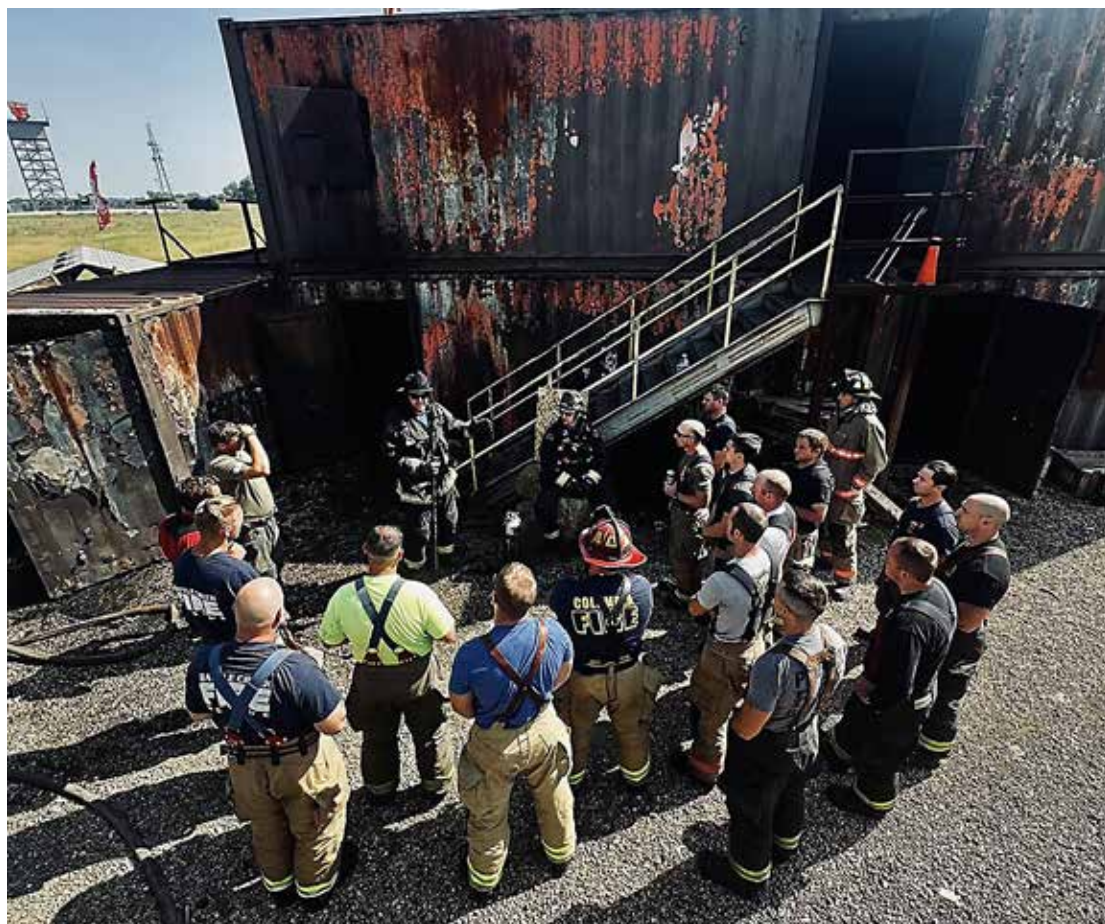
Firefighters who want to grow can't wait for the department to hand them opportunities—they have to seek them out. When looking for outside training, keep these key points in mind:

- **Identify training needs** – Pinpoint areas that could use improvement. This doesn't mean the department is struggling, but some skills get rusty without variety. For example, if extrication drills have looked the same for years, an outside class could introduce a new approach to training on it.

- **Choose relevant training** – Choose training that aligns with your department's goals, and capabilities. While training on a technical rescue discipline like high-angle rescue might sound exciting, it isn't practical if the department doesn't have the gear or capability to perform those operations. Stick to training that aligns with real-world needs.

- **Find budget-friendly options** – Training can be expensive, but plenty of free or low-cost opportunities do exist. Government programs, industry-sponsored courses, and online offerings provide solid education without breaking the bank. Additionally, consider seeking alternative funding opportunities like engaging local organizations, or raising money through an event to help sponsor or support training initiatives.

- **Do your research** – This is an absolute must! The fire ser-



vice is full of self-proclaimed experts, but not all training is created equal. Research instructors, read course reviews, and ask fellow firefighters about their experiences before committing.

## SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is power, but only if it's shared. If the department funded the training experience, it is a tremendous opportunity and responsibility. Maximize the return on investment by sharing what was learned. Take notes, create handouts, and offer to lead an in-house session to pass along what was learned. The greater the department's perceived benefit from the training, the more likely they are to support future training opportunities.

A word of caution however, how that information is shared matters. Humbly presenting new

techniques as "a way" encourages productive discussion and creates buy-in amongst members. Conversely, arrogantly presenting the same information as "the way" will likely be met with resistance with little buy-in. Additionally, be sure to explain the "why" behind the technique, tactic, etc. and be open to member's scrutiny—in fact, welcome it! Respectful debates around techniques and tactics lead to better decisions on the emergency scene, and when training holds up to scrutiny, it earns credibility.

## FIRETRAININGDIRECTORY.COM

As stated earlier, I am a proponent for outside training. But I found when firefighters ask me, "Where do you hear about all these training events?" My typical response was "social media," and that wasn't exactly helpful. That's why FireTrainingDirectory.com was created—a centralized database designed to make it easier to find upcoming training opportunities.

Building and maintaining a directory like this is no small task, so the project takes a crowdsourced approach. Similar to FirefighterRescueSurvey.com, where firefighters log civilian rescues, this site relies on submissions from the fire service community through the "Submit a Training" form found on the website. Once submitted, each listing is verified to ensure accu-

rate dates, locations, and working URLs before training details go live. With any crowdsourced platform, there's always a risk of errors, so users can easily report errors they find, no matter how small, allowing them to be fixed quickly.

The directory is up and running now! Currently, it offers basic search filters, but if firefighters find it valuable, more features and functionality will be rolled out over time. I encourage you to peruse the database and if you know of an upcoming training, please submit it.

In conclusion, outside training isn't just about learning new techniques—it's a cornerstone of staying sharp, safe, and engaged in the fire service. It prevents stagnation, broadens perspectives, and builds a network of like-minded firefighters who want to keep getting better. Whether just starting out or well into a career, investing in outside training is one of the best ways to stay at the top of the game. And now, with FireTrainingDirectory.com, finding those opportunities has never been easier.

*Cole Kleinwolterink is a member of the Waukee Fire Department, Granger Fire Department, and Fire Science instructor at Des Moines Area Community College. Feel free to reach out to him at kleinwolterink@gmail.com with any questions, comments or inquiries.*



FireTrainingDirectory.com



f A crowdsourced fire training initiative.



## U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notification

The following are U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notifications of firefighters who have died from across the United States. The South Dakota Fire Service extends its thoughts to the family and friends of these firefighters.

• **ADAM "PUGSLEY" J. KUSPA**, 41, Elkhart, IN, died Jan. 6, 2025. Adam was a career firefighter with 19 years of service and the rank of captain with the Elkhart Fire Department. On Saturday, Oct. 26, 2024, Captain "Adam Pugsley" J. Kuspa was performing training at a movie theatre that was getting torn down. He stepped out of the ladder bucket and hurt his knee. He had surgery in December 2024 and was recuperating at home and attending physical therapy. On Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, a blood clot broke loose in his leg and he suffered a massive pulmonary embolism and passed away.

• **JEFFREY FIALA**, 25, Honolulu, HI, died Jan. 6, 2025. Jeffrey was a career firefighter with two years of service and currently a Firefighter 1 with the Honolulu Fire Department. On Monday, Jan. 6, 2025, Jeffrey Fiala responded to a residential fire. While conducting a search and rescue of the two-story apartment complex, he became separated from his fellow firefighters and a mayday was called. He was rescued from the structure and transported to the emergency room where he was pronounced deceased. Investigation into the incident continues.

• **WILLIAM "BILL" NIX**, 72, Birch Tree, MI, died Jan. 16, 2025. William was a volunteer firefighter with five years of service with the Thomasville Volunteer Fire Department. On Thursday, Jan. 16, 2025, Thomasville Volunteer Fire Department personnel were responding to a residential fire. Firefighter William "Bill" Nix was riding in the front seat of an engine when it ran off the right side of the roadway and overcorrected before traveling off the left side of the roadway, striking a ditch and overturning. Firefighter Nix was pronounced deceased at the scene. The driver was transported to a Memphis hospital with serious injuries.

• **ROGER LATHROP**, 52, Millerton, PA, died Jan. 23, 2025. Roger was a medical captain with 33 years of volunteer service with the Big Elm Volunteer Fire Department. On Thursday, Jan. 23, 2025, Medical Captain Roger Lathrop arrived at the station to respond to a residential structure fire. He was in the tanker when he suffered a medical emergency and was found by fellow firefighters. He was immediately transported to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased from a cardiovascular event.

• **MARK EADS**, 62, Hanford, CA, died Feb. 1, 2025. Mark was a career firefighter with 22 years of service with the Kings County Fire Department and held the current rank of Captain. On Saturday, Feb. 1, 2025, Captain Mark Eads responded to the scene of a residential fire. While at the incident, he suffered a medical emergency. He was immediately transported to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased. The cause of his death has yet to be determined.

• **PETER "PETE" JOSEPH BLOMBERG**, 72, Newtown, CT, died Oct. 28, 2024. Peter was a volunteer firefighter with 50 years of service with Botsford Fire Rescue and the current assistant chief. On Monday, Oct. 28, 2024, while on-duty, Assistant Chief Peter "Pete" Joseph Blomberg was fatally struck by a vehicle while crossing the street en route to an annual Newtown Board of Fire Commissioners Meeting. His colleagues immediately performed CPR and he was then rushed to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries.

• **JACOB SCOTT KINCARD**, 37, Richlands, VA, died Feb. 3, 2025. Jacob was a Firefighter/EMT-I with the Richlands Fire-Rescue and had attained five years of career service. On Monday, Feb. 3, 2025, Firefighter/EMT-I Jacob Scott Kincard had just completed a mandatory paramedic class clinical. While on his way home, he was involved in a single motor vehicle accident and was pronounced deceased at the scene.

• **CHRISTOPHER MYKEL CLEVINGER**, 33, Sweet Springs, MI, died Jan. 26, 2025. Christopher was a volunteer firefighter with 15 years of service with the West Central Missouri Fire Protection District and currently ranked as a captain. On Saturday, Jan. 25, 2025, Captain Christopher Mykel Clevenger responded to an emergency medical call at a residence. The next day, Sunday, Jan. 26, 2025, Captain Clevenger was found unresponsive at his home. He was immediately rushed to the hospital where he was pronounced deceased from an apparent heart attack.

