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NOVEMBER 2025 • VOL. 18 - NO. 9

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



On Oct. 2, Pennington County 911, Battle Creek Fire, Keystone Ambulance, Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department, Pennington County Search and Rescue, United States Forest Service, SD Highway Patrol and the Pennington County Sheriff's Office responded to the south side of Hippie Hole for a carryout of a patient. Great teamwork from all agencies allowed this patient to be located and carried out to the awaiting ambulance quickly, allowing the patient to receive the medical care needed. Photo courtesy of the Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department.

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Fire reported in Meade County

Black Hawk Volunteer Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire in the 6000 block of Polk St, incorporated Summerset, Meade County, on Oct. 8. First arriving firefighters found a free-burning fire with a heavy smoke condition, issuing from the exterior of a single story, residential structure with fire extending into the interior of the structure to include the ceiling and roof assembly. Rapid attack by firefighters contained the fire to the structure of origin, stopping the spread of the flames to nearby structures, infrastructure and other improvements. The American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota, family and neighbors are assisting the residents. No injuries to civilians, or firefighters. Agencies responding: Pennington County 911, Meade County Dispatch, Summerset Police Department, Black Hawk Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hawk Fire Corp, Piedmont Fire and Ambulance Service, North Haines Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department, Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hills Energy, Montana Dakota Utilities, American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota and the South Dakota Fire Marshalls Office. Photo courtesy of the Black Hawk Volunteer Fire Department.

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From Dave Jorgenson for SE District-SDFA Districts

Attached is a QR code, please scan it and answer the questions pertaining to what do you expect out of your district fire schools. We are trying to understand the dynamics of low turnout. What are you wanting, looking for, that your district can provide for you, for a better learning opportunity.

Any district can also take the survey with your replies, all replies are hidden.

Thank You

From SE District Board

DISTRICT FIRE SCHOOL SURVEY!

We are doing a survey on what you are expecting from the Board for District Schools. We are asking for your input to make your District Schools the best experience and training that we can offer.

WE WANT YOUR
INPUT!



TAKE A MINUTE AND
TELL US WHAT YOU
WANT IN A DISTRICT
FIRE SCHOOL!

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

NOV. 21, 2025: 1st annual “Pistols and Pulaskis Blood Drive” hosted by SDWF, SD Highway Patrol and Vitalant inside the Rapid City Outdoor Campus from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Friendly blood donation competition. Call Vitalant at 877-258-4825 to schedule a time

DEC. 5-7, 2025: SD Fire Chief’s Conference, Deadwood, SD.

DEC. 14, 2025: Tactics on Tap, Watertown, SD.

JAN. 9-11, 2026: SD Fire Instructor’s Conference, Mitchell, SD.

FEB. 6-8, 2026: Les Lukert Conference, Kearney, NE.

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

APR. 25, 2026: Spring School, Volga, SD.

JUNE 11-13, 2026: 140th South Dakota State Firefighters Association State Fire School, Watertown, SD.

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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.

Vertical Crush: A Controlled Approach to the Door Pop

By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

One of the most common auto extrication tasks firefighters perform is a simple door pop. While the concept is straightforward, proper technique and tool placement often determine whether the evolution is smooth and efficient or a drawn-out struggle. There are multiple ways to pop a door, and every firefighter should know more than one so they can adapt to any scenario. This article focuses on one reliable option: the Vertical Crush.

After the initial size-up, the vehicle must be stabilized. Once that's complete, the firefighter evaluates the door and forms a plan of attack. Before placing any extrication tools into operation, both glass and airbags must be properly managed.

First let's discuss glass management. Sometimes the glass has already broken during the crash, which makes the job easy; simply remove any remaining shards from the window opening. If the window is still intact, more planning is required. First, determine whether the glass is laminated or tempered because the type of glass dictates your options for removal. Tempered glass will shatter into small, dull pieces. Using a spring-loaded window punch placed in the lower corner of the window will break it safely, allowing the remaining shards to be cleared away. Another option to use on tempered glass is to insert the adze end of a Halligan into the

gap between the door and the window, then twist side to side until the glass breaks. There are certainly other methods to take tempered glass, but one method to avoid is swinging any type of tool into the victim compartment like what is often done in the movies.

If the window is laminated, it contains an inner plastic layer that holds the shattered pieces together. This glass must be cut out rather than punched. Tools like the Glas-Master or power options such as a sawzall or impact drill with a Ripper Window Attachment can be used effectively. Regardless of the method, firefighters must remain mindful of patient location, blade placement, and any potential obstructions (such as deployed airbags) that could be struck during cutting.

With the glass managed, the next concern is the airbags, more specifically, undeployed airbags. If an airbag has already deployed, the cylinder has discharged and poses no additional hazard. However, if it remains undeployed, the charged inflator must be identified and avoided throughout the extrication. When setting up on a jammed door on the side with an undeployed roof airbag, it's critical that the top tip of the spreaders does not crush against the stored gas inflator. The good news is that, at least through the 2011 model year, most vehicles do not have inflators above the front door window openings. The bad news is that

many vehicles do have inflators mounted horizontally in the roof rail above the rear door openings. Performing a vertical crush in these areas could puncture a 4,000 psi inflator, creating a serious hazard.

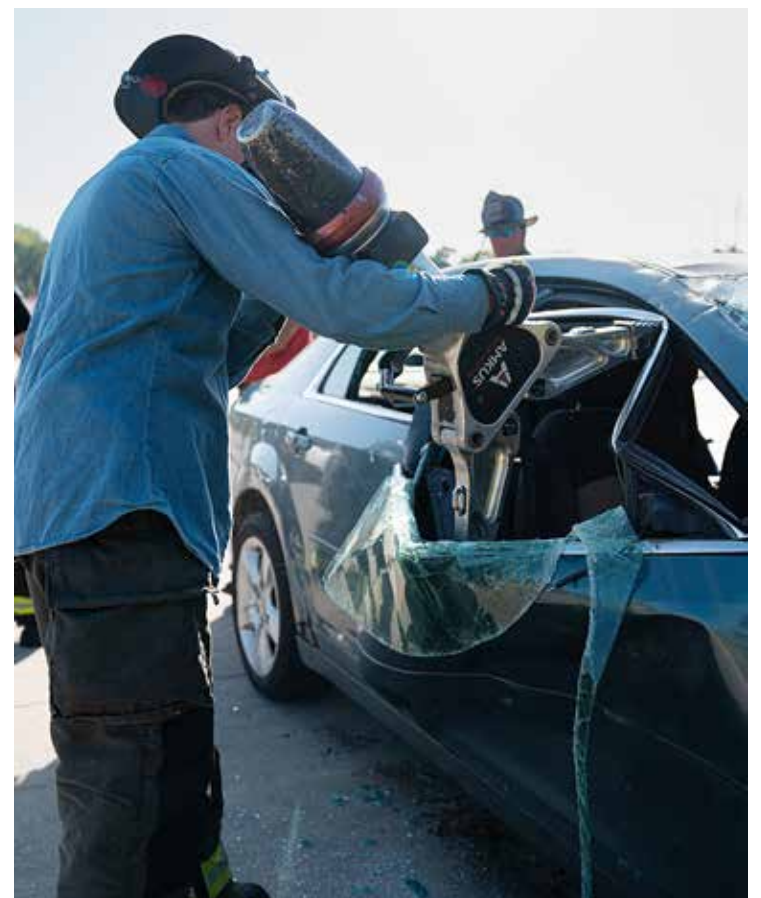
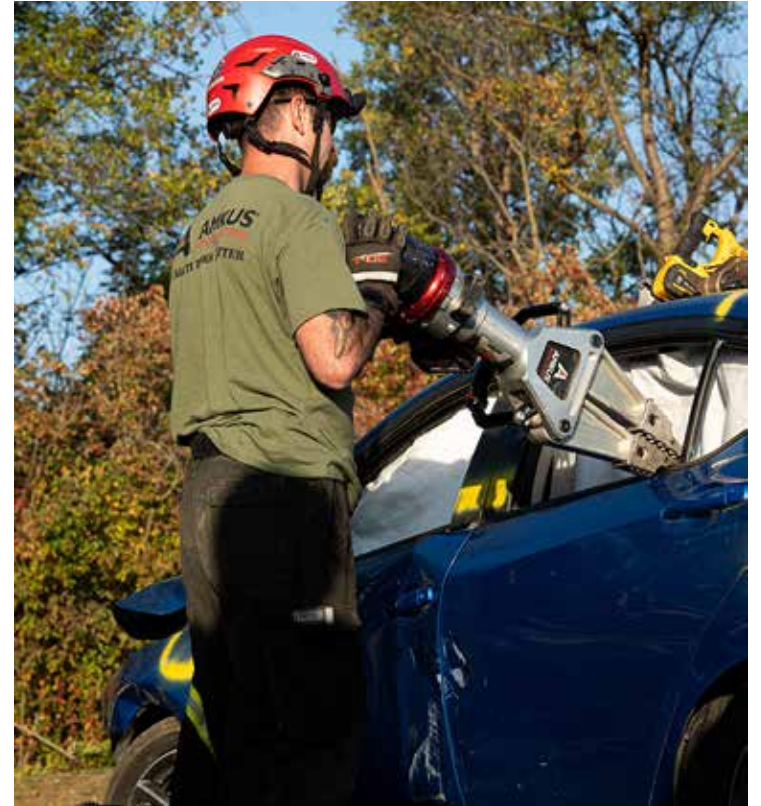
The solution is simple but essential: perform a "Peel and Peek." This means removing the plastic trim from the vehicle posts to expose hidden components before committing to tool placement. Common tools for this task include a small pry bar, large flathead screwdriver, or a FUBAR tool. None of these tools are specialty items and can be found at any hardware store if needed. Once exposed, the firefighter must perform a visual scan for inflators or airbag components. Some vehicles may not have airbag ID markings, so always assume airbags are present and stay out of deployment zones. This extra step highlights the importance of understanding how evolving vehicle design impacts our extrication tactics.

