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AUGUST 2025 • VOL. 18 - NO. 6

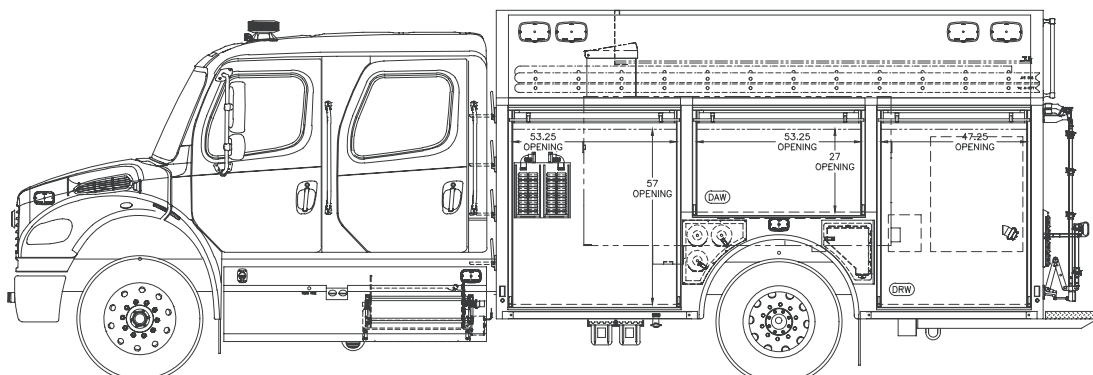
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A semi-trailer carrying hazardous waste caught fire on Sunday, June 15, at mile marker 191 on Interstate 90. Murdo Volunteer Fire Department, Jones County Volunteer Ambulance, local law enforcement, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Department of Transportation and All Pro Towing were at the scene to assist. See more photos inside. Photo from Murdo Volunteer Fire Department Facebook page.



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# Less of You, More of Them: A Nozzlemans Approach to the Fire Room

By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

I once took a class where the instructor compared the close-quarters combat technique known as “slicing the pie” to firefighting. Now, I’m no trained tactical operator, but the illustration stuck with me. It painted a clear picture of how to properly approach the doorway of a fire compartment with intention, control, and awareness.

“Slicing the pie,” also known as “pie-ing,” is a tactical close quarters movement technique used to systematically clear a room by gradually moving around a corner of the doorframe in smooth motion with deliberate, controlled movements. This method allows for controlled engagement while minimizing personal exposure to threats. The speed of movement should never exceed your ability to identify and respond to what’s on the other side; similar to driving: never go faster than you can see and stop.

Done correctly, the tactic maximizes the use of cover and concealment while methodically clearing unknown space, leading to “less of you, more of them.”

So how does this apply to firefighting?

When the nozzle firefighter reaches the doorway of the fire room, they should adopt a similar approach to “slicing the pie” while flowing water into the fire compartment.

Think of the advance from the hallway to the fire room as a tactical entry. “Slicing the pie” on the fireground means using the near side of the doorway as your axis point, and using the reach of the stream to cool the room. The “less of you, more of them” principle applies as well. By rounding the corner from a distance and flowing water into the compartment, you reduce radiant heat exposure which we know is the type of thermal energy our gear offers the least protection against. The more you can do from outside the threshold, the better.

And just like in close quarters combat: “never move faster than you can effectively engage the target.” On the fireground, that translates to moving deliberately and not rushing to cross the threshold of the fire room.

Avoid getting “sucked into cover.” In movies, you’ll see characters press up against a wall before blindly turning their whole body into a doorway or corner. When we do that, we sacrifice awareness. Creating space away from the door, rather than hugging it, allows you to see more of the room and gives you better situational awareness. With this in mind, when advancing toward a fire room, the nozzle firefighter should take the opposite side of the hallway. If the room is on the right, advance along the left wall if possible. This provides a better angle for



water application and allows the stream to hit the doorframe and deflect water into the fire compartment before entry (see picture). So although the nozzle firefighter wants to use the near side door frame as their turning axis, they should do it from the opposite side wall.

To illustrate this point, have a friend or family member stand inside a room while you “slice the pie” from outside. The farther you are from the door, the more of the room you’ll be able to see as you move. Watch videos of elite military units doing CQB—you’ll notice the guy on the right side of the hallway is watching the left, and vice versa. It’s all about working the angles.

This ties directly into processing speed. If you don’t get sucked into cover and instead maintain distance, you give your brain more time to assess and decide. Your ability to process information depends on your training, experience, and natural skill but adding space improves your decision-making window.

At first glance, it may seem like tactics from military or law enforcement don’t belong in the fire service. But when you break it down, the principles of spatial control, deliberate movement, and reducing exposure align perfectly with what we do. Our tools may be different, but the need for precision in high-risk environments is the same. Slicing the pie is just one more way we can improve our approach and own the space we’re working in, one corner at a time.

## TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion the firefighter should be able to...

- Demonstrate proper nozzle positioning and movement when approaching a fire room using the “slicing the pie” technique.
- Identify the tactical benefits of maintaining distance and angling when flowing water into a fire compartment.

*Cole Kleinwolverink 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 [kleinwolverinkc@gmail.com](mailto:kleinwolverinkc@gmail.com) with any questions, comments or inquiries.*

# ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

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**For ADDRESS CHANGES CONTACT:**

**Samara Erickson**  
**605-940-1795**

**[Samarajo1982@gmail.com](mailto:Samarajo1982@gmail.com)**



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We welcome your views, opinions, news tips and questions. Letters to the editor must be accompanied by a name and daytime telephone number, and may be edited for space.



# Teams Wanted for Milbank Heroes Pull in August

Got your team together for the Second Annual Heroes Pull in Milbank? It's coming up on Sunday, Aug. 17. Teams will vie for bragging rights for pulling a fire truck 45 feet the fastest. All proceeds go to the Milbank Special Olympics and Special Olympics of South Dakota. Registration is ongoing, but the deadline to get a t-shirt is Aug. 1. So, call your friends now or get started on organizing your co-workers or employees.

## NEW THIS YEAR:

- The Pull will be held in tandem with Milbank's National Night Out on Sunday, Aug. 17.

## 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.

**AUG. 9, 2025:** Chancellor CFD's 120<sup>th</sup> Celebration – water fights, food and fire trucks. To sign up or bring a truck, contact Jeremy at [chancellorfire@hotmail.com](mailto:chancellorfire@hotmail.com) or 605-681-6571.

**AUG. 17, 2025:** Second Annual Heroes Pull, 5 p.m. Flynn Park, Milbank, National Night Out events begin at 1 p.m.

**SEPT. 14, 2025:** Southeast District Fire School, Yankton.

**SEPT. 20, 2025:** Badlands District Fire School, Kadoka.

**SEPT. 21, 2025:** Northwest District Fire School, Isabel.

**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.

**APR. 24-26, 2026:** Rushmore Fire Conference.

**JUNE 11-13, 2026:** 140<sup>th</sup> State Fire School, Watertown.

- The Pull begins at 5 p.m. Get there early for National Night Out events that begin at 1 p.m. Check out the food trucks, inflatables for the kids, and fire and police cars.

- The Pull is moving to Flynn Park this summer – on the street between the Milbank Visitor Center-City Offices and Mundwiler Funeral Home.

## ABOUT YOUR TEAM:

- 10 people make a team. Make 'em burly!

- Each team is responsible for raising \$800 to donate to the Special Olympics. Get a local business to sponsor you or be independent. (Take \$50 off for each female on your team – up to \$300 total.)

- Questions? Contact Abbey Trapp or Peggy Greiner at 605-432-5579. Register by Friday, Aug. 1, to receive Free t-shirts for all your teammates.



Got your team together for the Second Annual Heroes Pull in Milbank? It's coming up on Sunday, August 17. Teams will vie for bragging rights for pulling a fire truck 45 feet the fastest. All proceeds go to the Milbank Special Olympics and Special Olympics of South Dakota. Registration is ongoing, but the deadline to get a t-shirt is August 1.

## Dozens gather for the annual Rochford Day

The annual celebration supports the Rochford VFD and showcases the town of just 8 people.

The small community of Rochford was bustling with activity Saturday (July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2025) during its annual Rochford Day celebration. Dozens of people came to the area to support the Rochford Volunteer Fire Department in its largest yearly fundraiser.

Known as "The Friendliest Ghost Town in the Black Hills," the town of 8 people was anything but ghostly. The day was filled with music, food, and games. People brought their whole families, and those out biking in the northern Black Hills took a break to enjoy a pancake breakfast and a free-will donation lunch held at the fire hall.

The day's events also included

the annual duck races hosted by the historic Rochford Chapel, a popular attraction for children and adults alike.

Rochford Volunteer Fire Department Chief Jason Steele said the event highlights the tight-knit nature of the communities in the Black Hills.

"Everybody's, you know, very supportive out here," Steele said, "We go to everybody else's days when they have a celebration,

everybody supports everybody."