• **JOHN "JR" R. GAUDET**, 40, Binghamton, NY, died Feb. 12, 2025. John was a career firefighter with 11 years of service with the Binghamton Fire Department. On Wednesday, Feb. 12, 2025, firefighters from the Binghamton Fire Department responded to the scene of a multi-alarm commercial structure fire. While fighting the fire, a wall collapsed. A short time later a mayday was declared and Firefighter John "JR" R. Gaudet was rescued from the debris. Two other firefighters were also injured at the scene. All three were immediately transported to the UHS Wilson Medical Center where Firefighter Gaudet was pronounced deceased. The two other firefighters were treated and released.

## SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Last Spring I wrote a couple of articles entitled "As Bouncy as a Brick" that focused on the push for Firefighter resilience. In summary, people think we can just bounce back from the difficult calls and keep on going, like the proverbial Energizer Bunny. Well, just when you thought it was safe to go back into the water, what should appear at the close of 2024, but an article written by a firefighter / therapist (sounds a little like me) Nick Halmasy, "Resilience: Smoke or Fire?" for Firefighter Nation. By now, most of you know I have a bit of a contrarian streak when it comes to mental health stuff and Halmasy just fed my addiction. Let me repeat his opening paragraph: "Listen: You've heard about resilience. It's being sold in all kinds of ways. Want to improve resilience? Have you tried cold showers? Have you tried intermittent fasting? Have you heard about Misogi? [you may want to Google this one] Have you tried push-ups at 4 a.m. and not sleeping? Resilience has been hijacked by quick fixes and hard tasks. All this has blurred our understanding by offering a wide range of often-contradictory processes." Kind of reminds me of the late-night infomercials where you could buy the "Ronco Slicer Dicer", with the tag line but wait there is more... You see resilience has become a buzz word and everyone, it seems has a new prescription to help you improve your resilience.

Halmasy, like me is a unique breed of therapist, as he is also a firefighter and in his gracious moments sees people finally taking firefighter mental health seriously and trying to do something about it. He makes this observation, "As a firefighter, I see resilience as the ability to continue to do our job under immense stress." Then he adds a quote from Ross Edgely, the extreme swimmer: "Resilience is suffering strategically managed." So far, so good, right. Halmasy relates that he has seen the devastating effects of the invisible wounds, and notes: "In the volunteer fire department world, this took the form of pagers and radios dropped off at the chief's office, gear growing webs in the locker room, put there by people who, upon arriving to someone's bad day, in turn had themselves a bad day. In some cases, that day grew to a place where they couldn't serve anymore. In some circles, we've judged that as not resilient." That lead Halmasy and myself to wonder, if maybe we didn't get something right. That maybe responders are as a bouncy as a brick.

What am I driving at? There is a lot of material out there being "marketed" yes, sold like a Ronco Slicer Dicer to make your life easier, help you process your losses, make your more resilient. All without the benefit of asking the receivers of such services if they actually work. Halmasy, who is Canadian, takes a look at the mental health programs offered to firefighters in Canada, which is little different from us



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"So far, all I have done is blow the smoke away. Where then do we find the real fire? First of all, beware of anyone who comes to you with the failsafe program to help you or your department, is not telling you the whole truth."

in the lower 48, and concludes: "[there is] no statistically significant changes in symptoms of depression, anxiety, stress, posttraumatic stress, and alcohol use, at any follow-up time point, following the training intervention..." The "Gold standard" of any research is did it make a difference that we can measure. Wow, you mean all those dollars we just spent on this latest and greatest program wasn't worth the time and effort? Do you mean to tell me that "Dr. Knows Best" really doesn't. Halmasy, doesn't spare himself, as he admits he has been the "nerd" to bore the department to death with his insight, only to find the result was no significant change. To further back up his point he quotes another researcher, Jennifer Wild, from Oxford University, who had this to say: "We found no evidence of the effectiveness of pre-employment screening or psychoeducation offered as a standalone package, and little evidence for interventions aimed to improve wellbeing and resilience to stress".

So far, all I have done is blow the smoke away. Where then do we find the real fire? First of all, beware of anyone who comes to you with the failsafe program to help you or your department, is not telling you the whole truth. Like Halmasy I have been the token nerd to try and step in and help, what I found is that I helped more before I opened my mouth than after. So, now where do we find fire? Again, we are back to our Oxford University professor Jennifer Wild who says a helpful program could be a type of

therapy that targets modifiable risk factors. Let me put that in simple English, she is saying that the program should be something that works and is easily learned. The right training is meant to teach you different skills and tools to help manage the stresses, and pressures in your life. Secondly, it is also designed to help identify faulty beliefs that may lead to trouble, and to teach you what it feels like to need to shake those beliefs. It should also offer help in managing depression and anxiety. At the end of the day, again no real assurance, it could be that through the specific targeting of things we could reasonably change, we can then train a firefighter to withstand more of the pressure of the stresses by offsetting the potential negative belief and coping styles they would have otherwise used. Once again, no one has a one size fits all approach to helping us become more resilient, and what works for you may or may not help someone else.

At the end of the day, resilience is not well understood by providers nor by those of us who would be consumers. The same applies to a lot of training being offered today. It is time we became a little more discriminating in our who or what we offer to our responders and learn a bit more about our own needs before we "purchase" the next latest and greatest mental health widget. It is time to look under the smoke and see if there is any fire in the proposed treatment plan.

Your Perpetual Skeptic,

CHAPLAIN RODNEY V

## CLASSIFIEDS

### CLASSIFIED ADS FOR THE SOUTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTER NEWSPAPER

Classified ads run \$10 for the first 10 words, and 25 cents a word after that. A photo is \$10 additional. Rates are the same in each state (Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas). Email the ad to [jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com) to place your personal or departmental ads.



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# DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

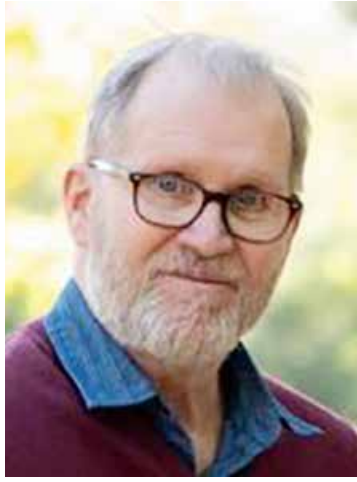
## Marvin Miller 1953-2025

Marvin Miller, 71 of Parker, passed away on Jan. 26, 2025 at Ava's House in Sioux Falls. Mass of Christian Burial was held Friday, Jan. 31, 2025 at St. Christina's Catholic Church, Parker. Visitation was Thursday, Jan. 30 at the church with a Scripture and Rosary Service beginning at 7 PM. Arrangements provided by Hofmeister-Jones Funeral Home.

Marvin James Miller was born on Oct. 3, 1953 in Sioux Falls, SD to Lyman and Maurine (Ostus). He was the 4th of six children. Marv grew up on the family farm southeast of Monroe. He attended country school until the 6th grade and graduated from Parker High School in 1971.

On Sept. 8, 1984, Marv was united in marriage to Paula Morris at St. Christina's Catholic church. To this union three children were born: Matthew, Meghan, and Trevor. They lived on the family farm where Marv grew up and he farmed for many years. Marv also loved to take his kids and nephews hunting. Marv also made sure his family went on a vacation every year. Surprising them all with a trip to San Francisco, CA one year.

Marv had a servant heart. He worked for UPS at the airport in Sioux Falls for 25 years. He also served on the Parker Ambulance where he was awarded a plaque for 25 years for service. Marv



served as a Captain, Training Officer, and Treasurer. Marv was also very active at St. Christina's Parish where he served as Eucharistic Minister and also helped with confirmation a couple years.

Marv will be missed. He is survived by his wife Paula; children Matthew (Sarah) of Parker, Meghan (Nick) Buchman of Harrisburg, and Trevor of Sioux Falls; his granddaughters Aubrey and Sydney Buchman; sister Marilyn Plooster of Sioux Falls, Ken (Jeanine) Miller of Parker, and Timothy (Harfiz) Miller, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, and many nieces and nephews and friends.

Marv is preceded in death by his parents Lyman and Maurine, brothers Les and Harlan Miller, brother-in-law Norm Plooster, sister-in-law Bev Miller, nephew Aaron Jans and in-laws Francis and Minerva Morris.

## Blake L. Braun 1983-2025

Blake L. Braun, 41, of Warner, SD, was brought to the arms of Jesus on Feb. 7th, 2025, after a hard battle at Sanford Aberdeen Medical Center.

A Memorial Service was held on Saturday, Feb. 15, 2025, at the Holy Cross Catholic Church, 20 6th St, Ipswich, SD 57451, SD, with Father Tim Cone officiating.

A time for a luncheon and fellowship followed the service at the parish hall.

Burial was at Pleasant Hill Cemetery in Powell, SD, at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Visitation was on Friday, Feb. 14, at Schriver's Memorial Chapel, 414 5th Ave NW, Aberdeen, SD, with a prayer service at 7 p.m. Visitation continued one hour before the service at the church on Saturday.

Schrivers' Memorial Mortuary and Crematory, 414 5th Avenue NW, Aberdeen, is in charge of arrangements. Family and friends may sign the online guestbook at [www.schriversmemorial.com](http://www.schriversmemorial.com). Services will be recorded and posted on Schriver's website following the service.

Blake Lawrence Braun was born on June 15, 1983, at the Ipswich Community Hospital to Terry and Lynda (Petersen) Braun. Right from the beginning, he was full of life and had wild ideas. He had a wonderful

first best friend, his older sister Nikki, who he loved to drag with on all his ideas. He was raised on the family farm south of Ipswich. Blake attended elementary school at Holy Cross Elementary and high school at Ipswich High School, where he graduated in 2002.

After high school, Blake attended Lake Area Technical College for Aviation Technology and worked at Quest Aviation as an airplane mechanic. After many years doing a job he loved, he left this to pursue his true passion of farming with his parents in hopes of someday taking over the family farm. His parents were so proud of his accomplishments and future plans.

Through the years, Blake knew of another wild soul that matched his soul perfectly, her name was Mandi Jo Deibert. Blake convinced her to go on a date, and their love grew strong immediately. Mandi came as a "package deal" with her beautiful daughter, Jersey, and Blake made sure they both knew he wanted the entire package. After a short while, Blake and Mandi welcomed their sweet boy, Hunter Daniel, on Dec. 2, 2010. Blake absolutely loved his role as a father, and many people commented on his protective ways. After Hunter was born, Blake wanted Mandi to know that he wanted to spend forever with the family they created, and he proposed to her shortly after at Mandi's favorite spot, the Gettysburg Bridge. In true Blake fashion, he pulled the vehicle over at the bridge because he had "heartburn" and his TUMS were in the back of the pickup. He "couldn't find" his TUMS and asked Mandi to come help him. When Mandi walked to the back of the pickup, Blake was down on one knee, asking her for forever. They were married on Feb. 14th, 2013, at the Bellagio in Las Vegas, NV. This year would have been their 12-year anniversary.