Once the glass and airbags are handled, it's time to begin attacking the door with the spreaders. The first step is to establish a purchase point. Sometimes crash damage has already created one, but if not, the firefighter will have to make one. This is where the Vertical Crush technique shines because it creates a large purchase point, while displacing the door away from the patient with very minimal entry of the tool into the patient compartment.

If attacking from the lock side, one of the most effective methods is the "Vertical Crush." Using spreaders set the tool on the window sill. I will cheat toward the side of the door I'm attacking to maximize the gap created. Open the spreaders until the upper tip contacts the top of the window, then continue opening to full spread or until the tool begins to slip. When done correctly the Vertical Crush creates a large gap near the Nader pin and spreads the door away from the patient while minimizing how far the tool intrudes into the passenger compartment.

A quick tip from my experience with Amkus tools: use the Gator Tips. These notched tips should be seated so the lower notch catches the window sill, and as you open the spreaders the top notch should engage the top of the window/roof rail. When positioned correctly the Gator Tips lock the tool in place and give you a reliable bite.

Remove the spreaders from the window opening and reposition the tips where they get the best contact between the door and the vertical post (the B-post or C-post, depending on which door you're working). If the initial purchase is small, your first spread may need to be on the window rail to open a larger gap near the Nader pin. Once that gap is created, close the tool, let it drop into the new position closer to the pin, then spread again. Re-



peat this cycle of spread, drop, re-position, until the Nader pin is defeated and the door swings free.

One thing to be cognizant of is skinning the door. If the tool begins peeling the outer skin, known as "skinning the door," open to maximum spread to clear the material, then reposition and try again. If this fails and the door pop becomes time-consuming, switch to cutters. If the Nader pin is visible, position the cutter blades directly over the Nader pin. If not, perform a blind cut where the door and jamb are tightest. The firefighter should not stop cutting as they hear the "pop" as that sound just means the high-strength steel has been severed, but lighter materials like sheet metal or wiring may still be attached. Continue the cut until all material is cleared and the door is fully released.

Once the door is popped, the scene will dictate the next move.

Assess whether the current space allows for patient removal or if full door removal is necessary. Remember, efficiency in door pops comes not from brute force but from precision, control, and awareness. By managing glass and airbags, creating solid purchase points, and working the tools deliberately, firefighters can achieve clean, effective access to their patients while keeping operations safe and disciplined. A video of this technique can be found online at Iowa Firefighter Training Article Archive: tinyurl.com/5676my9n

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 kleinwolverink@gmail.com with any questions, comments or inquiries.

SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

You know by now, I am a wealth of unusual information. This month my mind wandered to the idea of affirmation, or the idea of letting someone know you appreciate them. To be honest, affirmation is not a word we use often, but given that fact I looked it up with the help of “Uncle Google” which led me to the Cambridge Dictionary, which says an affirmation is support or approval. What led me down this path is that I was looking for a lead into another article, when this story caught my eye.

This story comes from Sherman Rogers, who has written a book about logging in the Pacific Northwest. (My guess this was back before logging was still a chainsaw activity). As a young man he worked in a logging camp, and on one occasion the boss needed to be away for a while and put Sherman in charge. “What exactly does that mean?”

Sherman wanted to know. “Can I fire people?” “Yes,” said the foreman, “And I know what you’re getting at. You’re going to fire Tony the first chance you get. I know he doesn’t get along with anybody. He’s nasty and he grumbles. But let me tell you something about Tony. He’s been with me eight years. He’s the first person to arrive on the job and the last to leave. Nobody has ever had an accident around Tony. His hill is always the safest one to work on.” On the first day of his new responsibilities, Sherman arrived at Tony’s hill and announced he had been put in charge. “I suppose that means you’re going to fire me,” said Tony. “Actually, I was,” said Sherman, “but the boss told me you’re the best workman we have. He said you’re the first to come and the last to leave, and there’s never been an accident around you.” Sherman

was startled to see tears begin to flow down Tony’s cheeks. “Why didn’t he tell me that eight years ago?” he cried. Twelve years later, Tony was the head of one of the largest logging companies in the area and he never failed to remind Sherman that it all began on the day he was told what the boss had said about him. We are all surrounded by people who have no sense of their importance or worth. Our touch, verbal or actual, may change a life.

We all have people in our crew, people we don’t quite appreciate it, until someone else reminds us of their value. But I wonder, what would happen if instead of complaining and blaming, we stopped to offer a word of support and appreciation.

What follows is my humble attempt to pass along a few words of affirmation to all of you who graciously volunteer your time, and trust that a word of thanks might be a little encouragement to keep on serving as only firefighters know how. Also, I ask for your indulgence, as most of the material I can find on firefighters is deciding masculine. (My apologies to all the excellent female firefighters)

When it comes to appreciation for what a firefighter is and does, I keep coming back to a statement made by an old New York Fire Chief, (back in 1908 if I remember right) he stated, “Firemen are going to get killed. When they join the department, they face that fact. When a man becomes a fireman his greatest act of bravery has been accomplished. What he does after that is all in the line of work.” While that is sobering, it is also a reminder that the job we do is not the run of the mill

FIVE PEOPLE DIED IN A SINGLE VEHICLE CRASH LATE WEDNESDAY EVENING, THREE MILES EAST OF SCENIC

Five people died in a single vehicle crash late Wednesday evening, Oct. 1, three miles east of Scenic, SD. The names of the persons involved were not released pending notification of family members. Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2004 Honda Pilot was traveling eastbound on SD Highway 44 near mile marker 90 and failed to negotiate a curve. The vehicle entered the north ditch and struck a barrier. The vehicle

then became engulfed in flames. The driver and four passengers died at the scene. The South Dakota Highway Patrol is investigating the crash. Responding agencies included: Pennington County 911, Pennington County Sheriff’s Office, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Rapid City Fire Department, Badlands National Park, Pennington County Search and Rescue, Black Hills Life-flight, and the Scenic Volunteer Fire Department.



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

“We all have people in our crew, people we don’t quite appreciate it, until someone else reminds us of their value. But I wonder, what would happen if instead of complaining and blaming, we stopped to offer a word of support and appreciation.”

everyday action. I also hope this will be one quote that you can use to remind yourself on those days when it seems that what we do is unappreciated. When you wonder why you do this, remember not everyone can do what we do, nor do they want to.

“You have to do something in your life that is honorable and not cowardly if you are to live in peace with yourself, and for the firefighter it is fire.” (Larry Brown)

“What is a firefighter? They are the person next door.... A person like you and me with warts and worries and unfulfilled dreams. Yet they stand taller than most of us. They are a firefighter.... A firefighter is at once the most fortunate and the least fortunate of all. They are someone who saves lives because they have seen too much death. They are gentle because they have seen the awesome power of violence out of control. They are responsive to a child’s laughter because their arms have held too many small bodies that will never laugh again.... They don’t preach the community of all people. They live it.” (Author Unknown). (In full disclosure, I rewrote this to honor both male and female firefighters)

“I’ve had tons of odd jobs, but I think that I would probably be a firefighter because you get to see the results of your job. You get there and there is a house on fire. You leave and there’s not a fire anymore.” (Luke Perry)

You might be a firefighter if you had to extricate someone by cutting the car doors off on one side and realized there was nothing wrong with the doors on the other side.” (Author Unknown)

One final thought when it comes to affirming what we do is this verse, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13)

In those days and hours when you wonder why do I answer the page at 3:00 AM? When you ask yourself: “Do, I really make a difference?” Do yourself a favor and look at these quotes and comments once again and remember you are appreciated and needed by your community. I would encourage you to look at that passage from the Gospel of John once again and remember you are not doing this for recognition, or glory. You don’t respond to be able to drive a truck in a parade, you are answering a call that comes from a much higher source, and in your service as a firefighter you are living out your call to love others as you love yourself. (Mark 12:31)

In this season of Giving Thanks, let me offer a word of thanks to each and every one of you who answer the call, who do the work no one else wants to do and who still maintain a little “twisted” sense of humor. I would also leave you with this reminder, don’t be afraid to give another firefighter a compliment, or thank them for a job well done. You see, we all can use a little “affirmation now and then.

Let me close this article with a blessing that has been around for over 4,000 years, “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24–26)

CHAPLAIN ROD

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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!

Thank You!

On behalf of the family of Nick Van Dam and the Murdo Fire Department, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the SD L.A.S.T. Team for their tremendous support and guidance in planning and organizing the memorial service after the tragic loss of Nick.