It wasn't just Rochford residents that attended but also firefighters and their families from across the region. Community feeds like Rochford Day are a long-standing tradition for local volunteer fire departments, which often rely on fundraisers and donations to operate.

Donations from the day's events benefit the Rochford Volunteer Fire Department. A por-

tion of the donations also went to the recently renovated Rochford Community Center, which hosted the morning's pancake breakfast.

Volunteer Fire Department fundraisers continue Sunday, as the Silver City Volunteer Fire Department will hold its own community feed. The event will take place at the Historic School House in Silver City from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## 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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**FOR SALE:** 2007 Freightliner / Toyne Pumper, CAT C7 Dsl., Allison Auto, Hale 1250 gpm Pump, 1250 gal. Tank, 16,360 miles, 372.6 hrs. Asking \$160,000. **Contact Beatrice Rural Fire Chief Matt Langley for more details and photos, 402-806-2747. Email: malangley@hotmail.com** FF-1

**BRUSH TRUCK FOR SALE:** 1997 Ford 350XL, 33,400 miles, gas, 300 gal. water, foam cell, Darley pump, 2 hose reels with hose, lights and siren. **North Haines VFD Info 605-390-7752** FF-1



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## 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.

• **JOHN MORRISON**, 52, Coeur d'Alene, ID, died June 29, 2025. John was a battalion chief with the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department and had attained 28 years of career service. Battalion Chief John Morrison responded with other firefighters from the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department to a grass fire on Canfield Mountain in Coeur d'Alene, ID. Sometime after arriving on scene, firefighters communicated that they were taking gunfire and believed that they had been ambushed. Battalion Chief Morrison was fatally wounded during this time along with Battalion Chief Frank Harwood from Kootenai County Fire and Rescue.

Officers from various law enforcement agencies promptly responded to the scene and exchanged gunfire with the lone gunman who was later found deceased. A fire engineer from the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department was also critically injured during the incident and is recovering. Investigation into the incident continues.

• **FRANK HARWOOD**, 42, Post Falls, ID, died June 29, 2025. Frank was a battalion chief with Kootenai County Fire and Rescue with 17 years of career service. Battalion Chief Frank Harwood responded with other firefighters from Kootenai County Fire and Rescue to a grass fire on Canfield Mountain in Coeur d'Alene, ID. Sometime after arriving on scene, firefighters communicated that they were taking gunfire and believed that they had been ambushed. Battalion Chief Harwood was fatally wounded during this time along with Battalion Chief John Morrison from the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department.

Officers from various law enforcement agencies promptly responded to the scene and exchanged gunfire with the lone gunman who was later found deceased. A fire engineer from the Coeur d'Alene Fire Department was also critically injured during the incident and is recovering. Investigation into the incident continues.

• **LEE M. KRAUS**, 52, St. Louis, MO, died July 1, 2025. Lee was a career firefighter with 31 years of service with the St. Louis Fire Department. On June 29, 2025, Firefighter Lee Kraus suffered a medical emergency after responding to several calls and while still on duty. Firefighter Kraus was transported to the hospital. Despite the lifesaving efforts of first responders and medical professionals, Firefighter Kraus passed away at the hospital on July 1, 2025, from a reported cardiovascular event.

• **MICHAEL REEDY**, 38, Roanoke, TX, died June 25, 2025. Michael was currently a captain with the Roanoke Fire Department and had attained 18 years of career service. After his 48-hour shift during which he completed a required annual physical and participated in a strenuous fitness activity, Captain Michael Reedy returned home. Within 24 hours of completing his shift, Captain Reedy's spouse found him unresponsive and initiated CPR. Captain Reedy was transported to the hospital where, despite all lifesaving efforts, he passed away. The cause of death has yet to be determined.

• **JEFFREY DESCHENES**, 54, North Andover, MA, died May 29, 2025. Jeffrey was a career firefighter with the North Andover Fire Department and had attained 25 years of career service. On May 29, 2025, Firefighter Jeffrey Deschenes responded to multiple calls during his shift. After returning home later that evening, Firefighter Deschenes experienced chest pain and went to the emergency room at approximately 10 p.m. He suffered a heart attack that night while at the hospital. Medical professionals were unable to resuscitate him, and he was pronounced deceased.

• **JAMES G. SITEK**, 68, Binghamton, NY, died July 4, 2025. James was the current chief of the West Colesville Fire Company and had attained 35 years of volunteer service. During the early morning hours of July 4, 2025, Chief James Sitek responded to a house fire. While on scene, Chief Sitek reported that he was not feeling well and collapsed shortly after. Emergency personnel immediately provided care. Chief Sitek was transported to the hospital. Despite efforts from medical professionals, he was pronounced deceased that morning.

## SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

A man flying a small aircraft encountered engine trouble and was forced to land in the middle of a desert wasteland. Stranded without water, the unfortunate man trudged through the desert for hours until he could no longer stay on his feet. Then, as he began crawling, across the burning sands, he encountered a necktie salesman. "Can I interest you in a nice new tie?" the salesman asked. "Are you crazy?" the man gasped. "I'm dying of thirst and you want to sell me a necktie?" The salesman shrugged his shoulders and moved on, and the dying man resumed his crawling. Finally, he came upon an unbelievable sight. There, before his eyes, in the middle of the desert, was a magnificent restaurant with neon lights blazing and a parking lot filled with cars. The desperate man crawled to the front door. With his voice growing weaker and weaker, he said to the doorman, "Please, help me in, I must have something to drink." To which the doorman replied, "Sorry sir, gentlemen are not admitted without a tie."

I realize that is a fanciful story, but I wonder if it does not apply to the Fire Service and Mental health. We ignore what we don't think matters until we find a decision we made months ago or years ago, affects us now. Adam Neff, who is a professional firefighter and (by now) a licensed counselor, points out that a lot of us would rather not make a decision now, not understanding that the decisions made now will affect us later. As I read Adam's article, I began to realize that even though we have made significant strides in the arena of mental health, it is more along the line of "...when it is convenient". The meaning is for those of us who have been around a while, that we turned out just fine, thank you without this touchy-feely stuff! However, Adam points out that we are just lying to ourselves, and so we continue to operate with the same poor approach to dealing with our mental health when we recruit new people to our departments. We make the assumption that people joining our departments know what they are



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"When I started in fire service, I was looking at helping, being heroic, saving lives and property. No one told me after years of service I would have a collection of memories that would haunt my dreams. No one told me about primary trauma and secondary trauma."

getting into. Believe me, that is not even close. When I started in fire service, I was looking at helping, being heroic, saving lives and property. No one told me after years of service I would have a collection of memories that would haunt my dreams. No one told me about primary trauma and secondary trauma. No one told me about the long rides back from the hospital, when our ambulance run to save a life turned out to be futile! We lie and say, hey we turned out all right, when the reality is our minds and bodies are screaming in pain.

Maybe it is time we stopped and asked each other, "How are you doing? No really, how are you doing?" If you ask members of the churches I served, I was down-right rotten when it came to asking these questions. I recall a young mother who had lost a child to SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). I would see her after worship and ask the question, "How are you doing?" The immediate response was "Fine!" Being the "rotten" man that I am, I would respond, "Don't lie to me!". Then I would see the tear, and offer a hug. Now, I am not suggesting you turn the department into a therapy room, but it is time to become "as rotten as I am" when it comes to pressing each other to own those feelings, rather than doing things like these:

- Deflect with humor. No one has developed this skill better than emergency responders.

- Keep talking. We will mention the hard stuff only briefly and then keep talking about random stuff, just keep talking.

- Isolate. We spend time alone while on duty and off; this is not seeking time for reflection but

rather choosing to be alone because it is easier than the slight chance of having to talk about something hard.

- Stay busy/distracted. You just keep working and you will do anything not to have to sit with whatever it is that is bothering you.

- Drugs or alcohol. This can look different for everyone. Here is what I am talking about when it becomes an unhealthy use: Day or night you are always drinking or using; alone or with someone, you are going to use, making excuses that you need it to sleep and hiding it or denying the amount you use.

The strategy of containment can be very successful until it's not. We as emergency responders have some other very useful coping strategies that will also work until they don't. We need to ask ourselves; do we use any of these coping skills? Would your loved ones describe you using these? Maybe this has worked for you, until.... "Maybe it is time to stop pretending we are all right and take steps toward a better approach to dealing with our pain and loss."

Once again, I find myself running up against space limitations. Once again you will have to wait till next time for the "exciting conclusion" of this month's episode.... Ok I know I grew up in the 1960's with the perpetual television shows telling me to tune in next week. In the meantime, if you find yourself in the desert and someone offers to sell you a tie, it might be a good idea to buy it!

Blessings.

CHAPLAIN RODNEY V

## Artesian house fire impacts whole community

In the late-night hours of Tuesday, July 8, a passerby spotted flames coming out of the home of David and Paula Larson of Artesian. The fire departments from Letcher, Artesian and Woonsocket and the Sanborn County Ambulance were all called to the scene, but unfortunately, the Larsons perished in the blaze.