Blake was very full of life and



was sure to make everyone he was around feel like family. He would take the shirt off his back and help anyone with anything. Almost everyone had gotten one of his big burly hugs, heard one of his karaoke songs, or went along with an impromptu trip somewhere. There really was never a dull moment with him, to say the least. He had a true way with words and knew how to make us all laugh. He knew how to have a good time and made sure everyone who was with him was also up to no good as well.

Blake felt a deep sense of pride in his role with the Warner Volunteer Fire Department, where he formed lasting friendships with his fellow members.

Blake is survived by his beautiful wife, Mandi Jo; daughter, Jersey; son, Hunter; parents, Terry and Lynda Braun; father-in-law, Dale Deibert; sister, Nikki (Chad) Loeb, along with their daughter, Jenna, and son, Stetson; and many sisters and brothers in law, aunts, uncles, cousins and best of friends.

Blake was welcomed into God's Kingdom by his grandparents, Gordon and Verna Lea Petersen and Frank D. and Armella Braun; and mother-in-law, Sheri Deibert.

In lieu of flowers, monetary donations can be sent to the Braun family at P.O. Box 225, Warner, SD, 57479, in honor of Blake.

Blake's family requested casual attire as Blake would want everyone to be comfortable.

## Dustin Cuka 1995-2025

Dustin John Joseph Cuka, affectionately known as Dudu, passed away peacefully on Jan. 19, 2025, at the age of 29, with his family and girlfriend by his side at Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls, SD.

Born on Feb. 25, 1995, in Tyndall, SD, Dustin was the youngest of four children born to Kevin and Sharon Cuka. He grew up with his siblings on their family farm, surrounded by love and laughter alongside Nicole, Ashley, and Cody. Dustin's adventurous spirit and infectious smile were hallmarks of his personality, and his energy brightened every room he entered.

Dustin attended Bon Homme High School and later earned a degree in Power Sports from Mitchell Technical Institute, where he received the prestigious Spirit of MTI Award. His strong work ethic led him to work at Koletzky Implement in Yankton and on the family farm alongside his father and brother, where he was known for his dedication and craftsmanship.

A lover of history and hands-on work, Dustin had a deep passion for restoring old tractors, including his great-grandfathers' first tractors. He also enjoyed spending time riding his motor-

cycle and tractors, relishing every moment spent outdoors.

Dustin proudly served for five years with the Tyndall Fire Department Elliot Hose Company No. 1, exemplifying his selflessness and dedication to his community. He was also a proud member of the Tri-State Old Iron Association, sharing his passion for preserving history and antique machinery.

Dustin's joyful and caring heart shone through in all he did. He loved chasing around his nieces and nephews, bringing them laughter and joy. A staple of the farm and the community, Dustin was always ready to lend a helping hand. His dog, Dennis, was always by his side, and he found a deep connection with his girlfriend, Chasity Wild, who showed him what love and happiness truly felt like.

Dustin is survived by his parents, Kevin and Sharon Cuka; his siblings, Nicole (Matt) Mayer, Ashley (Seth) Schramm, and Cody (Carli) Cuka; his maternal grandparents, Robert and Agnes Novak; his paternal grandmother, Dorothy Cuka; as well as his nieces and nephews, McKinley Mayer, Willow Cuka, Miles Mayer, Mya Mayer, Wylin Cuka, August Schramm, Layne Sch-



ramm, Wrenna Cuka, and Wells Schramm.

He was preceded in death by his paternal grandfather, Romaine Cuka.

Dustin's legacy of love, laughter, and unwavering work ethic will live on in the hearts of all who knew him. He was truly one of a kind, and his absence will be deeply felt by his family, friends, and community.

Visitation was held on Thursday, Jan. 23, at St. Leo Catholic Church in Tyndall. Funeral Mass was held Friday, Jan. 24, at St. Leo. Interment followed at St. Leo Catholic Cemetery in Tyndall.

# SAVE THE DATE!

## 2025 FIRE SCHOOL

June 12-14 • Watertown



# SDFA OFFICER DIRECTORY

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# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



**Charlie Kludt, President**

**"I would like to thank all the departments that have submitted their memberships to the SDFA. It is not too late to submit your membership. If your department would still like to be members, you can send in your membership payment and roster, and still receive the basic coverage and benefits of the SDFA."**

## Here it comes again

The coming of March means many things. The typical final blizzard of the season, usually during State High School tournament time. The melting of winter snow as the days grow longer and warmer. First sprouts of green grass. And of course, Saint Patrick's Day.

For a little Gaelic language les-

son. Fir Na Tine. Which means, Men of Fire, in Gaelic. And Fir bhean, which is lady of fire.

The fire service is rich in Irish history. Irish heritage families have made up the rosters of bucket brigades, fire brigades, or fire departments in every major city since the start of the fire service in America. Many of the largest departments today still have a majority of their members

that are Irish or Irish descent. Why?

The Irish were willing to perform the dangerous duties of law enforcement and fire service because they saw it as an honor to serve the new country they called home. Public service was a badge of honor.

Most of you reading this are not Irish. But we all have the same spirit to serve our communities, to help others in need, and uphold the honor of being a firefighter.

I would like to thank all the departments that have submitted their memberships to the SDFA. It is not too late to submit your membership. If your department would still like to be members, you can send in your membership payment and roster, and still receive the basic coverage and benefits of the SDFA.

The high school scholarship applications are due on March 15<sup>th</sup>.

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) will be meeting in May at Washington DC. Jeremy Walla and I will be attending the meetings and going to talk with the South Dakota congressional delegates. Having South Dakota representation in the various ranking positions, the volunteer fire service should have an understanding voice at any discussion.

The NFPA standards to OSHA regulations is still an ongoing debate and will be discussed at the spring meetings. Public hearings were completed with some eye-opening considerations brought forth by volunteer services.

Keep checking the SDFA webpage and Facebook for State Fire School 2025 updates and listings.

Stay safe,

**CHARLIE KLUDT,**  
 President

## Thoughts From The Treasurer

Don't forget the high school scholarship applications must be received by March 15. No one wants their high school students to miss the opportunity to receive financial help when going onto college. The application is on our website, just follow the simple steps.

State fire school is coming up, good time to start thinking about rooms, classes, etc. Last year's schedule is a great place to start. Some classes and activities will be repeated due to demand, but I know there will be new ones. Watch for updates on Facebook or our webpage for interesting information.

Membership dues have been coming in at a good pace. We are about even with last years but take a minute and check with your

treasurer or chief and make sure they get this year's membership dues paid. It would be truly sad if we had to tell your family sorry there are no benefits available as the department's dues have not been paid. Don't let that happen.

The 2025 legislative session is drawing to a close. There seemed to be a bunch of bills that affected the fire service this year. How it will all play out is to be seen. With that thought and I am NOT making any political comments here, but I'm sure you have been watching what President Trump has been trying to accomplish with cutting the federal budget. The fire service, I'm sure, will not be spared. I wouldn't be surprised if the AFG, SAFER and or VFA grants maybe in question to be funded. Hopefully not, but you never know.

The SDFA Board is still working on transitioning the treasurer's position from me to an ac-



**Denny Gorton,**  
 Treasurer/Past President

**"The SDFA Board is still working on transitioning the treasurer's position from me to an accounting firm. This will provide a positive long-term location for handling the funds. The amount of total funds the SDFA handles has certainly grown over the years, and it is time to have professionals handle them."**

counting firm. This will provide a positive long-term location for handling the funds. The amount of total funds the SDFA handles has certainly grown over the years, and it is time to have professionals handle them.

One change has been the new mailing address at Box Elder. This again helps to provide a seamless process if people change positions or whatever. It

has gone very well this year with dues and thank you to all the departments that updated their addresses. It helped a bunch.

With this I'll close for another month. Remember to get your firefighters email addresses to us so they can get the monthly newsletter. Be safe.

**DENNY GORTON,**  
 Treasurer

"Hello South Dakota Firefighters! My name is Cherise Evans. I am the representative for the Black Hills District. I took over this role as Don Ward moved into his new role as the association vice president. I look forward to meeting more firefighters throughout the state by being active on this state board. Hopefully everyone has had a happy holiday season and positive start to the new year.

If you need to contact me for anything, please feel free to via phone or email; BHDDir@sdfirefighters.org.

If you call and I do not answer, I am probably at work as a Registered Nurse in Rapid City. You may leave a voicemail and/or send a text to my cell; 605-393-7801 and I may be able to better respond to you throughout the day.

While in this position, I hope to meet many more firefighters than I can count, and bring a new voice and point of view to the association. With being more involved with firefighting in SD,

I hope to encourage more people to volunteer and help out their local fire departments and communities. Bringing in new subjects, firefighting tactics and skills is a priority for me as we continue to learn new ways to fight fire every day. Hopefully this can spark the passion for the fire service in many people and bring in new and/or younger people to our communities and departments.

Now for a little bit about myself. I am a fifth-generation firefighter in South Dakota. My maiden name, Hartmann, is fairly popular in the fire service and is a large reason I became a volunteer firefighter. With my dad, Damon Hartmann, uncle, Darrell Hartmann and late grandfather, Dale Harmtann being firefighters for **multiple** decades, they have been great resources of knowledge and experience to grow as a firefighter myself. I completed the Firefighter I & II courses while I attended college at SDSU in Brookings and completed my practicals and live burn in April 2016. I am and have been an ac-



**Cherise Evans,**  
 Black Hills District Director

**"While in this position, I hope to meet many more firefighters than I can count, and bring a new voice and point of view to the association. With being more involved with firefighting in SD, I hope to encourage more people to volunteer and help out their local fire departments and communities."**

tive firefighter and nurse on the Doty Volunteer Fire Department since April of 2016.

Being involved with the purchase of three trucks for the department over the years, open house and membership committees has given me experience with working with other vendors in the fire service, communication and planning skills that will benefit me in the role as a representative on the state association board. My husband is also an active firefighter on Doty VFD and has experience as a captain, assistant chief and now chief that

I can use to better communicate with other fire departments in the area and bring new ideas to the association to possibly make communication between departments and the association better.

With the Spring coming upon us and the fire season just around the corner, stay safe and I hope to see and meet many of you in Watertown at Fire School June 13th-15th!

**CHERISE EVANS,**  
 Black Hills District Director



# STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Fire Department Certification 2025

Fire Department Certification documents for 2025 will soon be distributed to all fire departments across the state. These documents are essential for the State Fire Marshal's Office to gather important information from vari-

ous fire departments. This information serves multiple purposes. Fire departments that meet the minimum standards can qualify for funding from the Fire Insurance Premium Tax. Additionally, the data helps maintain an updated contact list, which includes addresses, phone numbers, and key personnel. This list is crucial for sending

training announcements and for emergency callouts during disasters. The roster submitted by each fire department is also used by the Department of Revenue to confirm eligibility for "SD Firefighter" license plates. For any questions about this process, feel free to reach out to our office at (605)773-3876.