We are also deeply grateful to all the fire departments from across the state who came to pay tribute. Your presence at the service, the powerful tribute of lining the streets with your trucks, and the deep sense of brotherhood you showed meant more than words can express. It was a beautiful and moving display of respect and solidarity.

To everyone who sent memorials, flowers, cards, and kept us in their thoughts and prayers — thank you. Your kindness has brought comfort during an incredibly difficult time. We will never forget the outpouring of love and support.

With heartfelt appreciation,

**The Family of Nick Van Dam
& the Murdo Volunteer Fire Department**



DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

Eric Michael Tycz October 9, 1966 – September 25, 2025

Eric Michael Tycz, 58, of Tyndall, South Dakota, passed away unexpectedly on Thursday, September 25, 2025, just 14 days shy of his 59th birthday. Born October 9, 1966, in Tyndall, Eric made his life there and remained deeply rooted in the community he so dearly loved until the day of his passing.

Eric graduated from Bon Homme High School in 1985. He left a lasting impression not only on his classmates but also on faculty, upperclassmen, and underclassmen alike. Following high school, he attended the University of South Dakota, where he built many lifelong friendships and created cherished memories during his time there.

In 1986, Eric began working alongside his father at Sokota Batteries in Tyndall, where he remained until 1993. He treasured the opportunity to work with his dad and to connect with the many customers he came in contact with. In 1997, he opened Sportsmans Rendezvous in Tyndall, which quickly became a beloved gathering place. Running Sportsmans Rendezvous with his mom by his side was one of the highlights of his life. Together, they welcomed everyone with warmth, good food, and plenty of laughter. Eric's quick wit, his endless supply of jokes and magic tricks, and his ability to encourage and lift others up made him the heart of the establishment. If you knew him, you loved him.

In 2011, Eric began working at Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance as a crop adjuster. True to his nature, every job he chose centered around people. To meet Eric was to immediately gain a friend. He was known for his contagious smile, positive energy, and his ability to make anyone feel seen, valued, and cared for. Loyal, genuine, charismatic, and fun, he was a light to everyone around him.

Eric was active in many community organizations throughout his life. He participated in karate, Boy Scouts, Bon Homme Bass

Club, and served proudly with the Tyndall Fire Department for 35 years including a period of time as Assistant Chief, a role he was especially honored to hold. His decades of service reflected not only his commitment, but also his deep love for the community he called home. He also contributed to the 4-H Barbecue Committee, bowled, played slow-pitch softball, and completed the Reisch World Wide College of Auctioneering to become a licensed auctioneer. He treasured playing cards with his close group of friends, where laughter, camaraderie, and friendly competition filled many evenings. Eric also played in hundreds of tournaments with the Free Poker Network, including many national tournaments in Las Vegas. He went on to compete in World Series of Poker events and Mid-State Poker Tour tournaments, further fueling his passion and talent. He also loved to golf, and though health challenges in recent years put a damper on his game, his goal and hope was always to get back out on the course again.

Eric gave the best bear hugs, told the best stories, and never missed an opportunity to share laughter. He often said, "A Day without laughter is a day wasted," and he lived by that motto. His phenomenal memory, heart for people, and gift for conversation made him unforgettable. Eric was also known for giving people second chances, a reflection of the gracious, forgiving, and compassionate person he was. There will truly never be anyone like Eric.

He is survived by his uncle Art Winckler of Yankton, SD; aunts Dorothy Frank and Darlene Tycz, both of Tyndall; along with numerous cousins with whom he shared a sibling-like closeness and lifelong bond. He was preceded in death by his parents, Robert and Hilda Tycz; his grandparents, Charles Sr. and Anna Tycz, and Otto and Emma Winckler; and by a number of be-



loved aunts, uncles, and extended family members.

Visitation was held at St. Leo's Catholic Church on Tuesday, September 30, from 5:00–7:00 p.m., with a wake service to follow. Funeral services were held on Wednesday, October 1, at 10:30 a.m., at St. Leo's Catholic Church, with public burial immediately following. Honoring his years of service, Eric will take his final journey to St. Leo's Cemetery aboard the 1927 fire truck of the Elliott Hose Company No. 1, Tyndall Fire Department. A luncheon was held at the Tyndall Auditorium after the burial, and all were invited. There will also be a time for friends and family to share special stories and memories of Eric.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made directly to the Tyndall Fire Department, Bon Homme Bass Club, or Bon Homme Golf Course.

In addition, Eric's high school graduating class of 1985 is establishing the Eric M. Tycz Memorial Humanitarian Scholarship. Contributions to the scholarship may be made at Security Bank in Tyndall. This thoughtful gesture is a reflection of the kindness, selflessness, and humanitarian heart that Eric shared so freely with others.

Above all, Eric's laughter lives on in every life he touched, and may we honor him by living with the same joy and generosity of spirit that defined his life.

Rodney Peterson June 19, 1942 – September 26, 2025

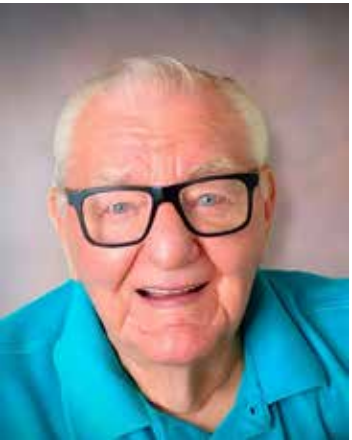
Rodney Dennis Peterson, 83, formerly of Viborg, passed away on Friday, September 26, at Center Point Medical Center in Independence, MO. Funeral services were held at the Community Center in Viborg, SD, on Friday, October 3. Arrangements provided by Hofmeister-Jones Funeral Home.

Rodney was born on June 19, 1942, in Viborg, South Dakota, to Arnold and Merna (Lineback) Peterson. After graduating from Irene High School, he owned and operated Rod's 66, a gas station in Viborg, for many years. Later, he devoted much of his life to supporting the agricultural community through his business, Rod's Feed and Seed, until he retired in 2013 following a stroke.

A true social butterfly, Rodney thrived in the company of family and friends. He was passionate about golf, softball, bowling, and dancing, and he particularly enjoyed a good game of pinochle.

Rodney's love story began one summer evening while playing softball when he noticed Helen riding her bicycle through Viborg. They married on January 2, 1971, at Bethany Lutheran Church in Viborg, SD. After settling in Viborg and calling it home, they built a life and family, becoming proud parents of five sons affectionately known as the "R" boys: Rex, Ryan, Ross, Reid, and Randy. In 2021, Rodney and Helen proudly celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary before she passed away later that year.

Rodney was deeply committed to serving his community, acting as chairman of the Viborg Pork Show and actively participating in the Viborg Volunteer Fire De-



partment for many years, along with other various community organizations, all while proudly embracing his Danish heritage. Known for his quick wit and sense of humor, he had a remarkable ability to make people laugh, often without even trying. Rodney spent the last 4 years residing in a retirement community in Lee's Summit, MO, near his son Rex.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Helen; his parents, Arnold and Merna; his sister, Donna Sundleaf; his son, Reid Alan; and his granddaughter, Lauren Kae.

He is lovingly remembered by his sons: Rex (Emily) and their children Lexy (Andrew), Karsen, Reid, Rylan, and Ava; Ryan (Mika) and their children Trystan, Aydan, and Kyla; Ross (Becky); and Randy and his children Taylor, Blake, and Ty. He is also survived by his great-grandsons, Abel and Benjamin Warner; his brother, Jerry (Lyla) Peterson; and many extended family members and friends who will cherish his memory.

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 _____ Submitter's Phone # _____

Department Name: _____ Total Number of Members: _____

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Pumpers _____ # Tankers _____ # Rescue _____ # Ambulance _____ Other: _____

Names in picture: (on separate form please)

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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



Charlie Kludt, President

"You may have seen the photos in the October newspaper of the supper hosted by the Pennington County Fire Services. What a display! Between Fairburn and PCFS, their events were the talk of the weekend. I think that speaks well of the people of our great state."

Conferences, Meetings and Opportunities

The past several weeks have had, and the next couple months will have several fire service related opportunities.

The Fall Fire Conference in Spearfish was held in October with our guest speakers Tom Merrill and Rodney Foster as the keynote speakers. As always, they were so appreciative of the South Dakota hospitality and friendliness of people everywhere they went.

Those were the same sentiments expressed by all the attendees at the NVFC Conference in September.

The Fairburn VFD, south of

Rapid City, was having their annual fundraiser. Several of the NVFC directors and spouses loaded up in cars and travelled down for the event. It was the perfect example of the volunteer fire service coming to the aid of another department. People helping people.

What was expressed by many and made it so enjoyable was that the Fairburn folks made them all feel like they were local friends and relatives. (I admit, I was back at the hotel welcoming other NVFC folks as they arrived. But I did send along some cash to put in the boot.)

You may have seen the photos in the October newspaper of the supper hosted by the Pennington County Fire Services. What a display! Between Fairburn and

PCFS, their events were the talk of the weekend.

I think that speaks well of the people of our great state.

The South Dakota Salutes Appreciation Event was held at Hunters Pointe near Humboldt. Volunteers helped SD Salutes with over 500 participants over the two day event. Go to the SD Salutes website to see lots of smiles in photos <https://www.sd-salutes.org/appreciation-shooting-competition/2025-shooting-event-photos>.