Sanborn County Sheriff Tom Fridley reported that crews were at the fire for about 1.5 hours to make sure the fire was completely out and nothing was smolder-

ing. The fire did not engulf the entire building, but there was a lot of smoke, which is thought to be the cause of death for the Larsons, but nothing is definite or documented. The start of the fire is also still under investigation, but preliminary, unofficial reports suspect the cause was electrical.

With the loss of the beloved couple comes the loss of the business they ran in Fedora for over 50 years, Larson Feed and Grocery. Anyone who has or does live in the Artesian/Fedora

area has a memory they recall of visiting the store, sometimes every day, depending on the person's age. According to recollections posted on social media, many childhood memories include visiting the Larsons' store for snacks, cold drinks, an easy meal from their shelves, or just a place to go to visit with other locals. The iconic business will be missed by many across decades and several generations.

(Woonsocket Sandborn Weekly Journal, Woonsocket, July 17, 2025)



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# DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

## Thomas Laubach

1949-2025

Thomas Charles Laubach, 75, passed away on July 1, 2025, at the VA Hospice Cottage in Sioux Falls, SD, after a battle with cancer. A celebration of life service for Thomas was held at Canton United Methodist Church on July 8, 2025. A private family interment will take place at a later date.

Tom was born in Cheyenne, WY, on July 13, 1949, to Dorothy and Howard Laubach. He was raised in Cheyenne, WY.

On Oct. 3, 1970, Tom married Janet Coykendall. They had two children, Nate Laubach and Sara Hill. They raised their children in Hanna, WY, where Tom worked as a coal miner. While in Hanna, Tom volunteered as a football and wrestling coach. He was also part of a saddle club in Hanna, where he helped host team ropings and rodeos. Tom was an avid team roper himself. Janet and Tom began chariot racing and would travel to compete. Tom and Janet later moved to Gillette, WY, where he worked for the Burlington Northern Railroad and was a volunteer on the Campbell County Fire Department.

After he retired, he continued

to volunteer for many years. Tom loved hunting elk, deer, antelope, and many other animals. He was also an outfitter, a hunting guide, and was active in competitive target shooting. Tom loved to ride and rope and spent many hours in the saddle on a horse during his lifetime. Tom was a true cowboy through and through.

Tom was a veteran of the United States military, having served in the US Army where he was awarded the national defense service medal, combat infantry badge, air medal, bronze star medal, Vietnam service medal with 2 bronze service stars, sharpshooter (rifle M16) Republic of Vietnam campaign medal, and 1st class Gunner (M60 MG). At the end of his military career, he retired as a sergeant.

Tom and Janet moved to Canton, SD, just a few years ago to be closer to their children and grandchildren. Tom was a member of the Canton Volunteer Fire Department, and many admired

his wisdom within the department and his ability to teach newer firefighters many valuable skills. Tom also had a passion for golfing and spent many mornings with friends golfing at the Canton golf course. Tom loved fishing and spending time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was a great fan of Canton C-Hawk

wrestling.

Tom is survived by his children, Nate (Laurel) Laubach and Sara Hill; grandchildren, Colton (Karisa) Laubach, Kyle (Kaly) Laubach, Kaden Laubach, Carlee Laubach, Sage Hill, and Hawk Hill; and two great-grandchildren, Creek and Hazer Laubach.

He was preceded in death by both his parents and his wife, Janet Laubach.

Tom's family would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the VA Hospice cottage and the many others who showed their care and compassion.



## Smoke reported in Beresford basement

Around 8 a.m. on July 1, the Beresford Fire Department responded to a structure fire on South 4th Street. A resident noticed smoke from the basement and called 911. Officers found the fire in a basement bedroom and directed firefighters accordingly. The attack crew, in full gear and SCBA, quickly extinguished the fire. Fourteen firefighters spent about an hour at the scene, putting out the fire and ventilating the home. Beresford Fire Department stresses the importance of having working smoke detectors in your home. Submitted by Tarz Mullinix, Beresford Fire.



## Rockerville called to scene of drowning

Shortly after 8 p.m. on Saturday, July 12, the Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department and the Pennington County Sheriff's Office was notified of a possible drowning at Hippie Hole, a popular but challenging to access, swimming and cliff jumping spot in the Black Hills. A drowning was confirmed and after an underwater search, the body of a 23-year-old Jaden White Plume of Box Elder was recovered between 10:30 and 11 p.m. that night. Alcohol was involved in the incident. The male was entangled in underwater debris. This is the fourth incident at Hippie Hole since June of 2025 the Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department has responded to. Agencies responding: Pennington County 911, Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department, Pennington County Search and Rescue, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Rapid City/Pennington County Water Rescue Team, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Keystone Ambulance, and South Dakota Game Fish and Parks. This is an ongoing investigation. Photo courtesy of the Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department. The photo shows Rockerville Fire Chief Gail Schmidt (right) leading a briefing of firefighters and search and rescue team members during the July 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> incident.

## Hill City holds structure fire to room and contents

Hill City Volunteer Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire in the 24000 block of Highway 385, unincorporated Pennington County, SD on July 13, 2025 at 15:03.

First arriving volunteer firefighters discovered a room and contents fire in a single-family residential structure.

Rapid attack by volunteer firefighters contained the fire to the

room of origin, holding the fire to a single alarm.

This was the third incident Hill City Volunteer Firefighters responded to on Sunday, July 13<sup>th</sup>.

Agencies responding included Pennington County 911, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Hill City Ambulance Service and the Pennington County Sheriff's Office.

**ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!**

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## SDFA OFFICER DIRECTORY

### PRESIDENT CHARLIE KLUDT

P.O. Box 606  
Viborg, SD 57070  
605-326-5072 Home  
605-940-1087 Cell  
Pres@sdfirefighters.org

### VICE PRESIDENT DON WARD

1202 Union St.,  
Belle Fourche, SD 57717  
605-645-2689 Cell

### SECRETARY SAMARA ERICKSON

1017 S. Cleveland Ave,  
Pierre, 57501  
605-940-1795  
Samarajo1982@gmail.com

### TREASURER DENNY GORTON

PO BOX 1884  
Rapid City SD 57709  
484-0806 Cell  
sec@sdfirefighters.org

### DIRECTORS: SOUTHEAST DAVE JORGENSEN

501 NE 2nd St.  
Colton, SD 57018  
605-446-3980  
SEDir@sdfirefighters.org

### NORTHEAST MARK STOKS

901 13th Ave. SW  
Aberdeen, SD 57401  
605-380-9817 Cell  
NEDir@sdfirefighters.org

### CENTRAL RICHARD GEORGE

39604 227th St,  
Woonsocket SD 57385,  
605-461-9190,  
CenDir@sdfirefighters.org

### NORTHWEST CHAD BAUMGARTEN

PO BOX 599  
Lemmon, SD 57638  
374-5868 Home  
222-9702 Cell  
NWDDir@sdfirefighters.org

### BLACK HILLS CHERISE EVANS

4555 Candlewood Pl, Apt. 308  
Rapid City, SD 57702  
605-393-7801 Cell  
BHDDir@sdfirefighters.org

### BADLANDS JASON MOSTERD

526 Franklin St,  
Burke, SD 57523  
605-840-0252  
BLDDir@sdfirefighters.org

### SOUTH CENTRAL RICK GUSTAD

PO BOX 33  
Platte, SD 57369  
605-337-9629 Home  
605-680-2637 Cell  
SCDir@sdfirefighters.org

### NVFC DIRECTOR JEREMY WALLA

6408 Prestwick Rd  
Rapid City, SD 57702  
605-484-3911 cell  
Jeremy.walla@gmail.com



# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



### Charlie Kludt, President

"These past few months have been a true test and testimony of the fire and rescue services and the willingness and capabilities of so many across the country. Devastating natural disasters from thunderstorms, tornadoes, flooding, wildfires, and ice and freezing temperatures have been taking place in unprecedented ways."

## What is Your Samaritan Assistance?

Recently, we heard the parable of the Good Samaritan discussed at our church.

In short, the scripture tells how a lawyer was seeking clarification on his understanding of, love thy neighbor as thyself. He wanted to know, who was his neighbor?

As the parable goes, the Samaritan showed mercy and helped the injured man along the road. Then took him to an inn for more help and to heal. The Samaritan did what he could to help the one in need with what he had. The scripture lesson ends with Jesus saying to the man, "Go and do likewise."

I couldn't help but think of the various people on our fire and

ambulance crews, and the various calls we have responded to recently and over the years.

These past few months have been a true test and testimony of the fire and rescue services and the willingness and capabilities of so many across the country. Devastating natural disasters from thunderstorms, tornadoes, flooding, wildfires, and ice and freezing temperatures have been taking place in unprecedented ways.

We plan for the expected events. We discuss the strange and unexpected, especially after something happens somewhere else. Do we need to prepare for every possibility? That's not realistic.