Paul Merriman, State Fire Marshal  
 "This information serves multiple purposes. Fire departments that meet the minimum standards can qualify for funding from the Fire Insurance Premium Tax. Additionally, the data helps maintain an updated contact list, which includes addresses, phone numbers, and key personnel."

Thank you for your assistance!

PAUL MERRIMAN,  
 State Fire Marshal

# SDFA AUXILIARY REPORT

Hello! State Fire School (June 12-14, 2025) is swiftly approaching and this year, the State Auxiliary has a few new exciting opportunities. We will be hosting classes at the Lake Area Tech campus, right along with the fire classes. We will be offering CPR/first aid and a grant writing class, just to

name a few. Our full schedule will be announced soon! Be sure to book your hotel rooms now! Next to the school campus, there's a Girls and Boys club that offers same day drop ins for the little ones, allowing you and your spouse to attend classes! Watertown offers a variety of attractions such as the Bramble Zoo,

Redlin Art Center, Watertown Family Aquatic Center, and Lake Kampeska. We look forward to seeing everyone and cannot wait for a fun and educational weekend!

COURTNEY VENARD,  
 SD State Auxiliary

Courtney Venard,  
 Auxiliary

"We will be hosting classes at the Lake Area Tech campus, right along with the fire classes. We will be offering CPR/first aid and a grant writing class, just to name a few. Our full schedule will be announced soon! Be sure to book your hotel rooms now!"

# Needs Assessment Survey

My name is Allison Barry. I am an assistant professor in exercise science at SDSU. I am conducting a needs assessment for the South Dakota Volunteer Fire Service to gain a better understanding of Volunteer Fire Departments' membership, training and health programs and policies.

**Physical Activity and Nutrition.** Participation in this survey will ask for information about your department. Please have only one person from each department complete the survey in REDCap. It is recommended that the person who completes the survey has access to membership information, call volume, type of calls, budget, and health and wellness policies. If the person has all the information when completing the survey, it should take about 25-30 min-

utes. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary, and you can stop the survey at any time. When data is presented, all data will be anonymous. When you complete the survey, you have consented to participate. Here is the link for the survey as well: <https://redcap.sdstate.edu/surveys/?s=9CYFTKEK4C3EJH8M> Upon completion of the survey, you will be asked to enter an email to receive a \$25 Amazon gift card. Allie and her team look forward to working with volunteer fire de-

partments across South Dakota to improve health and wellness. After the first phase of this project is completed, we will conduct focus groups with firefighters and fire chiefs to gain a better understanding of what physical activity and nutrition programs are needed. We will be selecting two departments in year 3 (2026-2027) to work with to create a wellness initiative for those departments. If there are any questions about participating in this study, please contact Allison Barry, PhD at [allison.barry@sdstate.edu](mailto:allison.barry@sdstate.edu).

## 2025 SDFA AUXILIARY BOARD

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# SOUTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTER SURVEY

This will be the first phase of a FEMA funded research project entitled **Empowering Volunteer Firefighters: A Community-Based Approach to Enhancing Physical Activity and Nutrition.**

Participation in this survey will ask for information about your department. Please have only one person from each department complete the survey in REDCap. It is recommended that the person who completes the survey has access to membership information, call volume, type of calls, budget, and health and wellness policies.



Survey Link



Questions can be directed to:  
 Allison Barry, PhD, [allison.barry@sdstate.edu](mailto:allison.barry@sdstate.edu)



**Don't need it... SELL IT!**  
 South Dakota Firefighter Classifieds...  
[jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com)

## Benefits of being a 100% Department Member

*When you pay your department dues, there are many advantages for your firefighters. Below is just one of the many.*

### INSURANCE

100% Membership provides the following:

- Basic \$10,000 of Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance — 24 hrs/day
- Purchase up to \$250,000 additional AD&D
- \$10K of Line of Duty Health and AD&D, fire related health incidents, i.e. heart attack, stroke, other.

**If you haven't paid your dues, it's not too late!**



# 'Break the stigma': Rapid City area first responders climb Kilimanjaro for mental health

By MADISON WILLIS,  
Rapid City Journal

The gleaming yellow of his father's firefighter uniform always held a strange fascination for young Matthew Emrich. It was a beacon of safety and strength, a symbol of his father's unwavering dedication to serving and protecting their community.

As a child, Emrich would watch in awe as his father donned the uniform, transforming from a loving parent into a brave hero ready to face any danger. The image of his father, clad in that uniform, became etched in Emrich's mind, fueling his childhood dream of following in his father's footsteps.

"I just thought like any other little kid who looked up to their dad. It was really cool, and I just wanted to make a difference and help others," Emrich said.

At the age of 16, Emrich reached his dream by attending a volunteer fire department course and beginning his journey in the first responder world. Emrich said he was even given the unique opportunity to fight a few fires with his father early in his career.

However, the bright-eyed enthusiasm of his early days soon gave way to a harsh reality. The sights, sounds and smells of the fireground were far more intense and traumatic than he had ever imagined.

The weight of his responsibilities grew heavier with each passing year, as he witnessed the devastating consequences of fires and the profound suffering they caused. The once-clear line between his personal and professional life blurred, and the emotional toll of being a first responder began to weigh heavily on Emrich.

## THE STIGMA

Emrich is one of many first responders who shoulder the mental toll of their career. The Journal of Occupational Health Psychology indicates that firefighters and other rescue workers experience post-traumatic stress at rates comparable to combat veterans.

A report by the journal indicates about 20% of firefighters and paramedics meet the criteria for PTSD at some point in their career. According to a study by Badge of Life, a suicide prevention organization for police, officers are more likely to die from suicide than by any type of criminal activity.

Emrich said the reason why suicide rates are so high within occupations such as first responders and military service members is because of the cultivating of a "toxic tradition or stigma."

"Firemen, law enforcement and military members are seen to be these big tough people and up until the last few years it's been looked down on if you were to ever say 'I have a problem with that call' after seeing a

very bad incident," Emrich said.

Through this stigma, Emrich said first responders get worried about being punished for opening up about the horrors they've faced. So, to avoid ridicule and punishment, their emotions are bottled up, resulting in them seeking negative outlets such as drinking, isolation or death.

"Instead of dealing with it, people just internalize it. And as we know so well, you're not handling it by stuffing it down, you're making the problem worse," Emrich said. "You're just stuffing things into a closet over and over again for years upon years and at some point, the hinges of that closet are going to burst and everything is going to come out."

In the last 10 years Emrich had lost several friends who were first responders to suicide.

"The responders are always the heroes, the problem solvers and the fixers. Our job is to show up to a chaotic situation to fix the problem and a lot of times that comes at a cost," Emrich said. "We have our own internal problems that we're not addressing because we're always worried about taking care of others."

A brotherhood built from trauma. The relentless exposure to trauma took its toll, and Emrich found himself grappling with PTSD. Desperate for relief, he sought ways to escape the emotional turmoil that plagued him. But a chance encounter in 2018 with police officer Dan Raetz changed everything.

Their paths had crossed before, amidst the chaos of emergency scenes. Emrich recognized a kindred spirit in Raetz, someone who understood the invisible wounds borne by first responders. Raetz, an officer since 2010, shared Emrich's deep-seated commitment to service, a legacy inherited from his own parents in law enforcement.

"Some of my earliest memories were growing up in different police departments and sheriff offices in Wyoming. It was always a field I wanted to go into," Raetz said. "It's as if I'm kind of carrying on a family tradition."

Between shared calls and quiet conversations, a bond of understanding formed. They leaned on each other, finding solace in the shared experience of bearing witness to the best and worst of humanity. A brotherhood was forged in the fires of adversity, offering a lifeline of support in a world that often demanded too much.

"Around the time I met Dan, I was in a really dark place - we both were. But I had to decide on whether I was going to keep spiraling down this path that's leading to destruction or I could do something about it," Emrich said.

Conversations from crime scenes soon transitioned to the outdoors as Emrich showed Raetz his passion to seek adven-



ture within the Black Hills and beyond.

"For me that was when it really grew into realizing and feeling the outdoors, the adventures and the hikes were more so for us to process our stuff," Raetz said.

As the two explored, both had reached out to their agencies and sought help to address their mental health. Expecting to be met with backlash, the two were surprised by the support they received.

## A PATH TO HEALING

Since 2019, the towering peaks and rugged trails have become their refuge. With each lung-burning climb and breathtaking vista, Emrich and Raetz chip away at the trauma they carry, finding solace in the grandeur of nature.

The shared struggle, the physical exertion - it all helps to lighten the burden, to make the memories a little less sharp, the nightmares a little less frequent, Emrich said.

Now, the duo has set their sights on their most daunting challenge yet: Mount Kilimanjaro, a dormant volcano and the highest peak in Africa.

Its snow-capped summit, rising just over 19,000 feet above the Tanzanian plains, will test their limits and further forge their bond. On Jan. 5, Emrich

and Raetz will begin their ascent, this time not for their own personal gain, but to provide to the first responder community.

"We wanted to do a little bit more in our communities in the first responder world," Raetz said. "From a few conversations, the idea turned from a boys' trip to something bigger than ourselves."

Emrich and Raetz are climbing Mount Kilimanjaro to raise awareness and funds for first responder and military members' mental health. They're supporting organizations like Save a Warrior and Warrior PATHH, which provide resources to those struggling with the emotional toll of their jobs.

Their journey is a testament to the healing power of nature and the importance of supporting those who serve on the front lines. Emrich and Raetz both echoed that their goal is "to break the stigma" of mental illness around these professions so their members can seek the help they deserve.

The two had started a GoFundMe, where all the donations will be given to charity. Emrich said the goal is to raise \$5,000 by Jan. 17 when the two reach the top of the summit.

Emrich said once they are at the top they will be perching a flag with one simple message: "Break the stigma."

"Break the Stigma" Successfully Summit's Mt Kilimanjaro

The Box Elder Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief Matt Emrich, and Rapid City Police Officer Dan Raetz successfully summited Mount Kilimanjaro (19,330 feet) in Tanzania Africa on Wednesday Jan. 15th, 2025.

The successful summit by the team of Chief Emrich and Officer Raetz is in recognition of breaking the stigma of mental health issues faced by Firefighters, Law Enforcement Officers, Military, 911 Dispatchers and other First Responders.