If you applied for a grant from the SD Salutes or Independent Insurance Agents of SD, you should be receiving your award notifications. Over \$75,000 dollars was awarded to fire and EMS agencies across the state by these organizations. Thank you for the continued support.

The SDFA will be looking to appoint a new NVFC Director this winter. Current South Dakota director Jeremy Walla of Whispering Pines VFD has retired from the fire service. Thank you Jeremy for your years of service to the Black Hills area.

Each state is allowed two Directors to serve on the NVFC Board of Directors. Currently, I serve as the other director. If

you are interested in becoming the NVFC representative, let your SDFA District Director know and feel free to contact me for more information. Likewise, checkout the NVFC website.

If you're not sure what the NVFC does for the volunteer fire service, the SDFA board voted to send an SDFA member to the conferences with the other directors. Each spring is in Washington DC. The Fall meetings are hosted by a state association at a location across the country.

Other fire service events coming up include the Fire Chiefs Conference (it is good for anyone) in December. SD Fire Instructors Society conference in January. Check the SDFA website for event registration and information as it comes available.

Fall has arrived. Thanksgiving will be here, soon. Please, take the time to express your appreciation to your family and those who are, or, have been an important part of your firefighting career.

Have a safe and Blessed Thanksgiving.

CHARLIE KLUDT
SDFA President

Greetings South Dakota Firefighters,

I am writing this just a day after the South Dakota Firefighters Association Fall Conference in Spearfish, South Dakota. What great speakers! Tom Merrill spoke about volunteer fire departments in that they are not "just a volunteer fire department" but a "professional fire department" and the things we can do to achieve that status. Things like how we present ourselves to the public to maintaining the trust of the community that we have. Rodney Foster gave a presentation on staging of equipment and some ways to possibly make staging a place where people and equipment don't go to just sit around.

We also held our memorial ser-

vice for those who have died in the line of duty in South Dakota. I feel every young/new firefighter needs to attend this service and hopefully they will gain a deeper respect for those that gave their lives protecting others. Next year we will be holding a ceremony in Pierre to place our most recent Line of Duty Death name on the memorial on the capitol grounds by Capitol Lake. The date for this will be published after conferring with the family of the firefighter. Chiefs Conference is once again in Deadwood on the weekend of December 5-7, 2025, remember everyone is welcome to this conference, you do not have to be a Chief. Instructors Conference will be January 9-11, 2026 in Mitchell. SD State Fire School will be June 11-13, 2026 in Wa-



Don Ward, Vice President

"Chiefs Conference is once again in Deadwood on the weekend of December 5-7, 2025, remember everyone is welcome to this conference, you do not have to be a Chief. Instructors Conference will be January 9-11, 2026 in Mitchell. SD State Fire School will be June 11-13, 2026 in Watertown at LATC."

tertown at LATC.

The SDFA Director from the Southeast district, Dave Jorgenson, is putting a survey together so that we can learn what you want for District Fire Schools. He was trying to get the information for taking this survey in this

edition of the paper. Please look for it and give us some feedback.

DON WARD
VP SDFA
605-645-2689

Happy Fall! A membership email went out October 11th to all department admins regarding updating department rosters. With this email was a list of the members we currently have on file for the department. We send this out so departments can log in and update information or email me the updated information so when invoices go out for the 2026 dues they are up to date with the number of rostered firefighters. Updating your roster with the most current information can be done through out the year and it is recommended so if for some unfortunate reason the insurance needs to be utilized we have all the members listed. The invoices will be generated in mid November to be emailed and sent by paper to the departments.

Along with this you will receive the additional AD&D information from Acrisure to up-

grade to a higher benefit for an additional cost to you. If your Department is a 100% paid department each firefighter on the roster already receives the \$10,000 AD&D. When the invoice is received you may login and pay online with a debit or credit card or you can mail a check to 514 Americas Way #23560, Box Elder Sd 57719. With all of this fun information please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email at sec@sdfirefighters.org or give me a call and we can make sure you are set up correctly in growthzone.

SAMARA ERICKSON
Secretary



Samara Erickson, Secretary

"If your Department is a 100% paid department each firefighter on the roster already receives the \$10,000 AD&D."

Beresford FF1 and FF2 classes

Beresford Fire Department will be hosting FF1 and FF2 classes starting in November. This is open to anyone that is a resident of South Dakota. Anyone that is interested please contact Eric Andal @ 605.351.3898 or email: andal29@hotmail.com

SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Greeting from SE South Dakota Spring School meeting was held in Volga, looks like the great class listings.

Volga will present the classes to the board by next month, we will work on getting the information out early January. Spring School will April 25th 2026 in Volga

Attended the fall conference in Spearfish, had great instruc-

tors, very informative, lots of eyes were opened. The SDFA board will ask these two instructors back for next years Fall Conference. We will have more information out next spring with the details. Lots of discussions during class and afterwards, lots of people talking, reminiscing, joking, seeing friends that don't see, only during fire schools and fall conference. Instructors were

sitting with us, we learned from them, they learned from us, we all felt like fire brothers and sisters have a reunion. You need to plan on attending next year.

There will another article in newspaper, asking to do a survey, using a QR code, the SE District Board is asking for input on what you are wanting, thinking, needing from the board, please do the survey, so we can



Dave Jorgenson, Southeast Director

"There will another article in newspaper, asking to do a survey, using a QR code, the SE District Board is asking for input on what you are wanting, thinking, needing from the board, please do the survey, so we can make our schools the best we can for our District."

make our schools the best we can for our District. Thanks, from

DAVE JORGENSEN
SESD director

Firefighters are firefighters. This is what fall conference speaker Rodney Foster said when he arrived on Friday. He was referring to the fact that we are all the same no matter where he goes. Conversations are the same, concerns and problems are similar regardless of the town he is in. Talking to speakers from other parts of the country is an added benefit to attending a conference. The stories, comradery and laughs were in high gear this past weekend in Spearfish as we welcomed Rodney Foster from Oklahoma and Tom Merrill from the Buffalo, New York area. These two high energy speakers kept the crowd engaged both on

stage and off. So, what can you learn from speakers from outside your area? Plenty. Listening to the speaker's presentation is only a small part of a conference. The ability to sit down and tell stories and learn what other areas are doing is priceless. Everyone across the country is having the same issues with training, engaging the younger generation and shortage of manpower. We are not alone. Some have solutions, others have ideas that may work in your department. If you are not taking advantage of a fire conference you are missing out. As we head into winter conference season, I encourage you to get registered to improve yourself and

your department, step out of your comfort zone, meet new people. It's a great brotherhood out there. Embrace it. You can keep up to date on the latest conferences by going to the SDFA website and clicking on events. Here is a list as of now: SD Fire Chief's Conference, December 5-7 in Deadwood. Tactics on Tap, December 14th in Watertown. SD Fire Instructor's Conference, January 9-11 in Mitchell (anyone can attend this event). Les Lukert February 6-8 in Kearney, Nebraska. Rushmore Conference, April 24-26 in Rapid City. I am also hearing of a new conference being put together in Huron so check back on that exciting news. Depending



Rick George, Central District Director

"The stories, comradery and laughs were in high gear this past weekend in Spearfish as we welcomed Rodney Foster from Oklahoma and Tom Merrill from the Buffalo, New York area. These two high energy speakers kept the crowd engaged both on stage and off. So, what can you learn from speakers from outside your area? Plenty. Listening to the speaker's presentation is only a small part of a conference."

on where you live, there are also state fire schools in North Dakota and Iowa that have impressive line ups. So, get signed up. Step up your game. If you are going to be a firefighter, you might as well

be the best one you can be. See you on the training ground.

RICK GEORGE,
Central District Director

Thoughts From The Tailboard

The next season is happening right now. In South Dakota there are five seasons. Winter, summer, spring, fall and hunting season. The weather a couple of weeks ago was just beautiful, warm and sunny, nearly perfect for early fall. Today, as I finish this article, it is pretty cool, damp, and cloudy. Went from shorts and T-shirt to jeans and sweatshirt in one day. Oh well, we'll adapt.

The SD Firefighters Fall Conference wrapped up last weekend in Spearfish. If you were unable to attend you missed two particularly good classes and the annual Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service. Of course, there is always good discussion with fellow firefighters on how to solve everything. Sometimes the most valuable lessons are when sitting around a table, enjoying any beverage and just shooting the bull. Rodney Foster did a great class on staging fire apparatus for any incident on Saturday morning. We have all been there, that multi-mutual aid fire where sometimes you seem to have more resources than you know what to do with. Rodney from Stillwater, OK, had some great pointers on how to keep those resources ready, and what you as a staging officer can do.

On Sunday morning Tom Merrill, who hails from New York state, presented *The Professional Volunteer Fire Department*. Tom

explained that in his town of approximately 130,000 residents, there are ten volunteer fire departments. That would be like Mitchell, Aberdeen, or Pierre having 130,000 residents and ten fire departments serving that town. That can be hard for us to understand. Tom's message was that we all need to look at how the public, the citizens we serve, look at our fire departments. Do they see "professionals" or a bunch of firefighters who say, "what do you expect, we're just volunteers." Tom's book is a great read and has more thoughts and ideas than you can believe.