We have areas that are prone to flooding. We expect it in the spring and occasionally if big rains come. But how often does it happen? People were trying to

blame local officials and weather forecaster for the lack of warning in the recent Texas flooding disaster. No one plans for a river to rise over 20 feet in an hour. Just like no one expected Louisiana and Mississippi to have 8-18" of snow last winter.

There are approximately 1.1 million firefighters in the United States. Roughly 680,000 are volunteers. In our communities, we may have 15 to 50. When disasters strike in our territory, it is still the locals that come out first with what they can to assist.

Whether it is tools and equipment, manpower, searching, or providing shelter and meals. Contractors will leave projects to assist. Our state mobilizes the National Guard to assist communities. That is all local assistance with people doing what they can with what they have.

What we need to prepare for is, what to do if disaster strikes a neighboring community. The primary concern for that department should be that of their family's welfare. As a neighboring agency, be ready to become the primary response.

The Good Samaritan lives everywhere and in us all. It is just a matter of what assistance you have to offer. Maybe that is putting on an air pack and getting dirty. Or, maybe it's doing paper-

work and making sandwiches.

Remember to mark your calendars for 10-12 October for the Fall Fire Conference in Spearfish. We have two speakers coming who know and understand rural volunteer services.

Mr. Tom Merrill will speak on the "The Professional Volunteer Fire Department." And Mr. Rodney Foster will provide insight on "Rural Department Staging and Working Together."

We will also be looking for 16 people, two groups of eight individuals, to be part of a focus group gathering information and ideas for the research project by SDSU on the health, wellness, and nutrition of the fire service in South Dakota. Many of you may have completed their survey at State fire school last year. This is a continued step in the project requirements. We will be looking for firefighter representation from across the state, for a quick 1-hour session. If you are interested in being part of the focus group, let us know.

The dog days of summer are here. The fields are going to start drying down. County fairs and school activities are going to be starting. Let's all be ready and be careful.

Stay safe,

**CHARLIE KLUDT**  
President

## It will never happen here.

We have all heard the phrase. Some of us may have even said it. But what happens when it does? Well, it did. A small local department had the unthinkable happen last week. Now reality and realism of the job is setting in. A fatal fire is never easy. A double fatal fire hits hard and affects the entire community. This fire department made a phenomenal stop considering the conditions they faced. They stopped the progression of fire within minutes of arriving with limited manpower but, it wasn't enough. Now the second guessing starts. *What if I had done more? What if I had packed up faster? What if I had given more? What if...*

Those two words are probably the most common phrase in our heads after a difficult call. Most of us have been there, staring at the ceiling at 2 a.m. thinking ... *what if.*

This is the second mutual aid double fatal fire I have responded to this year and just one of many throughout my time in the fire service. It never gets easier. I have learned to watch the faces of the firefighters and read the emotions. Everyone handles it differently, but it affects everyone involved.

So, keep an eye on your brothers and sisters. Check in on them, not just immediately following a traumatic call but in the following days and weeks as well. Post the mental health phone numbers in your firehouse so your firefighters can see them. Some-



### Rick George, Central District Director

"Keep an eye on your brothers and sisters. Check in on them, not just immediately following a traumatic call but in the following days and weeks as well. Post the mental health phone numbers in your firehouse so your firefighters can see them. Sometimes we think we are handling things fine, then a trigger happens and everything floods back. If they reach out to you, let them talk, you listen."

times we think we are handling things fine, then a trigger happens and everything floods back. If they reach out to you, let them talk, you listen. Talk to family members of your firefighters and ask them if there have been any changes in mood or difference in character. We are all in this together.

Sorry for the seriousness of this article. I actually had no idea what I was going to write about this month and this just seemed to flow. Maybe I needed it. Thanks for listening.

**RICK GEORGE,**  
Central District Director



## Deadwood assists at Spearfish fire

On July 3, the Deadwood Fire Department was requested by Spearfish Fire Department at 11:06pm for water tender support for a structure fire in rural Lawrence County. Deadwood Fire sent a crew of three with "The Hawk" to assist. See more on page 9. From the Deadwood Fire Department Facebook page.



# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

## Thoughts from the Back Seat

Thought about this at fire school last month. A guest speaker called firefighters heroes. He was truly respectful of all of us. We appreciate that. That made me think, (not good when I do that, just ask Pam). I remember very recently about an FDNY Firefighter who was being given a "Hero" award. As I recall he had repelled down the side of a high rise building to save an individual who was hanging out a window. He deserved every bit of the recognition, and I certainly am not going to take anything away from his actions. But I thought who all and what all did it take to get that one in-

dividual to that point? Before the FDNY Firefighter ever took that first step off the high rise there were dozens, maybe hundreds of individuals who were there with him. His crew mates, instructors, companies that made the ropes and equipment. That firefighter certainly was the one who took the leap of faith, but he didn't do it alone.

If we all think back on our time there are so many who have been involved in our life as a firefighter, long before we became "heroes." When you decided to join your fire department who was one who said, "why not, go for it, what have you got to lose." What about the instructors who gave their time and patience to get you through the classes? The

older firefighters who probably took you under their wing to show you the ropes. Your family who allowed you to go to fires, meetings, training, all the other functions with only a little bit of grumbling? All the member firefighters in your department?

What's my point in all this rambling? I guess it's the next time you hear or see someone recognized as a hero, stop for a minute and give a tip of your hat to all those who helped in the process. Again, not to take away anything from anyone, but this isn't an individual passion, this thing called firefighting, it's a team passion.

Before I close, I would like to note that Rapid City Fire Department Battalion Chief Calen Man-



Denny Gorton,  
Retired Treasurer/Past President

"What's my point in all this rambling? I guess it's the next time you hear or see someone recognized as a hero, stop for a minute and give a tip of your hat to all those who helped in the process. Again, not to take away anything from anyone, but this isn't an individual passion, this thing called firefighting, it's a team passion."

ingis had an article in Fire Engineering recently. BC Maningis talked about the difficulty in locating the fire and the cause. I was on that fire last September and it was one to put in your memory bank. I have read numerous articles about Corrugated Stainless Steel Tubing for gas, (CSST) but couldn't say I've seen a fire with it. Thank you, Chief Maningis, for the great lesson I learned.

Chief Maningis was also an instructor at this year's state fire school, if you were in his class, I know you learned a lot. As they say, learn something new every day and pass it on.

With that I'm done for this month.

DENNY GORTON

# SDFA AUXILIARY REPORT

As the 85th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally roars into the Black Hills this August, thou-

sands of riders from across the country are gearing up for the ride of a lifetime. With the spirit of freedom in the air and the rumble of engines filling the streets, safety should be every rider's top priority.

While the rally is a time for celebration, camaraderie, and unforgettable rides, it's also a time when traffic congestion, distracted driving, and road fatigue can put bikers and motorists at risk.

Law enforcement agencies, emergency services, and local officials are joining forces to keep roads safe, but it takes the collective effort of every participant to make that happen.

## KEY TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS FOR RIDERS AND DRIVERS:

- **GEAR UP:** DOT-approved helmets, reflective vests, eye protection, and proper footwear are critical. Even if you're riding short distances, the right gear

saves lives.

- **STAY SOBER:** Alcohol and motorcycles do not mix. Designate a sober rider or use shuttle services available in and around Sturgis.

- **WATCH YOUR SPEED:** Country roads, highway curves, and crowded city streets all demand different riding techniques. Obey posted limits and adjust for traffic conditions.

- **STAY ALERT AT INTERSECTIONS:** A majority of multi-vehicle motorcycle crashes occur at intersections. Never assume you're seen—ride defensively.

- **HYDRATE AND REST:** Long rides in summer heat can lead to fatigue and dehydration. Take regular breaks and stay fueled

## Courtney Venard, Auxiliary

"While the rally is a time for celebration, camaraderie, and unforgettable rides, it's also a time when traffic congestion, distracted driving, and road fatigue can put bikers and motorists at risk. Law enforcement agencies, emergency services, and local officials are joining forces to keep roads safe, but it takes the collective effort of every participant to make that happen."

with water and food.

Whether you're a local or a visitor in a car, truck, or RV, be mindful of the surge in motorcycle traffic: Check blind spots frequently. Give riders a full lane. Signal every turn and lane change. Be extra cautious at night and in low-visibility conditions.

South Dakota Highway Patrol, local police departments, and medical services will have enhanced coverage throughout the region. Several "Rider Recov-

ery" and assistance stations will also be set up for those in need of mechanical or medical aid.

With over 500,000 attendees expected, safety isn't just about avoiding crashes—it's about respecting the ride, the riders, and the roads we all share. Ride smart, drive safe, and let's make this milestone rally a celebration to remember for all the right reasons.

COURTNEY VENARD,  
Auxiliary

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## 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.

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



# Custer County Fire opt out a no-go

By JASON FERGUSON

The Custer County Commission seemed set to pass a resolution at its regular meeting June 25 for an opt out of the mill levy for fire protection funding in the county in an effort to provide more money to the six departments in the county that do not belong to a taxing district.