Congratulations to Chief Emrich, Officer Raetz and thank you for your efforts to "Break the Stigma"

Don't  
need it...  
**SELL IT!**

South Dakota  
Firefighter  
Classifieds...

jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com



# Enter the STEPR™ Health & Safety Giveaway to Enhance Fire Department Fitness

Three STEPR PRO+ stair climbers will be awarded to volunteer fire departments

Responding to emergencies is a physically demanding job, and fitness and health are essential for volunteer firefighters, EMS providers, and rescue personnel to perform at their best. To support these dedicated first responders,

STEPR™ has partnered with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) to give away three STEPR PRO+ stair climbers in 2025 through the STEPR Health & Safety Giveaway.

Three volunteer fire departments will receive a STEPR PRO+ stair climber, accessory pack, initial warranty, and accompanying training to help foster physical and mental wellness among responders and provide innovative health and safety re-

sources for those who selflessly serve their communities.

To be eligible to apply, departments must meet the following criteria:

- Be over 50% volunteer; paid on-call is considered volunteer.
- Be located in the U.S. and legally organized under state law; Indian/tribal entities not organized under state law are eligible.
- Individual applying on behalf of the department or department chief must be an NVFC member. Not a member? Join here. Don't know your member status? Click here to find out.
- Demonstrate a need for the equipment, explain how it will be used, and articulate the impact it will have on the department and its members.
- Confirm that the department has a viable area to utilize and store the equipment.

STEPR stair climbers provide a full-body, low-impact cardio workout that directly supports the physical demands of first responders. Built for functional fitness, they help improve endurance, leg strength, and cardiovascular capacity – critical for firehouse readiness and real-world performance. With no STEPR subscription required and commercial-grade durability, STEPR is designed to help first responders stay mission-ready.

View the full criteria and apply by March 9 at [www.nvfc.org/STEPR](http://www.nvfc.org/STEPR). One recipient will be announced each month in April, May, and June.

#### ABOUT STEPR

STEPR is revolutionizing fitness with our innovative stair climbers designed to help individuals of all levels take their health

and performance to the next level. Built with quality, versatility, and accessibility in mind, STEPR climbers are trusted by athletes, first responders, and fitness enthusiasts worldwide. Our mission is to make stair climbing mainstream and empower people to take the next step toward better health. Learn more at <https://getstepr.com>.

#### ABOUT THE NVFC

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue services. The NVFC serves as the voice of the volunteer in the national arena and provides critical resources, programs, education, and advocacy for first responders across the nation. Learn more at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org).

## SD-LAST

Hello all. My name is Casey Warren and I am the coordinator of the South Dakota Local Assistance State Team (SD-LAST). SD-LAST was formed in 2017 after responding to a request for assistance from the Presho VFD due to the passing of Chief Donny Manger. The mission of the SD-LAST is to provide support, planning and assistance for the families and the department members following the loss of life or line-of-duty death of a public safety officer. We are an all-volunteer organization, with members through-out the state, with a main focus of assisting the families and agencies of individuals that die in the line of duty. While that is our focus, we can also assist departments with non-line of duty deaths of current or retired members. We also provide training and education to private businesses that also interact with the team. Our members also provide information to agencies on what happens when they have the worst day of their lives and request our assistance.

Our team has had the distinct pleasure in assisting agencies across the state during the worst days. From West River to East River, Line of Duty Deaths knows no boundaries. While the most of our work is focused on the fire service, we have had a number of requests for assistance from our law enforcement, emergency management, and emergency medical service partners. Those requests were related to both Line of Duty and non-Line of Duty related. We have also had requests for assistance from other surrounding states when they were overwhelmed.

I would like to take the time to discuss the differences, and our actions, between Line of Duty and non-Line of Duty responses by our team. This information relates only to our team and does not indicate the actions of any other organization.

Line of Duty death: The definition is quite long and exact so please refer to the URL link for the complete definition. However, the short version is a death that occurs because of traumatic injury, medical illness, or other special circumstances while the individual is on-duty or in some

instances off-duty. This covers both paid and volunteer agencies. (<https://bja.ojp.gov/program/psob/law-and-regulations>)

Once notified, our team will contact the agency that is requesting assistance to evaluate their needs. It is our goal of having members on-site within hours of the request. Members will only perform actions where and when requested. We will contact the National Fallen Firefighters Association and ensure that they have current and correct information.

We will typically stay on-site until the final service is completed. The team will try to provide assistance by working in the background and avoid being a bother to the family or agency. The family, both biological and extended (agency), is the priority and nothing is done that will bring undo stress and negativity during this stressful time. The biological family has the final approval.

Non-Line of Duty death: The death of a current or retired public safety professional, paid or volunteer, death not related to their occupation as a public safety professional.

Once requested for assistance, the first thing that is done is to confirm what assistance is needed. This is typically done over the phone, and most questions can be answered in a quick and timely manner. Depending on the request, the team may reach out to its members so see if anyone is able to respond in-person to assist if needed.

While SD-LAST is there to assist the families and the agencies, there is NO requirement in any way, shape, or form to use any suggestion or even the team as an individual or whole. The team is there if needed.

SD-LAST is 100% volunteer. We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our website ([sdlast.org](http://sdlast.org)) has some great information

Please contact us if you have any questions at all. We are here to help those that help others.

**CASEY WARREN,**  
Coordinator, South Dakota  
Local Assistance State Team,  
605-390-2619  
[Casey.warren@icloud.com](mailto:Casey.warren@icloud.com)

## MOODY COUTNY FIRE OFFERS ONLY MINIMAL SETBACK TO SPRING OPENING

Construction crews are completing final touches on the new addition to the Boys & Girls Club of Moody County following a small fire last week.

Firefighters responded early Monday, Feb. 10 to a blaze inside the gymnasium. Flandreau Fire Chief Don Peters said welding sparks ignited plastic and insulation on the west wall while supports were being installed for new basketball hoops. Crews

contained the fire with minimal water use, instead removing sheetrock, insulation, and plastic to prevent further spread. Damage was limited to the west wall, and repairs are underway.

"We were ahead of schedule, with a completion date that had moved up from our original completion date. The fire didn't put us behind, rather put us 'back on schedule', so we still are on track to open the expansion in

late spring.

"We are so grateful for the firefighters who came in and quickly put out the flames, and it sounds like the crews have already reconstructed the wall that was affected by the fire," said Boys and Girls Club of the Northern Plains Chief Executive Officer Jody Hernandez.

(Flandreau Moody County Enterprise, Flandreau, Feb. 19, 2025)

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# Rapid City area firefighters sent out to assist in California wildfires

By MADISON WILLIS,  
Rapid City Journal

Raging wildfires have consumed nearly 40,000 acres across California, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. With 24 lives lost and over 12,300 structures reduced to ash, the fires continue to pose a significant threat.

About seven firefighters and two engines from the South Dakota Wildland Fire left early Monday morning to answer the call for help at the Eaton fire.

Pennington County Fire Services Administrator Jerome Harvey said it is common for South Dakota fire departments to be called on for national fire dispatch, as they hold the expertise to handle wildfires.

“This area is known for the quality of its firefighters...,” Harvey said. “There is a tremendous capability and experience level here that’s used nationally. And the benefit that we see locally is when they bring that experience back.”

By Tuesday morning, South Dakota Wildland Fire was joined by the Interagency Task Force, which included three additional engines and 11 firefighters from Black Hawk Fire Department, Fairburn and Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department.

Fairburn Volunteer Fire Department Fire Chief Shannon Rittberger said the crews will be working 16 hour days for about two weeks to help contain the fires. As of Wednesday afternoon, Fairburn firefighters were stationed at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, CA smothering active threats.

“Our brush truck arrived there yesterday (Tuesday),” Rittberger



Fairburn Volunteer Fire Department to California 2025.

said. “All the resources in that area are at the Rose Bowl. That’s where they’re based out of and they are doing mop up on the fire. But in the next day or two from now they might be responding to other threats.”

Rittberger said there are numerous hazards that could occur that could extend the firefighter’s stay in California, however Rittberger assured they will not be leaving until the threat is eliminated.

Taking in jobs out of state helps maintain volunteer fire departments’ infrastructure and resupply so they can continue to assist in local fires, Rittberger said.

“We got a call from the state of South Dakota wanting to send some resources to California. We were asked to put together a crew with an engine and we did,” Rittberger said. “When we go into this cooperative agreement

with the state, we get paid for the engine and the crew and it helps maintain our department.

As for the crews responding in Eaton, Rittberger said each firefighter makes varying wages depending on their expertise. The department also receives reimbursement of upwards of \$115 an hour for the use of their engines.

Though the crews are paid, Rittberger said it requires a sense of purpose rather than an incentive to face that level of danger.

“It’s about a sense of community. They want to do this,” Rittberger said. “They give up time away from their jobs, their family and so on, just so they can go help someone.”

The South Dakota Wildland Fire and the Interagency Task Force will be patrolling and eliminating threats daily during their stay in California. The cause of the wildfire is still undetermined.



Firefighters from the Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department Spencer Garrett, right, and Matt Cooke, left, assist to contain the flames in California.

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## Emergency rescue at Turner County Courthouse

Demolition on the Turner County Courthouse took a scary turn of events last Tuesday morning when an emergency rescue had to be made after an excavator tipped over, trapping the operator inside. County residents were gathered to watch the demolition when the accident unfolded, and according to witnesses, the excavator started to sink into a hole on the site resulting in the operator being trapped inside.

Parker Fire reports that when they were dispatched to the rescue call, they immediately asked for the Sioux Falls Fire Heavy Rescue Team, as well as the tower truck from the Lennox Fire Department. The operator was safely removed by Parker

Fire units prior to the arrival of the SFFD rescue team however, and no injuries were reported to contractors or firefighters. The department also had assistance from the Turner County Sheriff’s Department, Turner County Emergency Management, and the Parker Ambulance. The dispatchers with Lincoln County Communications in Canton also assisted with the requests for extra crews.

Journey Construction, which is overseeing the project, had site leaders on the site to investigate the incident before demolition resumed.

(New Era, Parker, Feb. 13, 2025; written by Renae Hansen, editor.)



# Promoting Scene Safety at Roadside Incidents

EMS, Fire & Rescue, Law Enforcement, Highway Maintenance, Construction Workers, Towing & Wrecker Operators

Beresford Fire and Rescue responds to over 40 calls annually on more than 50 miles of Interstate 29 and other primary roads in Southeast South Dakota. During heavy traffic on I-29, over 200 vehicles can pass by a scene every minute. Just feet away from emergency responders in the **Hot Zone**.

Upon arrival, responders begin assessing the situation immediately. Our focus today is on scene safety for both the public and responders.

- Review or establish responding safety action plans.
- Promote critical support from motorists during these incidents.
- Recognize vehicle operators who adjust their driving to accommodate responders.

Agency responses vary, but having and sharing a plan is crucial. Public cooperation by reducing speed and maintaining safe distances is necessary during working events. A simple "Thumbs Up" can acknowledge their positive actions and raise awareness.