In addition to two great classes, the SDFA Board continued planning for State Fire School in Watertown in June. Classes were outlined, instructors determined, and it looks like another great lineup. They also started working on the Fall Conference for 2026. Stay tuned it will be a busy year. In Spearfish, we also held the annual Memorial Service for those South Dakota Firefighters who have died in the line of duty. Fire Chaplain Rod had a great message for all of us. As I placed a rose for the name that was called and the bell rang, I thought about that firefighter. I tried to remember what happened? Sometimes I knew, sometimes I didn't. How is the firefighter's family? Sadly, I didn't know. I wondered where are the department members whose name was called? Guess I couldn't answer that one. But Tom Merrill said as long as you say their name out loud they are

not forgotten. In that case, WE remember all of them. Rest easy my fellow firefighter. I will remember you.

With that I will close for this month. Wishing everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and remember to thank those who are so important in your life. Take care.

DENNY GORTON



Denny Gorton,
Retired Treasurer/Past President

"Tom's message was that we all need to look at how the public, the citizens we serve, look at our fire departments. Do they see "professionals" or a bunch of firefighters who say, "what do you expect, we're just volunteers"."

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**ACTION PHOTOS
NEEDED!**

Please send them to

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



Training is everything

By CHIEF MILLER,
Huron Fire Department

Training is everything, it directly effects your department in so many ways. In this article I will identify 4 key areas I feel are vital to the fire service and how training affects them. Training should be the foundation of your department and your foundation holds the weight of everything built upon it.

Train- to teach a person a particular skill or type of behavior through practice and instruction over time

TRAINING EXPOSES YOUR PROBLEMS.

When you first start in the fire service you begin with training, this comes in the form of basic knowledge and skills. Obviously, we are new and must be taught. It shouldn't be to anyone's surprise when you can't perform a skill or answer the question for why we are doing what we are doing. This will change as we train our firefighter's, expecting them to be capable of performing the required skills after they have been properly trained. This is the same for our knowledge. Some training is done in the classroom some is done on the training ground. As we move further into our training over time we must evaluate. How do you plan to evaluate yourself or your department? Set standards and expectations, this is what we will measure things against as we evaluate where we are at through training. Failure is ok in the right setting, when we do fail we know it is an area of weakness that requires attention. This is a good thing, set your ego aside and own your mistakes or short comings. Let others learn from it. Don't let your problems be exposed on the actual fire ground when the stakes at their highest. People that operate at the highest levels will want to know where they need to improve. Often times we can let our ego get in the way at training for fear of exposure.

TRAINING IS THE DIFFERENCE MAKER WHEN YOU OPERATE ON THE FIRE GROUND.

It's clear in sports when you see a team operating smoothly and everyone knows their responsibilities as well as how to handle them. A group that has spent countless hours training works like a well-oiled machine. If you struggle on the fireground it is a direct reflection of how much time and effort was put into your training. The crawl, walk, run process is often necessary when learning something new. We should not be crawling on the fireground. There are reasons we set the standards and have things like probationary periods. It is our responsibility to train our people to be ready to run. If you want your scene to operate efficiently you must set standards and expectations for your training. Expect people to show up to training with a positive attitude and give genuine effort. Expect people to perform the planned training and repeat the skills multiple times to become proficient. Expect people to do the hard stuff. If you don't expect this stuff in training don't expect it on the fireground. However, when that is the expectation you should be confident knowing what you will receive when the call come.

TRAINING IS HOW WE GAIN EXPERIENCE, ESPECIALLY IN SMALLER/SLOWER DEPARTMENTS.

Have you ever met the guy that's only been on 3-5 years but just seems to be confident and knowledgeable about everything he does, what about the guy that's been on for 20 years but only has 5 years real of experience? You can't control the calls, they happen as they happen and you're not going to make it to all of them. So how else do we get experience, train! There are so many options nowadays for gaining experience. Books, podcasts, YouTube, conferences or just getting out in the bay on your down time to work on something. There is no excuse for lack

of experience, you have so much control over this. Find a senior guy that will invest time into you or be that guy. The fire service changes regularly and will continue to do so. Who would have thought about the dangers of lithium ion batteries 20 years ago? Who sits down and reads the UL studies on different tactics or equipment studies? This is free experience we can gain through knowledge from people that already put in the crazy amount of hours to study the details. Find a department that operates differently from you and ask why, take the experience they have from something they do regularly and study them. Those departments that seem to fight fire every day, research them. Those guys out west that vertical vent on almost every fire, find out why and how they do it. The guys that perform VES and make grabs regularly ask yourself what drives their decision making. The experience to be gained through training is out there it's up to you to go after it.

TRAINING WILL SHIFT YOUR CULTURE.

Are you training the mindset of your department? Don't just set the expectation of performance on the fireground. Set the expectation of mindset. Are you expecting positive engaged active people? The overall vibe during training or the mindset of how often and to what level we train to is key to having a proactive culture. What we allow during training or don't allow will set the tone for the culture of your department. How much time is spent talking about anything but fire service related things in comparison to how much we talk about the things that directly relate to the job. When we take training seriously it shows we are dedicated to being better at what we do and have the desire to perform at the highest level. Push the concept to develop mastery in the fire service. Don't settle for mediocrity or reward it. Encourage learning, growth, development. Don't hold someone back when they want to



Chief John Miller

try something new or improve on something they aren't good at. Build the culture that encourages other when they are putting in extra effort to get better. Don't hand out participation trophies to those that just show up. If you want an aggressive fireground culture that looks to "win" at every task then drive that mindset in training. Change the thought process, not can we do it but how fast and well can we do it. Not did we get that accomplished but how thorough were we. How can I be better? Change the training to change the culture.

CHIEF JOHN MILLER BIO

Chief John Miller took over as the chief for Huron Fire Department in June 2025.

Married to my wife for 20 years and have 2 sons and a

daughter. From Raleigh NC. Began my fire career in 2005 in academy with the Cary Fire Department. Served a large portion of my career on a rescue truck specializing in technical rescue operations holding numerous certifications in rescue fields. Certified fire officer, instructor level 1 and 2. Part of my department's swift water rescue team certified as an advanced boat operator. Member of the honor guard. Chief of training for Mutual Aid International, non-profit organization teaching, equipping and sharing the gospel to firefighters in the country of Guatemala. Served three years in law enforcement before returning to the fire service. Enjoy spending time with my family and coaching track and field at James Valley Christian school.

Deadline Extended! Submit Your Presentation Proposal for the 2026 NVFC Training Summit by November 2

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) has extended the deadline for [submitting presentation proposals](#) for the 2026 NVFC Training Summit. Qualified instructors and speakers now have until November 2 to submit their proposals for presentations that educate first responders about critical issues in the fire and emergency services. The extension will provide extra time for those who need it due to the government shutdown.

The NVFC Training Summit will take place June 26-27, 2026, in Arlington, VA. This annual conference provides an opportunity to share ideas and best practices, network, and participate in training regarding key topics in

the fire and emergency services.

Breakout sessions will be offered in three tracks: responder health, safety, and training; volunteer recruitment and retention; and emergency service leadership. Sessions will be 90 minutes in length. Examples of relevant presentation topics include but are not limited to: effective training; fireground/response; physical health; behavioral health; fire and life safety education; working intergenerationally; department culture; mentorship; family engagement; work/life/volunteer balance; recruitment; communication; management; long-term planning; data for the fire service; technology/AI for fire departments; and finding funding

and resources.

The NVFC values the different experience and perspectives of first responders nationwide. Find out more about the call for presentations, including more topic examples and how to write a successful proposal, in the [Call for Presentations Guide](#).

Proposals must be submitted by November 2, 2025. A peer review team will evaluate all presentation proposals. Selections will be made based on quality, relevance, focus, practical application, and the presenter's experience and credentials. Selected presenters will be notified by early December. Find out more and submit your proposal [here](#).

The NVFC will cover travel

expenses and provide a stipend for selected presenters. Teaching teams are welcome to apply, but only one instructor per course can receive travel reimbursement/stipend. Please note, while organizations and companies are welcome to apply to share their subject matter expertise, all courses must be educational in nature.