That was, until an emergency meeting of the county's Fire Advisory Board Monday evening. That board rejected the commission's plan for an opt out, with a couple of those in attendance saying departments were concerned about raising property taxes as well as the opt out not going to a public vote.

As such, when the representative from the Custer Volunteer Fire Department moved to request an approval of the opt out, the motion died for a lack of a second. "I was amazed at the idea of not wanting to accept the commission's effort to help out," said fire advisory board president Clinton Rittberger, who is the chief of the

Fairburn Volunteer Fire Department.

As president of the board, Rittberger, who has spent time at a pair of recent commission meetings touting the potential benefits of an opt out, does not vote unless there is a motion that ends in a tie. "I will also respect this is the general wish of the body of the Fire Advisory Board. As president I will back that for whatever is necessary."

In an interview after the Monday meeting Custer County commissioner Mike Busskohl also seemed surprised at the opt out's "emphatic" failure, but said he respects the Fire Advisory Board's concern for taxpayers.

"But," he continued, "I also have worries they will not be properly funded in the near term." Busskohl said the commission would not pass the opt out resolution at its June 25 meeting. "They don't want it, so we won't pass it," he said.

At a special June 18 work session, the commission landed

on a figure of \$275,000 in additional funding for the six departments—Custer, Folsom, Custer Highlands, Pringle, Argyle and Buffalo Gap. Fairburn and Battle Creek's departments have already established taxing districts.

The opt out, which would have been for one year only, would have seen a projected levy of .169 placed on all taxable property within the county minus those in the Battle Creek and Fairburn districts. This would mean a tax of around 17¢ per \$1,000 in valuation, or around \$16.87 per \$100,000 in valuation.

Presently the taxpayers in those areas pay a .205 levy for fire protection, and that levy yielded \$334,605 for 2025. An opt out does not eliminate that mill levy, but rather the fire fund and opt out would roll into one levy to yield the desired extra \$275,000 to supplement the aforementioned \$334,605.

Commissioners and some fire department officials say the opt out is necessary as fire departments fall further behind in terms

of keeping up with equipment needs as inflation costs are rising faster than the money allocated to departments through the fire fund. The fire fund can be raised annually, but can only be raised by the Consumer Price Index factor as well as new growth within those districts. Opt outs have a deadline of July 15 each year for the following year's taxes.

Rittberger said although he doesn't speak for the departments, Monday's vote seemed to be a statement from departments that extra money does not necessarily improve departments and they can continue to get by with what they have, at least for now.

"There was sentiment they did not want to cause a burden to their community people and raise property taxes," Rittberger said, saying some feel a lack of volunteers, not funding, is a larger issue.

Commission chairman Jim Lintz said at the June 18 meeting while he is in favor of the opt out for one year, he said the commission and fire departments must look to the future as to what they can do to help boost fire department funding. The commission is required to ensure the county has fire protection.

"This is to get us by," commissioner Mike Busskohl said. Between now and next year, Busskohl said at the June 18 meeting, districts must be revisited, and any future opt outs would be sent to the vote of the public.

The opt out could have been referred to a public vote, with 5 percent of the voters within those areas signatures required to send the issue to a referendum. The commission estimated a vote would cost the county around \$40,000.

Rittberger told the commission at the June 18 meeting that between all of the aforementioned six departments there is roughly a \$397,000 shortfall in funding.

Rittberger talked about the aging apparatus fleet for county departments, and gave an example from his department, even though it would not be a part of this opt out. That department has a 1983 tender that he said has a "comical" startup procedure due to the age and rewiring that has had to be done on that piece of equipment.

"Sometimes new recruits might not know how to start it up, but we consider them to be vital because we have kept our budget down considerably and try to maintain and keep getting by and keep equipment we deem necessary," he said.

Rittberger said the departments have almost become too good with saving money and

being resourceful, to their detriment.

"Resourcefulness can be debilitating. That's my concern," he said. "We are getting behind. If we don't start stepping up and put in a fixed replacement schedule on some of this equipment, it will be hard to catch up in the future."

Commissioner Mark Hartman called the proposed opt out "a Band-Aid, and we need surgery" but said he would support it before reiterating his desire to see a fire district.

"Everything we talk about forever is back to the same thing," he said. "We have to have a long-term fix. I support this, but we need to make the district thing a bigger deal."

Rittberger said the fire advisory board plans to take up the districting cause again this fall. "We have to. I agree with that," he said. "We have to move forward." Rittberger said at the June 18 meeting he would be comfortable with a \$275,000 opt out, and spoke about some needs of some of the departments, which includes a new vehicle at the Custer Highlands department, while saying Pringle and Folsom could use some equipment upgrades as well.

Argyle and Custer are eyeing new fire halls. Brandon Zapp, a Custer Volunteer Fire Department member, said Custer will likely have an engine need within the next five years, as well.

Lintz said the commission would ultimately have the final say in how the money from the opt out was to be allocated to the various departments, but said the commission would have liked recommendations from the Fire Advisory Board. That is now a moot point.

Untimely, the commission would like to see the district issue voted on in 2026 during midterm elections. "Someone has to step up and say, 'this is what we want to do,' in terms of a district," Hartman said.

"Make it a hot topic at that meeting. We need to talk districts."

There was momentum for a district for at least the Custer Volunteer Fire Department's protection area last year, but that fell apart when a deadline to get the issue onto the last general election ballot came and went without a required resolution to establish the district being approved by the city and county.

Busskohl said the commission will continue to work toward providing more funding for the departments, whether that is through districts or through a voter-approved opt out in 2026.

## 2025 SE DISTRICT FALL FIRE SCHOOL

Sunday, September 14, 2025: Hosted by Yankton Fire Department

**Pump Operations:** Lieutenant Chris Noeldner, Watertown Fire Rescue

This class is great for the first-time apparatus pump operator to the seasoned veteran. Introduces the operator to controls including the relief valve, electronic pressure control devices, friction loss calculations, water supply, relay pumping and fire flow. Hoses and nozzles are discussed to understand the correct line and nozzle selection for fireground operations.

After classroom discussion, students will conduct hands-on exercises that feature realistic fireground scenarios. Students will understand how to correct situations like hose rupture, kink, and water loss, and understand how the gauges can inform the operator of these situations.

Advanced pump operations expands on basic skills. Pump operators will adapt to the type of water supply they will most likely encounter in their jurisdiction. They will then be relay pumping to an attack pumper at the fire scene, using gauges to estimate the available fire flow and/or calculate the fire flow based on shuttle time and be able to deliver a constant fire flow.

PPE Required: None required. Only appropriate dress for weather.

**Lithium Ion Battery Fires:** Lieutenant Webster Marshall, Jackson Trail Fire Department

We will discuss what happens when lithium-ion batteries are exposed to or become involved in fire directly or indirectly. Our class proposes and demonstrates different suppression techniques for fire response mitigation. Finally, we will discuss remediation processes that can be implemented after a fire has been controlled.

Hands-on portion of the course consists of several live fire lithium-ion battery burns. During these burns we will send different battery types from EV cars, scooters/e-bikes and other small batteries into thermal runaway. The final component of the hands-on portion culminates in a decontamination demonstration to emphasize the necessity of reducing contamination early and often.

PPE Required: Full structure gear.

**Residential Search & Victim Removal:** Zach Wisenburger & Pat Kaffar, Pheasant Country FOOLS.

This class will focus on the important task of completing a primary search in a residence quickly and efficiently. Participants will have the opportunity to learn new, or refine already learned, techniques to set them up for a successful search. Orientated searches, split search and window-initiated VES scenarios will be covered. The class will stress the importance of early and thorough primary search. Participants then learn victim removal techniques that stress the importance of keeping the victim as low as possible in the room.

PPE Required: Full structure gear with SCBA and spare SCBA bottle. Bottles can be refilled at either Yankton fire station.

# ACTION PHOTOS NEEDED!

Please send them to

**jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com**  
along with information to explain the photo.



# Family injured in Lawrence County house fire Thursday night

By Spearfish  
Black Hills Pioneer

The home of Lucy and Kyle Conklin was lost in a Thursday night fire on Lower Redwater Road in rural Lawrence County.

According to the Lawrence County Sheriff's Office (LCSO), some of the family members inside the home were injured in the fire, as they evacuated the burning building. The extent and nature of those injuries is not being released at this time.

The Spearfish Fire Department was dispatched just before 11 p.m. to a fire that had started in an attached garage and spread to the house. By the time fire crews arrived, everyone in the house had gotten out. According to the sheriff's office, they did not immediately report their injuries to

firefighters.

The house and garage were "fully engulfed" in flames according to the sheriff's office. Spearfish Fire Department established incident command on-site and requested water tender support from neighboring fire departments.

Deadwood Fire sent a crew to assist, shuttling in 12,500 gallons of water. Deadwood firefighters were on scene for six hours. According to the sheriff's office, the fire was battled "through the night and into the following day."