We have contacted the SDFA

and the South Dakota Firefighter News requesting their help with increased awareness. Informing the public about the dangers we face can assist in safer operations. Let's everyone make 2025 a time to push for enhanced scene safety and public awareness while on roadway events. Let the public know in your protection area of our needs.

Emergency Area Traffic Safety Slogans samples for public awareness.

- **Highway emergency situations require your involvement.** Slow down significantly when approaching an emergen-

cy scene turn on your 4-way flashers to warn others and reflect your assistance to the responders.

- **Be a hero on the road.** Slow down while approaching emergency vehicles displaying flashing lights and cooperate with responders. Your actions can save lives!

- **Your positive commitment helps resolve emergencies.** You are an important part of the solution.

- **Supporting the solution.** Your cooperation may be acknowledged with a "Thumbs Up" from responders.

Public awareness campaigns

can be more effective with multiple direct messages rather than one large article.

TARZ MULLINIX,  
ISO\* Beresford fire and Rescue (tarzm@aol.com)  
\*Incident Safety Team Member



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## The Custer Volunteer Fire Department honored at recent Custer Area Economic Development Corporation banquet

By JASON FERGUSON  
[Myblackhillscountry.com](http://Myblackhillscountry.com)

Receiving the Custer Area Economic Development Corporation Organization of the Year Award was the Custer Volunteer Fire Department.

Department members in attendance at the banquet were presented the award from Custer Area Economic Development Corporation president-elect Aleah Witt.

Witt lauded the fire department for working to improve fire protection in the community, its help with the annual fireworks show and its response to emergencies.






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23-0405



# Inside the headset: The unsung heroes of the Pennington County 911 center

By MADISON WILLIS,  
Rapid City Journal

Emergencies can strike at any moment, without warning. When they do, Pennington County's 911 Dispatch Center stands ready to respond. Behind the scenes, dedicated dispatchers like Shontel Mousseau act as the calming voice on the line during intense situations.

With fingers racing across keyboards and eyes darting between six monitors, Mousseau pulls up maps, records and critical information to guide first responders towards safety and resolution.

Pennington County 911 Dispatch Center Training Officer Marissa Brooks said the center serves as a lifeline for those in need, reminding us that even in the most chaotic moments, help is just a phone call away.

"Everyone involved in an emergency situation has an important part in it, but it starts with a call," Brooks said. "It starts with the caller contacting us, us gathering the appropriate information and then passing crucial pieces on to the responders so that they can provide assistance as quickly as possible."

The dispatch center assists 52 entities across West River, all of which are divided between four major groups: fire and emergency medical services, Rapid City Police Department, Pennington County Sheriff's Office and other local law enforcement agencies - like the Box Elder Police Department - and the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Despite the highs and lows that comes with the job, Mousseau said growing up she always wanted to help her community. With her parents having a strong background in law enforcement, Mousseau said she wanted to play her part in making a safe environment.

"I grew up with a big law enforcement family and was raised by two police officers," Mousseau said. "Taking this job made me understand them a lot more and how important their job was and how vital protecting the community is." Mousseau has served as a 911 dispatcher for 12 years.

Some examples Brooks provided about incidents the center has assisted within the past year was guiding someone through delivering a baby, assisting victims out of dangerous areas and coordinating a response to a multi-car accident.

Pennington County 911 Dispatch Center Training Officer Marissa Brooks assists a man experiencing a medical emergency on Friday as emergency personnel arrives.

In one instance, Mousseau's expertise proved invaluable as she assisted law enforcement in a high-speed pursuit. Her ability to quickly gather and relay crucial details allowed officers to apprehend the suspect while ensuring the safety of all involved.

"At the end of it, once they caught the suspect, the sergeant on the phone said I did great work on getting him all the information," Mousseau said. "And it



really solidified that I was going to enjoy state radio as a dispatcher."

Brooks said 911 dispatchers have to master the art of multitasking, simultaneously calming callers, gathering crucial information and relaying details to those on the ground, ensuring the right help arrives quickly and efficiently.

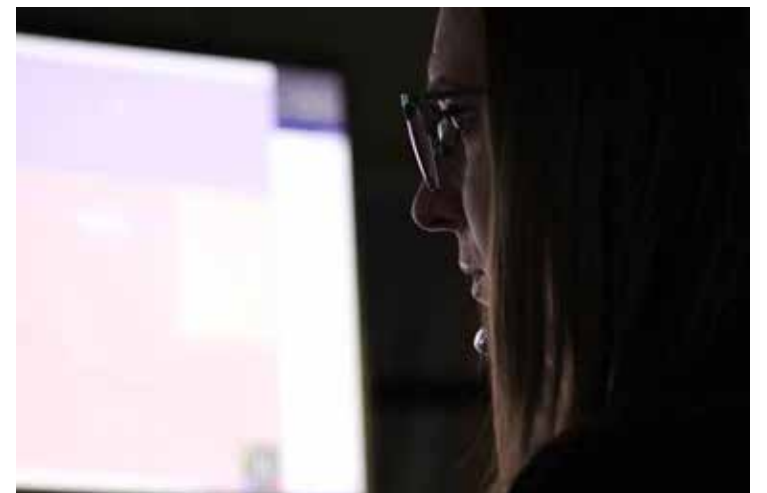
"If somebody comes to us with an array of skills, good customer service and a focused attitude, we're able to provide them with the proper training and tools to be successful in our career here," Brooks said.

To be a dispatcher, individuals have to go through a five-week classroom training followed by two weeks state certification and obtain an emergency medical dispatcher and emergency fire dispatcher certification.

After that the individual still has to complete about 1,200 hours with a trainer, completing six training courses.

Brooks said it is never-ending work as the dispatch center is open 24/7, every day of the week, including holidays. In 2023, the center processed 355,556 calls. Brooks said the average dispatcher handles a little over a 1,000 calls a day on a 12-hour shift.

However, Brooks said the cen-



ter does also get its fair share of "butt dials." Whether it is the kids playing with a phone or accidentally pressing the SOS button on a device, Brooks said they've heard it all.

In case of an accidental call to 911, Brooks advises the public to never immediately hang up as the dispatcher has to ensure there is no emergency that needs to be handled. Instead, the individual should talk with the dispatcher and inform them of the situation.

Currently the center has 44 full time and two part-time dispatchers, along with two radio techs and eight administrators. Brooks said the center is hoping to recruit eight individuals to have a

full staff.

Every month the center provides an introductory class on the work of 911 dispatchers in Pennington County. The four-hour class culminated in participants' sitting beside dispatchers and listening in as actual calls came through the county's Emergency Services Communications Center.

For Friday's class three residents got to learn the services 911 dispatchers provide in dire situations. Brooks said she hopes by hosting these courses the center can encourage more people to put on the headset and be that lifeline within the community.



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along with information to  
explain the photo.



# RISK INCREASES AS TEMPERATURES DROP

With the arrival of winter and its accompanying drop in temperatures, the Rapid City Fire Department is reminding residents to be extra vigilant about fire safety. The colder months typically see an increase in structure fires.

“During the winter months, specifically when the weather turns extremely cold, we tend to see an uptick in structure fire calls,” Fire Operations Division Chief Brian Povandra said. “This can be due to many different reasons to include: improper disposal of ashes from a fireplace for stoves, chimney fires, and electrical fires due to improper use of electric heaters.”

As of Wednesday, there have been three recent structure fires in various areas across Pennington and Meade counties.

The Scenic Volunteer Fire Department responded to a structure fire Monday morning in the 24000 block of Sobos Road, Scenic Township. According to the press release from the Pennington County Fire Service, firefighters found an active fire in a residential structure with heavy fire and smoke conditions.

Firefighters faced sub-freezing temperatures, snow-packed ice-covered roads and an active wind advisory with a windchill of -35 degrees as they contained the fire to the structure, the Pennington County Fire Service said.

Povandra said the weather, especially freezing temperatures, heavily affects how fire departments are able to respond to an emergency.

“Absolutely, it affects both our equipment and the firefighters that have to work in the cold. Firefighters mainly use water to extinguish fires, and in cold weather we all know that water turns into ice,” Povandra said.

As the cold weather turns water to ice it can put firefighters in danger when finding their footing, Povandra said. Ice can also cause the hoses to become more difficult to move or even freeze, making them unusable.

Povandra said oftentimes additional crews are brought in to help fight these types of fires due to the increased workload and stresses that are caused by the cold weather.

The American Red Cross, family and neighbors have been assisting the residents since the fire. No injuries to firefighters, civilians, domestic animals or livestock were reported.

At around 12:11 p.m. Monday, the North Haines Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to the 900 block of Virginia Lane in unincorporated Meade County.

Firefighters arrived to find a free-burning structure fire on the exterior of the attached garage as well as a nearby camper trailer, the Pennington County Fire Service said.

The crew was able to limit damage to the primary residence to smoke damage as they brought the fire under control

within 30 minutes of the first unit arrival. There were no injuries reported.

Lastly, the Hill City Volunteer Fire Department responded to a fire Tuesday in the 24000 block of Highway 385 in unincorporated Pennington County. Firefighters found an active fire in a residential structure, with heavy fire and smoke conditions extending into the roof assembly, the fire service said.

Facing subfreezing temperatures, including a low windchill and snow-packed roads, firefighters stopped the spread of the fire. No injuries were reported.

Pennington County Fire Service declined to disclose the cause of the fires.

Povandra reminded the public how to stay warm during the winter season while practicing fire safety. Residents should properly dispose of ashes in metal containers at least 10 feet away from any combustibles. The ashes should be cold before being disposed.

Never burn paper in stoves or fireplaces and make sure to have the glass or screen in place to prevent embers drifting into the home. Chimneys should be inspected and cleaned well before they are used.

For residents using heating appliances, there should be 3 feet of clearance around them. Electric heaters should always plug directly into the wall rather than using a power strip or extension cord.

Povandra said residents should ensure the heater has an automatic shut off in the event it tips over and always turn the heater off when leaving the home.

Lastly, furnaces should be inspected annually and prepared for the winter season.

*(Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Jan. 25, 2025; written by Madison Willis, staff writer.)*



## Skyline Fire

The Skyline Fire five miles west of Hermosa was reported Monday, January 27, about 1 p.m. Firefighters from South Dakota Wildland Fire (SDWF), Black Hills National Forest, and several VFDs contained the wildfire at 11.2 acres later that same day and began mopping up. It was officially controlled on the Jan. 28. Unseasonably warm weather that week melted away snow exposing dry fuels like grass and brush increasing the potential for a winter fire. The southern hills had limited snow cover to begin with. The incident was in SDWF jurisdiction. SDWF is thankful for the assistance of the BHNF, Rapid City Fire Department Rapid Valley Fire Department, Battle Creek Fire Department, Black Hawk Fire Department and Rockerville Fire Department. All of South Dakota remains in a drought which makes any outdoor spark a potential risky for starting a fire.