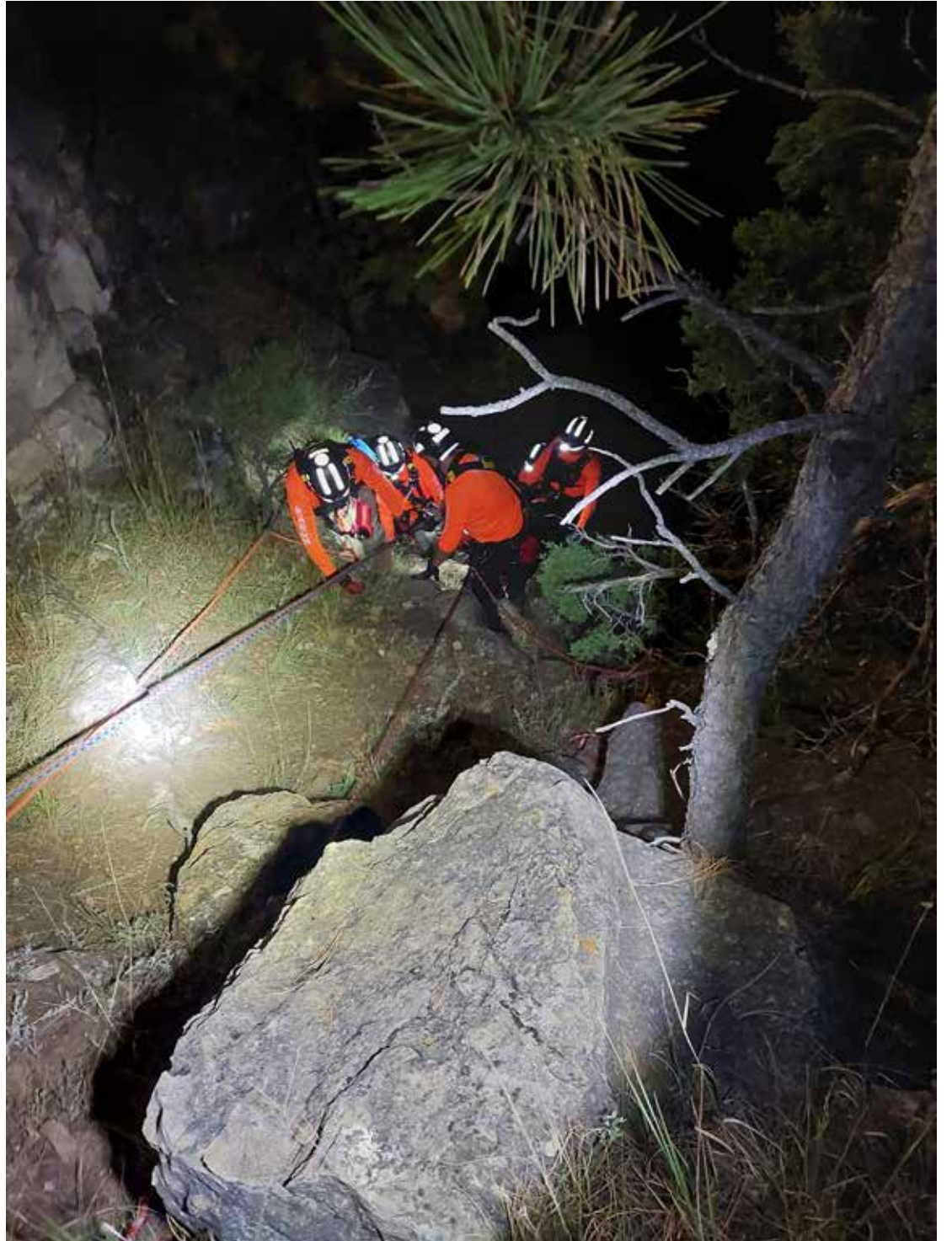
Learn more about the NVFC Training Summit at www.nvfc.org/summit. Read about the 2025 Training Summit [here](#). Questions? Contact Amanda Tegmeyer, Training Coordinator, at 202-887-5700 or amanda@nvfc.org.

ABOUT THE NVFC

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire and emergency medical services. The NVFC unites and supports volunteer and combination fire and EMS organizations through education, advocacy, leadership development, and collaboration. Guided by professionalism and innovation, we provide the tools and resources needed to protect communities, advance responder health and safety, and prepare leaders for the future. Learn more and join at www.nvfc.org.

Pennington County crews called to fall

On September 30, at approximately 11:57 p.m., Pennington County Deputies were dispatched to the area of Falling Rock for the report of a female who had fallen off a cliff. When Deputies arrived at the Falling Rock area, they located three females at the top of a cliff. 19-year-old Ava Christensen of Rapid City was identified as the person who had fallen from the cliff. With the assistance of Pennington County Search and Rescue, the Rapid City Fire Department and the Johnson Siding Volunteer Fire Department, Ava's body was located at the bottom of the cliff. She was deceased. This death is being investigated as an accident. Witness statements and evidence on scene indicate Ava lost her balance and accidentally fell off the cliff. Alcohol was present and is believed to be a factor. Several resources responded to this incident including: the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Pennington County Search and Rescue, Rapid City Fire Department, Johnson Siding Volunteer Fire Department, and Black Hills Life Flight. Photos courtesy of the Johnson Siding Volunteer Fire Department.



Fire engulfs Watertown barn

Watertown Fire Rescue responded to a barn fire on Monday.

At approximately 12:45 p.m., Sept. 29, Watertown Fire Rescue responded to a barn fire at 17359 464th Ave.

A large smoke column was visible from miles away, according to WFR, and mutual aid was requested from Castlewood and Goodwin Fire Departments.

The barn was fully engulfed on arrival, WFR reported, and had already collapsed. Two nearby homes and a shop were threatened, along with potential spread into a nearby shelterbelt, but firefighters were able to protect all exposures, the release stated. Both homes had some melted siding, and the shop had minor damage, but no fire spread inside.

Battalion 1, Engine 1 and Tender 1 responded. After those trucks were on the scene, firefighters called in Brush 1 and

Medic 4. Codington County Deputies and South Dakota Highway Patrol were on scene assisting with traffic control. Northwestern Energy was assisting with utilities.

The barn and its contents were a total loss, including vehicles and equipment, WFR reported. No injuries were reported. Roughly 20,000 gallons of water were shuttled to the scene. Castlewood and Goodwin Fire Departments assisted in shuttling water and suppression. A neighbor also helped with askid steer and grapple hooks to remove heavy debris so crews could reach hidden hot spots, according to WFR.

Goodwin Fire Department, Castlewood Fire Department, and Brian Zaig of BZ Welding assisted.

(Watertown Public Opinion, Watertown, SD, Oct. 2, 2025)





Pennington County crews participate in training

In an open field on the east side of Box Elder, firefighters, police officers, and EMTs from throughout Pennington County gathered Saturday morning, Oct. 4, to do a simulation training to prepare them for a real-life scenario of a car accident. "You got people out here screaming, looking for a lost child. We got some of them that are acting like they're literally you know taking their last breath. Some of them are walking wounded. So, we got a variety of patients, and it's as real as it's going to get," Rockerville Volunteer Fire Chief Gail Schmidt said. The volunteers who played roles as patients were involved with two cars colliding together and a school bus with kids that ended up rolling over because of trying to avoid the two-car collision. The training showed the victims in minor and major conditions. Some even ended up dead or missing. This training happens every two years to prepare firefighters and first responders for extreme incidents. Photos courtesy of Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department.



NVFC Board of Directors Holds Fall Conference in Rapid City

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Board of Directors held its annual Fall Conference in Rapid City, SD, on September 22-24, 2025. The board is comprised of up to two directors from 48 state associations and meets as a whole twice a year to conduct Council business and discuss matters of importance to the volunteer fire and emergency services. Among those in attendance were 60 directors from 39 states, including SDFA Board members and hosts, Charlie Kludt, Don Ward, Cherise Evens, Dave Jorgenson, and Denny Gorton.

The SDFA hosted a welcome social for the 142 conference attendees.

SDFA Auxiliary members Holly Bauer, Courtney Walker, and Dawn Kludt provided host activities throughout the conference for the 38 spouses that attended the conference.

During the conference, the board discussed the status of the proposed OSHA Emergency Response Standard and next steps, as well as approved the framework of the organization's five-year strategic plan. The board also received updates on NVFC projects, partnerships, and initiatives and reviewed proposed changes to the organization's by-laws. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recognized the NVFC as a National Firefighter Registry cham-

pion for the Council's partnership and support of the Registry.

Several committees met to tackle critical issues impacting the NVFC and the nation's volunteer fire and emergency services, including health, safety, and training; recruitment and retention; legislative; standards and codes; wildland; and more. In addition, the EMS/Rescue Section held its biannual meeting.

Along with the business side of the meeting, the board enjoyed a welcome social hosted by the South Dakota Firefighters Association (SDFA); the Chair's Lunch cosponsored by Clarion Fire Group and Wendell's Mint; a dinner hosted by SDFA and Pennington County Fire Services; a network-

ing breakfast sponsored by FirstNet, Built with AT&T; a networking lunch sponsored by OnStar; continental breakfasts sponsored by Tesla, NFPA, and Provident; and breaks sponsored by Columbia Southern University and the Anheuser-Busch Foundation. An auction, sponsored by ESIP, raised over \$4,800 for the NVFC's Health and Safety Fund. There was also a rehab unit demonstration from the South Dakota Auxiliary.

The NVFC appreciates the support and hospitality of our hosts, the South Dakota Firefighters Association and Pennington County Fire Services. Thank you to our conference sponsors: Anheuser-Busch Foundation; Clarion Fire and Rescue Group;

Columbia Southern University; ESIP; FirstNet, Built with AT&T; National Fire Protection Association; National HeroPlus Program; OnStar; Provident; Tesla; and Wendell's Mint.

The NVFC's Spring Conference will be held on May 15-17 in Alexandria, VA.

The 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 about the NVFC and join at www.nvfc.org.