Belle Fourche Fire Department, the Spearfish Ambulance Service, and Lawrence County Sheriff's deputies were also on the scene.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.



On July 3, the Deadwood Fire Department was requested by Spearfish Fire Department at 11:06pm for water tender support for a structure fire in rural Lawrence County. Deadwood Fire sent a crew of three with "The Hawk" to assist. Deadwood Fire shuttled around 12,500 gallons of water in support with crews on scene for about six hours. Assisting the Spearfish Fire Department in their efforts were: Deadwood Fire/Rescue; Belle Fourche Fire Department; Spearfish Ambulance Service; and Lawrence County Sheriff's Office. From the Deadwood Fire Department Facebook page.

## Supporting South Dakota's rural firefighters

By ADDISON DEHAVEN

A grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency will support and uplift South Dakota's firefighters — particularly the rural, volunteer workforce — with resources to assist them in meeting the physical demands of firefighting.

### WHO DO YOU CALL WHEN THERE'S A FIRE?

In larger cities, a full department of career firefighters are ready to respond to calls at a moment's notice. But for rural communities, volunteer firefighters — who also work as farmers and teachers and in other professions — answer the bell.

In the United States, roughly 65% of its 1.1 million firefighters are volunteers. In South Dakota, that number is even higher as 96% of all the state's firefighters are volunteers.

Volunteer firefighters are the backbone of many rural communities. They not only put out fires, but they assist during natural disasters, medical emergencies and other hazardous incidents. A research project from South Dakota State University's School of Health and Human Sciences is looking to support and uplift the state's firefighting workforce by providing resources and programming that ensures firefighters are

physically up to the challenges of firefighting.

Previous research has found that firefighters, particularly volunteer firefighters, face an increased risk of sudden cardiac death. This is due to the presence of multiple cardiovascular disease risk factors and low levels of physical fitness.

Allison Barry is an SDSU assistant professor who specializes in research related to improving cardiorespiratory fitness in tactical populations, like police officers, firefighters and other first responders.

As Barry notes, these professions are unique in that they require a certain base-level of physical fitness to do the job successfully.

In large fire departments, career firefighters have the resources needed to ensure their physical aptitude. Volunteer firefighters in rural communities often do not have that luxury.

"South Dakota is unique with its high percentage of volunteer firefighters," Barry said. "The vast difference in geographical access of the departments across the state leads to distinct barriers. We are working with departments across the state to create holistic and feasible programming."

Barry's project, backed by a \$600,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency, is currently focused on

better understanding the needs of South Dakota's many fire departments.

Alongside recent SDSU graduate Ashtyn Abraham, Barry conducted a survey on the perceptions of exercise, beliefs and behaviors of South Dakota's firefighters.

"We wanted to get a baseline understanding of the beliefs, behaviors and the demographics of career and volunteer firefighters within the state of South Dakota," Ashtyn said.

Ashtyn's sister, Ally, is also working with Barry on this project. This spring, she conducted a survey, specifically for fire departments, to understand the current infrastructure and health fitness resources they may or may not have available to them.

"We were looking to better understand the feasibility and barriers of health program initiatives," Ally said. "Do they have kitchen space? Do they have running water or electricity in their station? The resources available vary widely in South Dakota."

The Abraham sisters are particularly interested in Barry's project because their father is a volunteer firefighter in their hometown of Hazel, South Dakota.

"(Volunteer firefighters) volunteer out of the goodness of their hearts," Ashtyn said. "They want to help people, so we were curious how volunteer firefighters and their departments compare to the

career firefighters. We wanted to see what barriers there might be and how we could address them."

Barry and the research team have connected with many of the state's departments. The response, Barry said, has been fantastic, and they have received far more responses to their surveys than they initially anticipated.

"We have gotten great buy-in from fire departments across the state of South Dakota," Barry said.

Researchers on the project, set to begin its second year this summer, are analyzing the data from the surveys.

They will then use that information to conduct focus groups with fire departments around the state to get a clear view of the needs and resources available. In year three of the project, SDSU will partner with a few fire departments to pilot their wellness and nutrition programs.

Programming development will be led by Barry but will include input from other faculty and staff members in the College of Education and Human Sciences. Marni Shoemaker, assistant professor and a registered dietitian, will work on the nutrition initiatives alongside Megan Northrup, director for SDSU's accelerated graduate program in nutrition and dietetics. Seth Daughters, a former SDSU football player, a certified strength and conditioning coach, and instructor in the exer-

cise science program, will assist in developing the exercise training program. Jessica Meendering, director of the School of Health and Human Sciences, brings her expertise in community-based research to assist in data collection.

The resources and expertise will be housed in the newly formed "First Responder Support Training Center" and will include support for other tactical populations, like police officers and emergency medical services personnel, as well.

In the meantime, a few of the undergraduate researchers on the project — Ally and Ella Danner — have created a monthly newsletter, "Wellness on the Frontline," to promote health and wellness for first responders across the state. As Barry found during initial discussions, firefighters are very interested in learning about the research being conducted on their profession.

However, information on the research is often not readily available. The newsletter will serve as a communication tool to better inform firefighters and other first responders across the state.

"Growing up in a small town, so many of the people that we know are also volunteer firefighters. They all just want to help out because they have such a passion for their community," Ally said. "We want to be an advocate for them."





## Ladies only training day

Over the weekend of July 12 was the second “Ladies only” training day, with 12 attendees representing seven departments, some of which traveled across the state. From the Stone Face Fools Facebook post.



## Jackson County wildland fire

On June 30th, at 14:06, Interior Volunteer Fire Department responded to a reported wildland fire in a remote area in Central Jackson County, SD. The remote location, limited access along with predicted and actual weather conditions, hampered access by firefighters. Aircraft was called in to assist along with the Black Hats Hand Crew from South Dakota Wildland Fire. Thanks to the area ranchers that responded with their Utility Terrain Vehicle to assist shuttling firefighters into the fire. Firefighters continued to work the fire on July 1 to secure the containment lines. Thank you to all the responding agencies: Interior Volunteer Fire Department, Long Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Bureau of Indian Affairs: Fire Pine Ridge Agency, United States Forest Service: Wall Ranger District, South Dakota Wildland Fire, Pennington County 911 Dispatch, Great Plains Interagency Dispatch, area ranchers and neighbors. Submitted by Jerome Harvey, Administrator, Pennington County Fire Service.



# LPG TRUCK FIRE

By JERRY KNAPP

The LODD report for this routine truck fire stated that two of your members were burned severely over 85% of their bodies. They had all their gear on, lived for 2 days but succumbed to the internal and external burns. It was just a routine truck fire, a bottled water delivery truck at that. The funerals were massive.

The first in engine had some of your best firefighters on board and they made an aggressive attack on this fully involved truck. But look closely at the picture. Under the driver's door is a liquid propane tank. New name for it is auto gas. The propane relief valve activated just as the line was getting water. Look closer, the relief valve is in the liquid portion of the tank. Investigators are not sure if it was liquid propane that came out of the relief valve or just a gaseous

propane jet. Members were enveloped in fire for only a few seconds. It got under their coats and they inhaled superheated air. No, they did not have their facepieces on.

**TACTICAL REMINDERS:**

1) PROPANE TANKS: cool the tank to prevent it from exploding (BLEVE). When it does explode, expect a ground level fire ball will envelop the area. Tank fragments will fly far and near killing anyone in their path. Operating relief valves are not designed to prevent a BLEVE. If the relief valve is making a high pitch scream, take cover.

2) COMPRESSED NATURAL GAS (CNG) TANKS: DO NOT COOL THE TANK IF IT IS INVOLVED IN FIRE. Relief valves on CNG tanks are activated by heat; you want it to open. Cooling it, preventing it from opening may result in a tank explosion as described above.

Note: the tank is about 2' in diameter and 7' long. Note the exposed fittings and newly added head shield.

*Jerry Knapp is the Chief of the Rockland County, NY Hazmat Team, and is a 49 year veteran Firefighter/EMT with the West Haverstraw NY Fire Department. He served on the technical panel for the UL residential fire attack study. Knapp is the co-author of two books: House Fires and Tactical Response to Explosive Gas Emergencies published by Fire Engineering. He is the owner of Suburban Tactical Inc specializing in fire officer and firefighter training.*



## Custer VFD extrication training

On June 22, Custer Volunteer Fire Department did some extrication training with some of their neighboring fire departments. Crews were able to use extrication tools, the department's new air bags, stabilizing equipment, and most importantly work together as a team, helping each other out while also learning from each other. Thank you to Harlows Busing along with LJ's Recovery & Transport LLC for the donation of vehicles and your assistance in this training. From the Custer Volunteer Fire Department Facebook page.