## Rockerville called to grass fire

Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department was Dispatched for grassfire at 10:37 a.m. on Jan. 22. Upon arrival of Rockerville personnel, several civilians had stopped to assist in knocking down the fire. Strong north winds quickly pushed the fire into an area of rocks which slowed the fire. Thank you to all those who helped extinguish this fire, including the USFS engine which responded. The fire was just north of the Hwy 79 and Spring Creek Rd intersection on the east side of the highway. Burned acreage was less than 2 acres. This is a solid reminder that our fire danger still remains when we don't have snow cover. Please be careful with any ignition sources.



# Scenic Area Structure Fire Held to a Single Alarm

The Scenic Volunteer Fire Department responded to a report of a structure fire, in the 24000 block

of Sobos Rd, Scenic Township, Pennington County SD on Jan. 20, 2025 at 6:56 a.m.

Upon arrival firefighters found an active fire in a residential structure with heavy fire and

smoke conditions.

Firefighters, facing sub-freezing temperatures, an active wind

advisory with a windchill of -35, and snow packed ice-covered roads, stopped the spread of the fire, containing it to the structure of origin.

The American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota, family and neighbors are assisting the residents.

No injuries to firefighters, civilians, domestic animals, or livestock were reported.

Please maintain your smoke and CO detectors, keep them clean, free of dust and dirt. When you change your clock, change detector batteries. Replace the entire detector after 10 years or you suspect they are failing or faulty.

Agencies responding included Pennington County 911, Scenic Volunteer Fire Department, Interior Volunteer Fire Department, New Underwood Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department and Ambulance Service, Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department, West River Electrical Cooperative, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Pennington County Fire Service, South Dakota Highway Patrol, local ranchers, neighbors, the American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota.



## Apply Now for New Turnout Gear and Helmets Through MSA and DuPont's 2025 Globe Gear Giveaway

13 departments will each receive four new sets of turnouts and four helmets

MSA Safety, DuPont Personal Protection, and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) are teaming up once again to provide personal protective equipment to volunteer fire departments in need through MSA and DuPont's Globe Gear Giveaway. Proper gear is essential to the safety, health, and effectiveness of firefighters, yet many volunteer fire departments struggle to find the funding for up-to-date turnout gear.

In 2025, the program will provide 13 volunteer fire departments across the U.S. and Canada with four sets of Globe® turnout gear and four MSA Cairns® helmets each, for a total of 52 jackets, 52 pants, and 52 helmets distributed to help protect first responders. In addition, the first 500 applicants will receive a complimentary NVFC membership, courtesy of MSA Safety.

"Volunteer fire departments

are the backbone of their communities, but many face financial barriers when it comes to obtaining needed PPE," said NVFC Chair Steve Hirsch. "Through this partnership with MSA and DuPont, we're able to help equip firefighters with the gear they need to do their jobs more safely and effectively. We're proud to have collaborated on this program for over a decade."

The application period is now open. To apply, departments must meet the following criteria:

- Be over 50% volunteer
- Serve a population of 25,000 or less
- Be located in the U.S. or Canada
- Be an NVFC member (MSA will provide complimentary memberships to the first 500 applicants)
- Demonstrate a need for new gear

View the full criteria and submit your application by June 1 at [www.nvfc.org/gear](http://www.nvfc.org/gear).

Winners will be announced monthly between July and December. Stay tuned to the NVFC web site, *Dispatch* newsletter, and Facebook, X, LinkedIn, and Instagram pages, as well as the Globe Facebook page, for de-

tails.

### ABOUT GLOBE MANUFACTURING COMPANY AND MSA SAFETY

Globe Manufacturing Company, a leader in fire service protective clothing, is a subsidiary of MSA Safety Incorporated. MSA Safety Incorporated (NYSE: MSA) is the global leader in advanced safety products, technologies and solutions. Driven by its singular mission of safety, the Company has been at the forefront of safety innovation since 1914, protecting workers and facility infrastructure around the world across a broad range of diverse end markets while creating sustainable value for shareholders. With 2023 revenues of \$1.8 billion, MSA Safety is headquartered in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania and employs a team of over 5,000 associates across its more than 40 international locations. For more information, please visit [www.MSAsafety.com](http://www.MSAsafety.com).

### ABOUT DUPONT PERSONAL PROTECTION

From first responders to industrial workers, DuPont provides a wide range of personal protection solutions, including some of

the most trusted and innovative brands in the industry, such as Kevlar®, Nomex®, Tyvek® and Tychem® to meet your safety needs. More information can be found at [personalprotection.dupont.com](http://personalprotection.dupont.com).

### ABOUT DUPONT

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### ABOUT THE NVFC

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue services. The NVFC serves as the voice of the volunteer in the national arena and provides critical resources, programs, education, and advocacy for first responders across the nation. Learn more at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org).

## ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

Please send them to [jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com) along with information to explain the photo.



# Rapid Response by Hill City Volunteer Firefighters Contain Fire to a Single Alarm

Hill City Volunteer Fire Department responded to a reported fire in the 24000 block of Highway 385, Hill City, Un-incorporated Pennington County SD on Jan. 21, 2025 at 2:22 a.m.

First arriving volunteer firefighters found an active fire in a residential structure with heavy fire and smoke conditions extending into the roof assembly.

Firefighters, facing sub freezing temperatures, including a windchill and snow packed ice-covered roads, stopped the spread of the fire, containing it to the structure of origin.

The American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota, is assisting the residents.

No injuries to firefighters, civilians, domestic animals, or livestock were reported.

Agencies responding included Pennington County 911, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Hill City Ambulance Service, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Pennington County Fire Service, Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hills Energy, and The Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota.



## HAY BALES ERUPT IN FLAMES NEAR CASTLEWOOD, 1 OF 3 FIRES WEDNESDAY

Grass fires broke out in several locations in and around Codington County. Wichita Fire Rescue put out three grass and bale fires on Wednesday.

WFR responded to a reported grass fire in Codington and Hamlin counties. The fire in Codington County was on I-29's southbound lane, mile marker 172, according to a release. There was a separate grass fire reported at mile marker 167 in Hamlin County. In addition to the two grass fires, WFR put out a fire on a drop deck flatbed trailer loaded with square hay bales, the department said in a release.

WFR responded with a Water Tender and two brush trucks to the grass fire. The two grass fires were quickly extinguished. All units then assisted Castlewood Fire with the trailer fire, the release said.

The following departments assisted in traffic control and extinguishment; Codington County Sheriff's deputies, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Watertown Fire, Castlewood Fire and Performance Towing. Crews were on scene for more than three hours, and the southbound lane of I-29 was shut down for short periods of time while a payloader and telehandler were used to remove bales into the ditch of the southbound lane.

*(Watertown Public Opinion, Watertown, Feb. 1, 2025)*



### Beresford vehicle fire

Beresford Fire and Rescue responded to a vehicle fire on I-29 around mile marker 46 on Sunday, Feb. 2. The fire also ignited grass on fire in the near-by area. The fire was quickly extinguished. Due to extremely dry conditions and the lack of snow cover, grass and brush fires can become intense and very large in a short amount of time. Local firefighters request to take care and monitor any open burning that is being done and avoid burning on windy days. (T Mullinix BFD)







## Parkston responds to barn fire

Parkston Fire and Ambulance spent four hours at a rural barn fire nine miles out of town on Feb. 5. Explosions from inside fuel tanks and a tractor loader added fuel to the fully engulfed structure but 25-degree temps, slight winds and tin siding helped to contain the fire and aid in salvage. Submitted by Jeff Murtha.



# Lunch Time Structure Fire During Sub-Zero Temperatures Held to Single Alarm

At 12:11 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025, the North Haines Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to 900 block of Virginia Ln. in unincorporated Meade County, for a reported structure fire in or near an attached resi-

dential garage. While firefighters were responding to the scene, initial information obtained by dispatch confirmed that there was an active structure fire at the scene prompting a full first-alarm assignment to be sent.

First arriving resources arrived to find a free-burning structure fire on the exterior of the attached garage that was burning into the garage as well as the nearby camper trailer.

With the quick actions of the

first arriving crews providing an aggressive interior fire attack the fire was kept to the attached garage, limiting the attached residence to primarily smoke damage. The fire was brought under control within 30 minutes of the first unit arrival.

The occupants have been assisted by the American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota.

There were no injuries to the firefighters or occupants and no domestic animals were lost.

Agencies responding included Pennington County 911, Meade

County 911, North Haines Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department and Ambulance Service, Black Hawk Volunteer Fire Department, Piedmont Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Box Elder Volunteer Fire Department, Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department, Meade County Sheriff's Office, Meade County Emergency Management, Pennington County Fire Service, West River Electrical Cooperative, and the American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota.





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# Minutes - S.E.S.D. District Firefighters Association

## 137TH SCHOOL - HELD AT HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 7, 2024

Board members present Paul Scherschligt, Bob Mier, Brian Schmidt, Aaron Mullinix, Bruce Cramer, Dave Jourgenson, Jayme Adrian and Kevin Frangenberg.

### 8:30AM OPENING REMARKS

The pledge of allegiance. Welcome to the Hurley Fire Dept. Fire School. Brian Hurley Fire explained class location Extrication at the city building, Live Fire burn trailer at the Fire Station and where the beverages were located.

Lunch and the business meeting will be back at the school.

We will be introducing 2 by-law changes at the Spring school to clarify what the board can do when no one steps up to host a school & to modify when the schools can be held, currently it is any weekend in September and April.

We will be voting at the business meeting today on who is going to host Fall School 2025, we had Yankton and Volga ask to host the school.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35

### LIVE FIRE TRAINING, 6 HOUR ALL DAY COURSE (LIMIT 20)

Training will consist of a short AM classroom session covering basic principles of Safety, SCBA and Fire Streams. The remainder of the AM and all afternoon will be spent doing hands on training with Live Fire. Participants will put their knowledge and skills to use in the new two-story SDFA Mobile Live Fire Training Unit. This hands-on training will simulate conditions encountered in actual interior structure fires (live

fire, heat humidity and smoke) Full Structural PPE Required (PPE must be in good & serviceable condition and must include a Nomex Hood, SCBA, extra cylinder is recommended)

Instructor: SD MLFTU Instructor Cadre

### VEHICLE EXTRICATION, 6 HOUR ALL DAY COURSE (LIMIT 20)

This course provides hands-on training for fire and rescue personnel in size-up, stabilization, hazard control, patient access, and disentanglement at automobile crashes. Emphasis is placed on proper choice, placement, and use of equipment available locally. All are employed to think outside the box and complete the extrication with hydraulic tools using the jaws, shears, and rams, along with air bags, cribbing for stabilization along with other tools available.

Protective Clothing Required Instructor: Rocky Foster, Jeff Bream

### FENTANYL AND OTHER STREET DRUGS, 3-HOUR MORNING COURSE

This class is geared to all ranks, whether Fire or EMS. This class will discuss Fentanyl and various other street drugs that are out there, and first responders should be aware of.