Crews called to "Gertie Fire" near Hill City

Hill City Volunteer Fire Department responded to a reported wildland fire in the Gertie Road area, approximately one mile southwest of the city limits of Hill City, Un-incorporated Pennington County, South Dakota. First arriving firefighters observed an active fire burning in cured grass and timber and immediately attacked the fire. As of 3 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 1, the fire named the "Gertie Fire" was contained at 18 acres. Firefighters remained on the fire Oct. 2, conducting mop-up and holding operations. The fire remains under the jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service/Black Hills National Forest. No injuries to firefighters, civilians, domestic animals or livestock was reported. Agencies responding: Pennington County 911, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Hill City Ambulance Service, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, South Dakota Wildland Fire, Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department, Johnson Siding Volunteer Fire Department, Battle Creek Fire Department, and the United States Forest Service/Black Hills National Forest. Photo credit: Hill City Volunteer Fire Department.

Pistols and Pulaskis Blood Drive" Set for November 21 in Rapid City

South Dakota Wildland Fire (SDWF) and South Dakota Highway Patrol (SDHP) are joining forces with Vitalant for the first annual "Pistols and Pulaskis Blood Drive" on Friday, November 21 in Rapid City.

This friendly competition invites community members to donate blood and cast their vote for either SDWF or SDHP. The agency with the most donations earns bragging rights for the year.

The event runs from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. inside the Rapid City

Outdoor Campus building, located at 4130 Adventure Trail. Blood donations typically decline during the winter months, making this an ideal time to give.

Appointments are encouraged due to limited availability. To schedule your donation, visit <https://bit.ly/pistolsandpulaskisblooddrive> or call Vitalant at 877-258-4825 to schedule for the Pistols and Pulaskis Blood Drive by phone.

SDWF and SDHP are both agencies of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



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 to place your personal or departmental ads.

FOR SALE: 1949 Ford F-7 fire truck. Flathead engine, 6889 miles. Runs and drives, may need brake work. Some fixtures will stay with the truck. Been indoors majority of its life. Accepting sealed bids until 31 Dec. Truck will need to be paid in full prior to transfer. Send bids to Milford VFD, 612 1st St, PO Box 81, Milford, NE 68405. For questions or additional photos send email to milfordfirerescue@gmail.com



FOR SALE: 1998 Spartan Gladiator 8-man RD Murray/LTI 105' Aerial, 2,000 pump, loaded with options. Chief Dan Roghair 712-395-2824



What's an inch tall and can move a fire truck?

A classified ad in the South Dakota Firefighter!

Email jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com to get your truck moving fast!

PISTOLS AND PULASKIS BLOOD DRIVE

WHAT: FRIENDLY BLOOD DONATION COMPETITION BETWEEN SD HIGHWAY PATROL AND SD WILDLAND FIRE

**FRIDAY NOVEMBER 21
10 A.M. TO 2:30 P.M.
(INSIDE) RAPID CITY OUTDOOR CAMPUS**

HOW IT WORKS: COMMUNITY MEMBERS DONATE BLOOD AND CHOOSE TO SUPPORT EITHER SDWF OR SDHP

3 ways to schedule a donation time:
Link: <https://bit.ly/pistolsandpulaskisblooddrive>

QR Code

↓ ↓ ↓
**Call Vitalant at
877-258-4825**

Firefighters Draw Praise, Appreciation At Open House

On a picture-perfect evening Wednesday, the Yankton Volunteer Fire Department (YFD) hosted its annual open house that coincides with National Fire Prevention Week.

The sun was shining, the hoses were flowing and the sound of kids laughing and exclaiming, "Wow!" at the big vehicles was enough to call the evening a success.

Because of the weather, the YFD had its hands full with a huge crowd throughout the entire 2 ½-hour event.

Marie Windle, with her daughter Rosie and son David Lee and her father Robert Vick-

ers used the event as curriculum for her homeschooling.

"It was a learning experience, and I'm a homeschooling mom," Windle said. "We needed to come out and check it all out. They love all the little toys they give out and these (plastic firefighter) hats. Most importantly, we wanted to thank (the firefighters) for their services."

That was a common theme throughout the evening.

Of all the people interviewed by the Press & Dakotan, only one had ever needed the YFD's services, but they all showed gratitude for the fire department.

Skylar Schurman was in at-

tendance with his wife Paige and their son Samuel. Schurman is the one who had utilized the services in the past.

"(Samuel's) a 3-year-old, so obviously, fire trucks and stuff are what he's into," Schurman said.

"It's good education. When he gets a little older, we'll be able to really explain how it all works. I'm actually learning some things myself."

"There's always something to learn. We forget stuff as we get older. We have been reminded to check the batteries in the smoke detector, carbon monoxide, all of that. Before I bought our house, I lived in an apartment, and my neighbor had let something burn, and I called (the YFD), and their response time was very quick. They're awesome. You can't go wrong with these guys and gals. Most of them volunteer to save your house from burning to the ground. You can't beat that."

Yankton resident and Philadelphia native Anthony Jablonski took part in the event with his son Joseph.

"I've got to meet a couple of the volunteer firefighters over the last couple months and hear some of the stories of the incredible work they do," he

said. "We're just really grateful for the volunteer firefighters and for the role they play in our community. My wife saw it was happening and sent me and my son. He is big into firefighters."

In fact, I think it might be an upcoming Halloween costume."

Nick Raab was there with his family and took time to speak to the Press & Dakotan about the significance of the event to him.

"I've been coming to the open house since I was a kid, when my dad (Larry Raab) was on the fire department," he said.

His father served 30 years on the YFD and his grandfather Martin served before that, so it's personal for Raab.

"I have a really deep appreciation, and it's really great to just see what they're doing," he said.

"Just seeing all the kids enjoying everything — that's cool for people of any age, really. They do such a good job of really working to teach kids the importance of fire prevention. This is the key-stone event of Fire Prevention Week."

Ebony Creswell brought her two daughters, Lilianah and Athena, to the open house at the urging of Athena.

"We wanted to come and see the fire trucks, all the people and meet the firefighters," Creswell said. "We like to do this because it's a good way to get involved in the community. I just learned some things that I didn't even know. It's pretty incredible what these firefighters do. We thank them for all their hard work."

Steve Frick served on the YFD for 36 years and retired three years ago. He still comes to the event that he helped man for decades.

"This event is always great, but with weather like this, it's been a great turnout," he said. "It's always good to see all the little kids out here enjoying it and learning. The primary message is always fire safety and prevention. It's a great community event."

(Written by Jay Gravholt, Yankton Daily Press and Dakotan, Yankton SD, Oct. 9, 2025)

Milbank firefighters respond to two fire calls

Members of the Milbank Fire and Rescue crew were summoned to two alarms in the past week.

The firefighters responded to a report of carbon monoxide in a residence at 47462 147th St., Milbank.

The garage of the home, owned by Chris Kelly, had become filled with fumes as he washed the garage floor with a gas-powered pressure washer, according to David Giesen, fire chief.

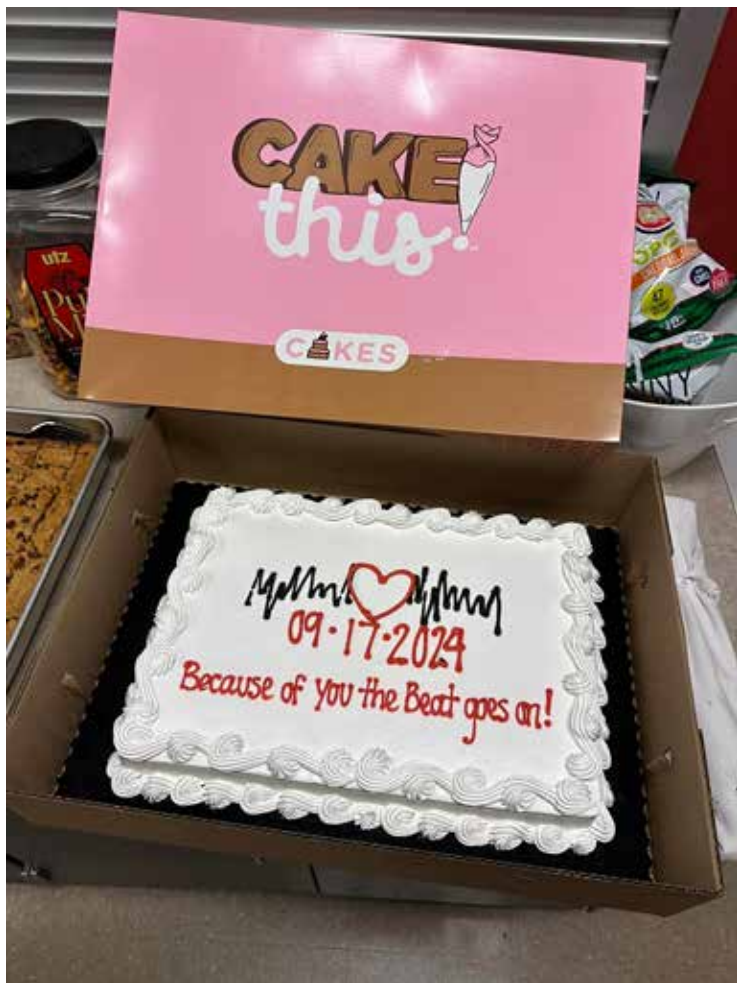
Firefighters were on the scene about 30 minutes and used exhaust fans to ventilate the area.