## Hill City boat fire

On July 13, shortly before noon, the Hill City Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to a boat explosion and fire on Sheridan Lake. Hill City Volunteer Firefighters were assisted by the Pennington County Sheriff's Office Boat that was patrolling Sheridan Lake at the time of the incident. Firefighters entered the water and tied a rope to the burning boat. The Sheriff's office boat was then able to tow the burning boat back to the north marina, allowing land-based firefighters to extinguish the flames. There were no injuries reported. Agencies responding: Pennington County 911, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks and the Rapid City Fire Department Hazardous Materials Team. Photos courtesy of the Hill City Volunteer Fire Department.



## Interior, USDA Forest Service Expand Mental Health Support for Federal Wildland Firefighters and Dispatchers

Today, the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service announced federal wildland firefighters and dispatchers now have access to expanded mental health support through a network of licensed providers. As mandated by Congress, the new therapy service is designed to address the unique needs of those in emergency management positions.

Wildland firefighters and support staff work in dangerous, high-stress environments that can expose them to trauma and cumulative stress, increasing their risk of mental health chal-

lenges. The new service provides a network of licensed providers, who have expertise in addressing the mental health needs of emergency responders.

"Through the dedication and perseverance of our wildland firefighters and dispatchers, the Interior Department continues to protect communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources from the threat of wildfires," said Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum. "By providing essential tools to bolster their resilience, we are strengthening our wildland fire workforce so we can better defend against the growing threat of wildfires

across the United States."

"Firefighters and first responders put their lives on the line to protect us, our resources and our communities. We are so grateful for their service, and we are happy to provide them with more support if they need it," said U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke L. Rollins. "As we approach peak fire season, access to mental health services for our firefighters and first responders will now be easier and more convenient so we can continue to have the best wildland firefighting force in the world."

This service is just one of the resources available through the

Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program to support the mental and physical health of wildland fire personnel. Jointly led by the Agriculture and Interior departments, the program seeks to improve our understanding of the short- and long-term mental and physical health effects of working in wildland fire, and to position the departments to better address these health risks.

The new therapy service includes year-round access to confidential therapy sessions with licensed mental health professionals who understand the demands of emergency response

work. Providers will be available in every state. The service is offered to permanent, temporary, seasonal and year-round wildland firefighters and dispatchers with the USDA Forest Service and the Interior Department's Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The new service is part of a broader effort by the federal government to improve recruitment and retention across the wildland fire workforce and position the Nation to more effectively respond to wildfires and mitigate future risk.



# Pennington County and Governor Rhoden Recognize 52 years of Service

Jack Dustman, a lifelong resident of South Dakota and esteemed member of the New Underwood community, has dedicated over five decades of exemplary service in the fields of fire protection and emergency response.

Residing on the Dustman Ranch near Caputa, Mr. Dustman has faithfully served as a Volunteer Firefighter, Emergency Medical Technician, and President of the New Underwood Rural Fire Protection District.

His 52 years of unwavering commitment exemplify Pennington County's deeply rooted tradition of volunteerism in the fire service, in a state where 96.6% of fire personnel proudly serve in a volunteer capacity—second only

to Delaware.

Jack Dustman's legacy is one of selflessness, leadership, and steadfast dedication to the safety and well-being of his neighbors, reflecting the very best of South Dakota's civic spirit and rural resilience.

Following are a few highlights of Jack's career reflective of his outstanding community leadership:

- Under Jack's leadership, the New Underwood Ambulance Service was recognized as the South Dakota Emergency Medical Service of the Year in 2003;

- Jack served as the Chair of the Pennington County Fire Service Board, Assistant Fire Chief for New Underwood Volunteer

Fire Department and the Pennington County Fire Coordinator.

- He was instrumental in the design, development, and deployment of the Pennington County Fire Service communications network, serving as a model for the State of South Dakota;

- In 2021 Jack Dustman was recognized for his service with a Lifetime Achievement award by the Pennington County Fire Chief's Association.

- Pennington County Board of Commissioners declared Saturday, May 31, 2025 to be Jack Dustman Day in Pennington County.

- Governor Larry Rhoden, proclaimed Saturday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025 as Jack Dustman Day in South Dakota.

On the occasion of his retirement from active service, the community came together for a social gathering in his honor on Saturday, May 31, 2025, at the Rapid Valley Fire Station to celebrate his decades of sacrifice and commitment.



## Milbank training

Milbank firefighters training nights, keeping sharp with the fundamentals as well as learning new techniques needed with new equipment. Post on the Milbank Fire and Rescue Facebook page on July 1.

## Three grass fires in Watertown extinguished on I-29

Just after 2 p.m. Friday, June 20th, multiple units from Watertown Fire Rescue went to Interstate 29 because of a report of a large grass fire.

The WFR brought Brush 2, Brush 3 and Tender 1 to the scene where three separate fires were found within about a half mile of each other between mile markers 187 and 188, according to the release. The two Brush trucks were able to contain and

extinguish the fire, but required multiple refills from WFR's Tender truck that was on scene to supply water, the report said.

The units were on scene for about an hour and a half. WFR was assisted by the Codington County Sheriff's Department and the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

(Watertown Public Opinion, Watertown, June 25, 2025)

## Northwest District Fire School

Sunday, September 21, 2025

Registration: 8:00AM

Isabel Fire Department



### Class I: Propane Tree

Morning & Afternoon Sessions Available

Equipment Requirements: Students must have *full Structural PPE* (including hood) and SCBA in **GOOD & SERVICEABLE** condition that was NFPA compliant at manufacture date. If possible a spare SCBA cylinder should be brought as well.

Instructors: LFVD Deputy Chief Chad Baumgarten

### Class II: Hand Tool Vehicle Extrication

Morning & Afternoon Sessions Available

This class will cover techniques to be used when hydraulic extrication tools are not readily available. This class will benefit all attendees but focuses on the challenges faced by rural wildland fire departments when they are called to be first on scene in remote areas lacking current extrication tools and techniques.

NOTE: Protective Clothing Required -- Participants must furnish approved helmet, fire boots or leather safety toe boots, safety glasses, gloves, coveralls, or turnout gear for the hands-on portion of the class. **Must be 18 years of age and have suitable Rescue or Structural PPE.**

Instructor: Darrell Hartmann Retired Fire Chief Brookings FD

### Class III: Wildland Firefighting Tactics

Morning & Afternoon Sessions Available

This class will address different tactics available to firefighters when confronted with a fast moving wildland fire. Special focus will be given to alternative methods of controlling the fire. **The afternoon session will include a live fire hands on training scenario. Morning attendees are able to attend the live fire also.**

Instructor: Brent Dirk LFD Chief

### Class IV: Rural Electric Hands on Trailer

Morning & Afternoon Sessions Available

This class will provide hands on training in real life scenarios involving power lines, electrical power equipment and scenarios faced by the wildland firefighter in rural settings.

Instructor – Moreau-Grand Electric

**District Meeting: 12:00**

**School Fee: \$20.00 per Firefighter**

**Noon Meal: \$12.00 per Firefighter**

**Department Dues: \$100.00**

**Pre-Registration: Isabel Fire Department**

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## FIRE LEAVES RESIDENTS LOOKING FOR HOUSING

A fire on Tuesday evening left multiple residents of a Huron multiple-residence building seeking temporary housing.

The fire, reported at 7 p.m. at the intersection of Wisconsin Ave. SW and Sixth St., brought firefighters from the Huron Fire Department and Huron Volunteer Fire Department to the scene with two ladder trucks to contain the fire.

Apartment residents were assisted by Salvation Army and Red Cross to temporary housing at Dakota Inn. McDonald's of Huron provided the displaced with food.

*(Huron Daily Plainsman, Huron, June 27, 2025)*



## Minimal damage to Huron home due to quick response

On June 24 at approximately 7 p.m. the Huron Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire. Engine 2 and Engine 1 responded and confirmed a working fire. Engine 2 secured water supply and made a quick knock down of the fire that was mostly contained to the exterior of the building. Additional members made entry and completed a search of the building for any occupants. Volunteer members arrived throughout the call and were vital to boosting manpower. Car 1 arrived and assumed operational command of the incident with assistance from the Beadle County Emergency Management Director to handle accountability over the incident. Ladder 1 arrived and set up to check for extension in the eaves/attic area and complete exterior overhaul operations. Huron Ambulance service and Huron PD assisted as well. Thank you to Red Cross and Salvation Army for assisting with the occupants needs. Minimal damage was caused due to quick aggressive actions by fire department personnel.

## Edgemont home completely destroyed by fast-moving fire

A vacant Edgemont home that had been recently renovated and listed for sale was completely destroyed in less than an hour by a catastrophic fire on Tuesday, May 20th. The green, split-level home on C Street next to the Baptist Church was completely engulfed in flames when firefighters pulled up moments after receiving the call at approximately 8 a.m. Black smoke billowed out of the back of the structure, and flames were visible from second-floor classrooms at Edgemont School.

The fire briefly escaped the home itself, setting vegetation on fire behind the home as flames raced up the hill. Firefighters quickly

knocked down those flames before they were able to reach a nearby power pole. A live wire from that pole's transformer to the home was a source of caution for the fire crew, until Black Hills Energy arrived around 8:45 to turn off the power as the fire crew continued to mop up.