Instructors: Special Agent Seth Weeman, SD DCI

### TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, 3-HOUR AFTERNOON COURSE

The National Traffic Incident Management Responders Training was created by responders for responders. This course provides first responders a shared understanding of the requirements for

safe, Quick clearance of traffic incident scenes; prompt, reliable and open communications; and motorist and responder safeguards. First responders learn how to operate more efficiently and collectively. This training covers many TIM recommended procedures and techniques, including: TIM Fundamentals and Terminology, Notification and Scene Size-up, Safe Vehicle Positioning, Scene Safety, Command Responsibilities, Traffic Management, Special Circumstances, Clearance and Termination, and Telecommunicators.

Instructors: Trooper Parker Bailey and Gerrit Tronvold Pierre Fire Dept.

Meeting reconvened at 12:25PM

We thanked Hurley for the school and the meal.

Secretary's report Kevin Frangenberg reported on the minutes were Motion by Brian Hurley Fire to approve, seconded by Dan Hurley Fire. Motion carried. Treasurer's report was read by Bob Mier. Motion by Cory Colton Fire to approve, seconded by Matt Irene Fire. Motion carried.

Dave spoke on the State Newspaper get your articles and pictures. This paper goes out to all paid departments and 100 percent paid departments get the paper online. Remember all the State Legislators get a copy of the paper also. Let them know what we do. Fall Conference is coming up the end of the month in Pierre, a note the Memorial service will be moved to Saturday.

South Dakota Solutes shooting event in Humboldt at the end of September.

South Dakota Firefighters As-

sociation (sdfirefighters.org) has an events tab this lists all the training opportunities on it, check it out.

We had 38 on the roster today with in attendance.

Hurley will have hospitality at the Fire Station after classes today.

Paul spoke on the Five Alarm seminar in Vermillion on tickets are available on Eventbrite website. November 16th and 17th

Spring school will be at Vermillion Fire department on April

26th at their Training Tower South of town.

Fall school 2025 will be at Yankton, a show of hands decided between Yankton & Volga.

Brian Hurley Fire made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jayme Harrisburg Fire Motion carried. 12:35 PM

KEVIN FRANGENBERG

Secretary Southeast District Firefighters Association

# Southeast District Spring Fire School

**DATE:** Saturday April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
**LOCATION:** Vermillion Fire/EMS Training Center 1530 S. Dakota St. Vermillion, SD 57069

## Schedule of Events

Registration: 0700 – 0800  
District Meeting: 0800 – 0815  
Classes: 0830 – 1200  
Lunch (Provided): 1200 – 1230  
District Membership Meeting: 1230 – 1300  
Classes: 1315 – 1630

### CLASS 1A: FIREFIGHTER I & II FINAL PRACTICAL'S - MORNING

**Class Description:** This class will be for those that need to take and pass their final practical examination to receive the State of South Dakota Certification. Candidates should bring their green cards and practical paperwork to sign off on.

### CLASS1B: LIVE BURN - AFTERNOON

**Class Description:** This class will satisfy the requirements for the live burn portion of the state certification process. This will consist of fire behavior, thermal layering, nozzle advancement, and water application in different fire environments.

**Equipment Requirements:** Structural PPE and SCBA, Spare Cylinder

**Instructor:** Layne Stewart, South Dakota Instructor Lead Evaluator along with Vermillion Fire EMS Instructor Cadre

### CLASS 2: AUTO EXTRICATION - ALL DAY

**Class Description:** This class will begin with an overview of vehicle structure and supports. Class will progress into cribbing and making entries using a multitude of different tools. As the day progresses the class will begin to increase in complexity until time runs out.

**Equipment Requirements:** Suitable Rescue or Structural PPE

**Instructor:** Chris Bornitz, Heiman Fire Equipment Sales Representative, Brent Soland, Genesis Rescue Tools

### CLASS 3: COORDINATED FIREGROUND

**Class Description:** This 6-hour live fire class on coordinating truck and engine company function on the fireground. The morning session will be made up of two separate classes. Truck Company Function and Engine Company Functions. During the afternoon session the two courses will combine to participate in coordinated live fire training.

**TRUCK COMPANY FUNCTIONS:** This class will give the student the basic knowledge and ability to be able to perform several Truck Company Tasks on the fireground. Skills included will be Forceful Entry, Search, Ventilation, and VES.

**ENGINE COMPANY FUNCTIONS:** This class will cover engine company functions, particularly aggressively advancing handlines and flowing appropriate GPM to extinguish the fire. The student will develop the knowledge and skills to operate in any position in an engine company.

**Equipment Requirements:** Structural PPE, SCBA, Spare Cylinder, Certified South Dakota Firefighter.

**Instructors:** Scott Reiland & Tanner Sittig, Pheasant Country Fools

# YOU SHOULD HAVE YOUR DEPARTMENT FEATURED!

Just fill out the attached form and send it back with a group photo and we'll feature your department in an upcoming issue of the South Dakota Firefighter Newspaper.

Submitter's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Number of Members: \_\_\_\_\_

# Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ # Paid \_\_\_\_\_ Year Department Established: \_\_\_\_\_

# Fires Per year \_\_\_\_\_ # Rescue/Extrication Calls Per Year \_\_\_\_\_ Is Your Dept. Fire & EMS Combined? \_\_\_\_\_

# Pumpers \_\_\_\_\_ # Tankers \_\_\_\_\_ # Rescue \_\_\_\_\_ # Ambulance \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Officer's Name:

Office:

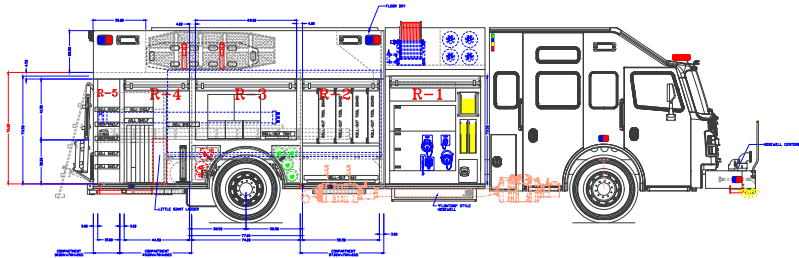
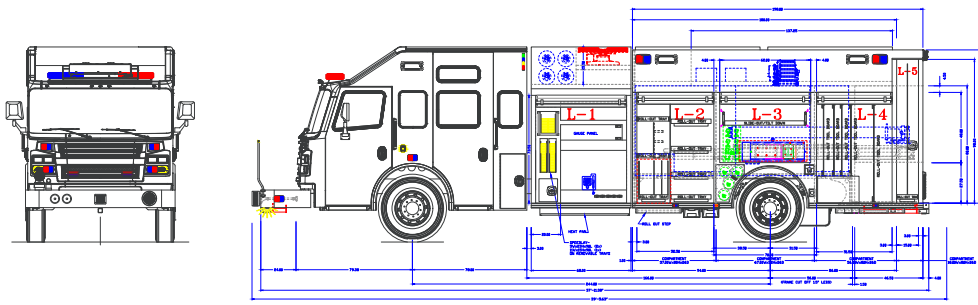
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Please type the names as they appear in the photo. For best reproduction, please send or e-mail the actual photo and not a photocopy or scanned copy.


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PO Box 122, Humboldt, IA 50548  
E-mail to: jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com

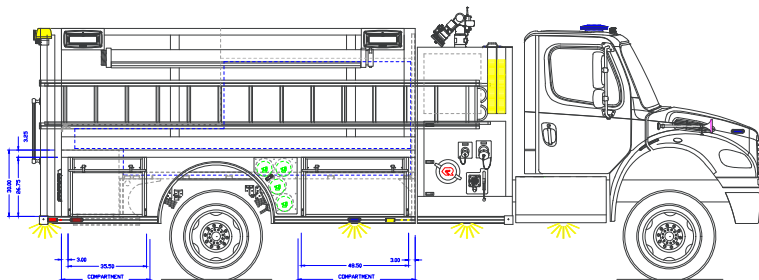
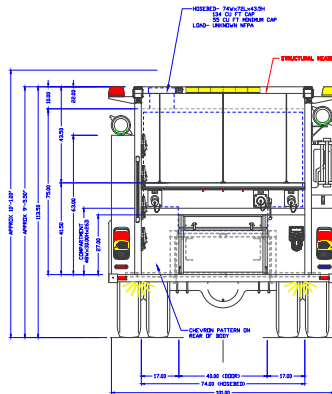
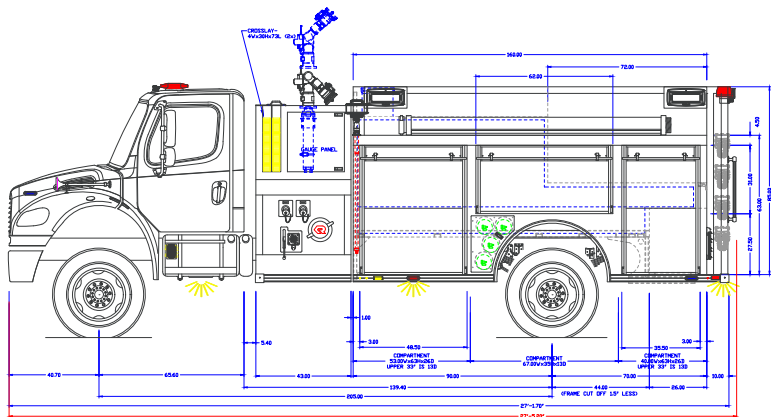


# RECENT SALES




**TEA FIRE DEPT**  
**ROSENBAUER RESCUE**

APPROVED BY:	
CHASSIS: COMMANDER 7824	
PUMP: WATEROUS CXVK 1500 GPM	
TANK: POLY/1000/20(FOAM)	
PANEL MATL: LINE X	
COMP INTERIOR: SPATTER PAINTED	
MAXIMUM HEIGHT	NONE
MAXIMUM LENGTH	NONE
BODY WIDTH	101"
<b>TEA FD, SD</b>	
	ROSENBAUER FX 3/16" 1666-D



**YANKTON FPD**  
**ROSENBAUER PUMPER TANKER**

APPROVED BY:	
CHASSIS: FREIGHTLINER	
PUMP: WATEROUS 1250 GPM	
TANK: POLY/1000/25(FOAM)	
PANEL MATL: STAINLESS STEEL	
COMP INTERIOR: SPATTER PAINTED	
MAXIMUM HEIGHT	NONE
MAXIMUM LENGTH	27'6"
BODY WIDTH	101"
<b>YANKTON F.P.D.,</b> <b>SD</b>	
	ROSENBAUER STAINLESS STL 1768-D

**Contact your Heiman Fire Partner for more info!**



**WHEN PROTECTION MEANS EVERYTHING.**



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