On Thursday, October 9, at 11:08 a.m., Milbank Fire and Rescue members were summoned to Rick Hanson Salvage at 600 W. Milbank Avenue. According to Justin Mathiason, assistant fire chief, a worker from B&B Recycling of Winner was operating an excavator when it developed a hydraulic leak. Hydraulic fluid sprayed directly onto the turbo, causing a fire. The operators had extinguished the fire before the firefighters arrived.

(Milbank Grant County Review, Milbank, SD, Oct. 15, 2025)

**ACTION
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Please send them to
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along with information to
explain the photo.



Tea FD sends thanks

A huge thank you to the Van Emmerik family for their donation of cookies in appreciation of our service at tonight's meeting of Tea Volunteer Fire Department. We'd also like to share something very special. Almost a year ago, we posted about Della, who suffered a major cardiac emergency. Thanks to the quick response of everyone involved that day, Della is here with us today. She stopped by to personally thank us and brought a cake as a gesture of appreciation. The people pictured were among those who responded that day, alongside our partners from the Tea Police Department, the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, and Paramedics Plus. Thank you to the Van Emmerik family and thank you to Della for reminding us why we do what we do! From the Tea Fire Department Facebook page.





Raffle results in fire truck ride to school

Thursday was an exciting morning for the Thompsons, as the family was picked up in style for school – in a firetruck.

The ride was part of the Brandon Fire Department’s first-ever “Ride to School” raffle, held during the department’s summer open house. Judge, the oldest, was the lucky winner.

“We had them meet us at the firestation,” Fire Chief Justin Hornsaid. “We were able to show them around the trucks and give them a little private tour beforehand. They were really excited.” For the Thompsons, the experience turned out to be memorable for more than one reason.

“When we gotthe call that Judge had won, I took it as my sign,” said Matt Thompson. “I’d been debating about joining the fire department for a while, and that night I turned in my application.”

Now a new member of the department, Matt said the decision has been deeply rewarding.

“It’s very fulfilling to give back,” he said. “It’s a great group

of people to work with.”

Judge and Cullen’smom, Sarah, said the anticipation had been building for weeks.

“It’s been written on the calendar since summer,” she laughed. “Getting up this morningwas really easy.”

Fire Prevention Week was a busy one for the Brandon Fire Department. The week started with their annual pancake breakfast, which drew more than 1,200 people, a record turnout,Horn said. And throughout the week, they spent hours visiting each of the local elementary schools and preschools to educate youngsters on fire safety.

“This whole week has gone great,” Horn said. “It’s awesome to see the community show up and support what we do.”

And for the Thompsons,that community connection just got a little stronger – one firetruck ride at a time.

(Written by Jill Meier, Journal editor, Brandon Valley Journal, Brandon Valley, sd, Oct. 15, 2025)

Firefighters Respond To Sunday Mobile Home Blaze

The Vermillion Fire EMS Department was able to bring a fire in a mobile home under control shortly after it arrived on the scene Sunday, Oct. 12, at 6:39 p.m.

The fire was located at 833 E. Duke St. #48.

The fire was well involved in the rear side of the mobile home when the first chief arrived. Crews aggressively attacked the flames in both the home’s interior and exterior and brought the fire

under control. Crews remained on scene for several hours conducting salvage and overhaul operations.

There were no civilian or first responder injuries. The cause is still under investigation. Vermillion was assisted by Gayville and Elk Point Fire Departments, Vermillion Light and Power and Vermillion Police Department.

(Vermillion Plain talk, Vermillion, SD, Oct. 17, 2025)



Granite Fire in Boulder Canyon

Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department responded to the Granite Fire on Oct. 19 in Boulder Canyon where they fought a wildland fire in steep terrain with heavy winds. Aid was provided by Deadwood Volunteer Fire Department, Ft. Meade Fire Department, Vale Volunteer Fire epartment, Whitewood Volunteer Fire Department, SD Wildland, and USFS. They were able to knock the fire out quickly and keep it to 1.2 acres.



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Preparing for NERIS Onboarding



Essential Steps to Ensure Your Department Is Ready for NERIS

The purpose of this checklist is to help your department prepare for the NERIS onboarding process. There are important decisions to make and required information to assemble in advance. After these steps are completed, your department will be ready when it's their time, to proceed with NERIS onboarding.

1. Designate a Point of Contact

Identify and authorize a member of your organization to serve as your department's lead on NERIS. Your NERIS lead will oversee NERIS onboarding and implementation for your department. This individual must have authority to act on behalf of the department to support the onboarding and implementation process. After this decision is made, gather the following information:

- Name and title of designated NERIS point of contact.
- Authorization letter from the fire chief or equivalent.

2. Gather System Use and Reporting Requirements

Confirm whether your department will integrate NERIS with a third-party application, such as a fire-based Records Management System (RMS) or data analytics platform. If your department does not use a third-party application, skip this section.

- Third-party RMS integration details:
 - Application name, purpose, and vendor information
- Department contacts for system configuration and integration:
 - Designate a primary IT representative from your department to coordinate with the NERIS team.
 - Contact information for a vendor representative (if available) to support integration and troubleshooting.

3. Gather User Information

Compile a list of all users in your department who will access NERIS.

- If you plan to use the NERIS data collection application, be sure to include a list of all personnel who will need to submit and approve incident reports.

4. Gather Department Demographic Information

Gather essential details about your department, including:

- Core Department information:
 - Department phone number, headquarter address, population protected, shift information, staffing counts, PSAP information, AVL usage, and dispatch protocols.
- Geographic service boundaries:
 - City or district boundaries and other geospatial region sets such as first due boundaries.

Preparing for NERIS Onboarding



- Station details for each location:
 - Station names and addresses.

5. Prepare a Unit and Apparatus Inventory

Prepare an inventory of all units and apparatus, including each unit's designation, classification, and unique capabilities. Consider items such as:

- Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) designations:
 - Examples: E1 for Engine 1, T2 for Truck 2.
- Unit types and classifications using NIMS Resource Typing definitions wherever possible:
 - Examples: Engine types (structural, wildland), ladder types (platform, quint, tiller), and specialized units (rescue, hazmat, ambulance).
 - For guidance on NIMS Resource Typing definitions, refer to the [Resource Typing Library Tool](#).
 - For guidance, refer to the [NERIS Data Dictionary](#).
- Auxiliary and support units:
 - Examples: Light towers, command trailers, support trucks, transport vehicles.
- Unit level staffing:
 - Base level staffing needed for unit to be dispatched.
 - Whether unit-level staffing is dedicated or shared.

6. Gather Department Services

Gather details on the applicable services provided by your department to support fire, EMS, and investigative services.

7. Gather Department Relationship Information

Gather details on the relationships within and between departments.

- Mutual and Automatic Aid agreements:
 - List and type of aid provided (mutual, automatic, contract)
- Membership relationships between departments:
 - Example: Department A is a member of Department B

Questions, please contact:

Doug Hinkle, Chief Deputy Fire Marshal
 SD Department of Public Safety
 SD State Fire Marshal's Office
 221 S. Central Ave.
 Pierre, SD 57501
 (605) 773-3562 /
www.dps.sd.gov/firemarshal
fireinfo@state.sd.us



Fire Prevention Week!

Tea Volunteer Fire Department ended the week by visiting Tea Area Legacy and Venture Elementary Schools. We believe these visits are very important for making a great impression on young minds! This year's topics included, but were not limited to, the following:

- Home Safety – Stop, Drop, and Roll; Stay Low; Smoke Detectors
- School Safety – Fire Drills; What to Do When Fire Alarms Sound
- 911 Safety – How to Call 911; When to Call 911; Don't Prank Call 911
- Halloween Safety



Mutual aid called for Tea semi fire

On Oct. 8, Tea Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched for a semi on fire. Heavy smoke and flames were visible upon arrival. Harrisburg Community Fire Department was dispatched for mutual aid. It was then determined multiple trucks and trailers were involved in the fire. Firefighters quickly brought the fire under control. During this incident, two civilians entered the dangerous "hot zone" of the scene and were escorted back by law enforcement.

I-29 in Watertown closed briefly for car fire

A car fire sent Watertown Fire Rescue to Interstate 29 on Tuesday, Aug. 6. At approximately 4 p.m. Tuesday, Watertown Fire Rescue responded to a car fire following a single-vehicle incident on I-29 near mile marker 173, according to a release. WFR units Engine 4, Tender 1 and Medic 4 responded to the scene.

Upon arrival, crews found a two-door BMW fully engulfed in flames, with debris scattered across both southbound lanes of I-29, according to a release. Engine 4 initiated fire suppression efforts while Medic 4 evaluated the driver.

Tender 1 provided water supply support. The driver sustained minor injuries and declined transport to Prairie Lakes Hospital for further evaluation, the release stated. Engine 4 extinguished the fire, which had spread to the vehicle's fuel tank.

After the fire was put out, crews from Engine 4 and Tender 1, with assistance from Performance Towing, worked to clean up debris from the Codington County Sheriff's Office roadway. The east lane of I-29 southbound was closed for approximately 45 minutes during the incident, the release stated. Performance Towing, the South Dakota Highway Patrol, and the helped WFR. The vehicle was deemed a total loss.



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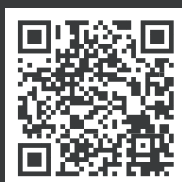
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