Despite the fire crew's aggressive efforts, the fire completely destroyed the home in about 50 minutes. Because the home was vacant, no one was injured. The cause of the fire is under investigation by the South Dakota State Fire Marshal.

*(Fall River County Herald, Edgemont, May 29, 2025; written by Linda Baird, staff writer.)*

### Badlands District Fire School

#### Kadoka Fire Department

September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

#### 1. LIVE FIRE TRAINING, 6-hour all day class, 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 the 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 and SCBA Required** (PPE must be in good & serviceable condition and must include a Nomex Hood, an extra cylinder is recommended).

Instructor: SD MLFTU Instructor Cadre

#### 2. TRAFFIC INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, 6-hour all day class

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

Instructor: Kenny Marks, Pierre Fire Dept.

#### 3. VEHICLE EXTRICATION, 6-hour all day class, 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: Zane Hamiel and Blake Nielsen, Winner Fire Dept.



# NVFC OSHA Task Force

The NVFC OSHA Task Force has been hard at work trying to help with an OSHA 1910.156 standard that would protect our nation's firefighters but do it in a way that is technically and economically feasible for all communities across the US. The NVFC also set up taskforce groups that looked at individual parts of the proposed standards and made suggestions on what may or may not work, especially for our volunteer departments. The efforts of all involved have been an extremely valuable resource for the NVFC, and nations fire service as a whole.

In June, members of the task force met with representatives from the International Association of Fire Chiefs including Billy Goldfeder and the International Association of Firefighters including General President Ed Kelly. Our meeting was very cordial and productive. We reviewed the record including prehearing comments, written comments, "in-person" comments and post hearing comments. We identified areas of concern and common threads throughout those comments. The main consensus from all in attendance was that the ERS, as written, is a one-size fits all document and needs some refinement and clarification. We were all in agreement that the majority of neither the volunteer or career departments were currently, or could, meet the rule without significant changes that were either economically or technically feasible. We collaborated for three days and were able to recommend some potential solutions:

1. We concluded that bulk of the safety concerns with significant risk could, and should, be addressed within a local Emergency Response Plan. The local ERP is key to identifying hazards and addressing solutions to keep responders safe. This approach removes the one-size fits all concerns echoed throughout the process.

2. We recommend shifting many of the responsibilities for compliance to the respective States and Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) and away from federal jurisdiction.

3. There was consensus to remove any reference to NFPA standards incorporated by reference (IBR) other than those that might be required by OSHA/Department of Labor such as the selection of turnout gear. We would also recommend that any reference to the life of serviceabil-

ity of an item, such as 10-year turnout-gear life, be removed and instead inspection language be used to identify when an item should be removed from service.

4. We have developed a proposed timeline for compliance for each section of the ERS that would account for time needed to stand up the solutions and the logistics required to implement it.

5. We concluded that it is essential that additional working groups be formed to develop resources to be co-branded by all organizations (IAFF, NVFC, IAFC), to assist local AHJ's in understanding and implement-

ing the ERS. These would include templates for Emergency Response Plans (ERP), Risk Management Plans, Pre-Incident Plans. This would also include developing training resources and webinars to educate the fire service. The key here is to assist local jurisdictions with the requirements of any rule instead of burdening them with it.

6. We discussed the recent personnel changes in both the OSHA Administration and the Department of Labor and how this may impact on the joint work we are doing.

7. Our NVFC working group

was grateful for the work of the NVFC Red Ribbon Panels and we used this information extensively during our discussions with the group. We agreed that the value of many of the suggestions of these groups would be instrumental in the building of compliance resources and the fewer details actually built into the rule itself the better. The majority of the recommendations belong in the hands of the local jurisdiction and states and not within federal oversight or details of the rule.

8. We believe all of our suggestions are supported by logi-

cal outgrowth of the process and supported by the record and process to date.

Moving forward, we anticipate additional meetings to discuss the next steps for this important and unprecedented process in aligning our organizations with the goal of improved responder safety. Overall, we feel good about the working relationships that we are developing with the partner organizations to be continued for the good of the fire service at large.

**DAVE DENNISTON,**  
NVFC Taskforce Chair



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## Hill City responds to structure fire call

On June 29, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire in the 12000 block Old Hill City Rd, unincorporated Pennington County South Dakota. First arriving volunteer firefighters discovered a free burning fire in a detached garage, extending into the roof assembly. Rapid attack by volunteer firefighters contained the fire to the structure of origin, stopping the spread of the flames to nearby structures, infrastructure and other improvements, holding the fire to a single alarm. Agencies responding: Pennington County 911, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Hill City Ambulance Service, Battle Creek Fire Department, and Pennington County Sheriff's Office. Photo courtesy of the Hill City Volunteer Fire Department.



## Sioux Falls quickly extinguishes kitchen fire

Sioux Falls Fire Rescue responded to a report of a structure fire in the early hours of Wednesday, July 9. According to authorities, the call came in at approximately 4:15 a.m. for a structure fire at the 1200 block of W 38th Street. Once on the scene, responders found smoke and fire coming from the backside of the home.

Fire crews quickly entered the home to search for residents and extinguish the fire, which was located in the kitchen. One crew put out the fire while others conducted a search to make sure no occupants were in the home. No occupants were inside, but crews found one dog, which was returned to the homeowner.

The fire was contained to the kitchen and back of the home, and was extinguished within 15 minutes. Crews remained on

scene for an additional 2 hours to complete ventilation and overhaul efforts. No injuries were reported.

Sioux Falls Fire Rescue responded with 5 fire trucks, 2 support vehicles, and 21 firefighters, and was supported by the Sioux Falls Police Department, MidAmerican, Xcel Energy, Metro Communications, and PCEMS.

The home did not have a sprinkler system. The fire is currently under investigation. Sioux Falls Fire Rescue would like to remind residents of the importance of working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, as well as establishing and practicing escape plans.

(KDLT-TV NBC 46, Sioux Falls, July, 10, 2025)



## Rapid City Fire Department Responds to Structure Fire

At approximately 4:30 p.m. on Monday, the Rapid City Fire Department responded to a structure fire in the 60 block of Saint Charles Street. A dark column of smoke was visible from a distance as crews made their way to the scene.

Upon arrival, firefighters quickly initiated an aggressive attack on the fire and were able to bring it under control in a short amount of time. During the response, crews encountered several hazards, including a downed power line, which required extra

caution while battling the blaze.

The fire involved both the main residence and a detached garage. Fortunately, no one was home at the time, and three animals were able to safely escape the structure. No injuries have been reported, and the cause of the fire remains under investigation. Units that responded to the scene include: Truck 1, Battalion 1, Engines 4 and 7, Medic Units 3 and 4, Squad 1, and Hazmat 6.

(KBHB-AM 810, Sturgis, July 8, 2025)

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## Huron called for mutual aid

Huron firefighters responded for a mutual aid request with Cavour and Iroquois on July 10. Units worked on scene to assist with fire suppression efforts. A small crew was able to make access to an adjacent building and secure a blocked fire rated door in difficult conditions preventing the fire from spreading to another building. This was a vital move in preventing additional loss. Glad we were able to help out our neighbors with a challenging call. Manpower and resources in situations like these is a must with our neighbors. From the Huron Fire Department Facebook page.



## 🏞️🌲 Hike Smart in Western South Dakota This Summer! 🧡👟

Western South Dakota is beautiful, but it can also be unpredictable. Whether you're heading to the Badlands, Wind Cave, Black Elk Peak, Spearfish Canyon, or anyplace in between, make safety your top priority.

Our response organizations are often stretched thin by responding to unprepared recreators who put themselves in bad situations because they did not follow basic safety measures. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

- ✅ **Plan Ahead:** Know your route and let someone know your plans.
- ✅ **Stay Hydrated:** Bring more water than you think you'll need.
- ✅ **Check the Weather:** Summer storms roll in fast. Don't get caught off guard.
- ✅ **Dress Smart:** Wear sturdy shoes, sun protection, and layers for changing temps.
- ✅ **Stay on Trail:** Protect nature and yourself by staying on known trails.
- ✅ **Cell Phones:** They need to be fully charged and on your person to be helpful. Some cell phones can call for help even without a cell signal.
- ✅ **Talking to 911:** If you call for help, follow the dispatcher's instructions and stay where you are until help arrives.

**Enjoy the beauty. Respect the wild. Be South Dakota ready.**



Murdo VFD responds to semi-trailer blaze

A semi-trailer carrying hazardous waste caught fire on Sunday, June 15, at mile marker 191 on Interstate 90. Murdo Volunteer Fire Department, Jones County Volunteer Ambulance, local law enforcement, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Department of Transportation and All Pro Towing were at the scene to assist. The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources was contacted and instructed emergency personnel and other responders that they would send assistance to pump off remaining hazardous waste. Photos from Murdo Volunteer Fire Department Facebook page.



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

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

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