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APRIL 2026 • VOL. 19 - NO. 2

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A fast-moving wildfire burned through approximately 7,000 acres of South Dakota wilderness as of 5:15 p.m. Friday, March 13 (the older estimate was 5,000 acres), forcing residents to evacuate and prompting a multi-agency response across Custer County. The Qury Fire ignited Thursday and spread rapidly, placing homes in its path and giving some families only minutes to decide whether to leave. See more photos inside.



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## Deadwood called for aid near Spearfish

On March 4th, at approximately 12:33 p.m., Deadwood Fire/Rescue was paged for mutual aid for a wildland fire in rural Spearfish. Deadwood Fire sent The Hawk with three firefighters. Two Deadwood firefighters assisted hand crews that worked to put out the blaze. One Deadwood firefighter remained with The Hawk to resupply water to apparatus. First due firefighters acted quickly to ensure a threatened structure remained safe. Approximately 20 firefighters from multiple agencies assisted in the four-plus hour operation. Assisting agencies: Spearfish Fire Department; SD Wildland Fire; US Department of Forestry; Lawrence County Emergency Management; and Lawrence County Sheriff's Office.



## Hot Brook fire contained

UPDATE Friday, March 13 at 6:45 pm: The Hot Brook fire is now 100% contained at 22 acres. Firefighters will continue patrolling the area in coming days. Firefighters at the Hot Brook Fire just west of Hot Springs are working today on containment and securing fire lines around the perimeter. Current size is estimated at 20 acres and containment is at 25%. The terrain is steep, rugged, and tough to access. Hopper Canyon Road is currently open to local traffic only.

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

**For ADDRESS CHANGES CONTACT:**  
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 We welcome your views, opinions, news tips and questions.  
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# Rapid Valley Commercial Structure Fire

The Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire on Lamb Rd., Rapid Valley, unincorporated, Pennington County, South Dakota. First arriving firefighters found a fire and smoke condition, in the walls and roof assembly of a commercial structure.

Firefighters, successfully contained the fire to the structure and area of origin protecting adjacent structures, infra-structure and other improvements.

No injuries to civilians or domestic animals were reported.

Agencies Responding: Pennington County 911, Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Box Elder Volunteer Fire Department, North Haines Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hawk Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department & Ambulance Service, Ellsworth Airforce Base Fire Department, Pennington County Emergency Management, Black Hills Electrical Cooperative, Montana Dakota Utilities.



## Colton recognizes members for service

The Colton Fire and Rescue recently held an appreciation dinner in Colton and honored the following (left to right): Jerrit Pedersen for 25 years of service; Dick Johnson for 52 years of service and 46 of those years as secretary (recently went from active roster to honorary); Dan Bunjer for 25 years of service; Matt Swartwout for 25 years of service; Jeremy Hoek for 25 years of service; and Gerrit Pedersen for 25 years of service.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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

**APRIL 25, 2026:** Spring School, Volga, SD.

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

**JUNE 27, 2026:** Jim Stevens Memorial Ride, 9 a.m., Hot Springs Fire Hall

## ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

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# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

## Keeping our Balance in the Volunteer Fire Service

M Scott Peck is a well-known author from the 1980s (I know, I am an old guy but bear with me on this one) tells this story about himself, "I spent much of my ninth summer on a bicycle. About a mile from our house the road went down a steep hill and turned sharply at the bottom. Coasting down the hill one morning, I felt my gathering speed to be ecstatic. To give up this ecstasy by applying brakes seemed an absurd self-punishment. So, I resolved to simultaneously retain my speed and negotiate the corner. My ecstasy ended seconds later when I was propelled a dozen feet off the road into the woods. I was badly scratched and bleeding, and the front wheel of my new bike was twisted beyond use from its impact against a tree. I had been unwilling to suffer the pain of giving up my ecstatic speed in the interest of maintaining my balance around the corner. I learned, however, that the loss of balance is ultimately more painful than the giving up required to maintain balance. It is a lesson I have continually had to relearn, as must everyone, for as we negotiate the curves and corners of our lives, we must continually give up parts of ourselves.

As I read that story again, I had to stop for a minute and remind myself, that I too need balance in my life. I need to be reminded, over and over again that as a firefighter, I cannot help but help! (You have

to go back in the archives to find that article.) As a result of this inbred tendency, I have a difficult time saying no to opportunities to help. Then I find myself wondering if I didn't say yes to too much. So, as a man who strives to seek that kind of balance, I hope that maybe, just maybe you will start to look for this balance in your life as you serve your communities.

When we joined the volunteer fire service, for a time at least balance in our lives was given up by the drive to learn as much as we could about this new found love. We spent hours at the station; we jumped from our beds as the tones were still dropping. (My wife told me in the first six months of my tenure with the fire service that if I didn't slow down, I would have a heart attack!) As the new ones on the department we wanted to be in all the action, to see and experience as much as we could. Now, forty years later, I hear the page in the middle of the night, roll over and see what is so important.... (Keep in mind when I see the words "structure fire" or accident, I move at a different pace.) I hope it doesn't take you forty years to find the right balance in the fire service, but how do we do that?

Matt Aalto, writing for National Volunteer Fire Council, offers some sound encouragement to all of us. His first suggestion is this, serve your community but take care of yourself, too. (I hope by now that the issue of self-care has not just become the latest "buzz" word of reason to dodge responsibility) Taking care of ourselves is done by establishing clear boundaries between your firefighting

duties and family responsibilities. This may involve setting specific availability hours for calls and adhering to these limits to ensure that family time remains uninterrupted. One thing you have to understand is you cannot possibly answer every call in your department, I know, I tried once...

Second, be a servant on a call but not a stranger at home. You know the person, always at the station, and never at home. So set time to "off duty". That means unless the whole downtown is on fire are we are being invaded by space aliens, your family has priority. The reason behind this is when we treat family time as nonnegotiable appointments (like the time the doctor looks at you and says it is surgery or die) this builds resilience against stress, and burnout, not to mention maintaining the relationships you say matter most, like marriage and family!

Third, fight fires, not burnout, by practicing stress management techniques. Techniques such as mindfulness meditation, yoga, (yea I know this "touchy feely" stuff again) and physical exercise serve as powerful tools to alleviate stress that often accompanies firefighting duties. Now you are saying Chaplain you've gone from advice to meddling. Your right, by now you know I am an advocate for mental and physical health as there is a connection. Years ago, I realized I was depressed. If you go to your Doc and say those words and he gives you a pill. For me that "pill" was a year-old Brittany Spaniel, a leash and daily walks. The dog died in 2014; I still walk and haven't battled depression



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"Years ago, I realized I was depressed. If you go to your Doc and say those words and he gives you a pill. For me that "pill" was a year-old Brittany Spaniel, a leash and daily walks. The dog died in 2014; I still walk and haven't battled depression for long since."

for long since. Want more suggestions? (Just say yes and keep reading) Give yourself a break from your cell phone and outside distractions for an hour to start and expand that time as you go on. Regularly scrolling social media as been shown to have a negative effect on your moods. So, as I often shout at other drivers, put the phone down. I am not going to be the "phone police", but in the immortal words of a 1960's commercial, "try it you might like it!"

Fourth, stop waiting for "The Big One." Many firefighters cancel plans or avoid doing the things that give them pleasure by creating time in their day just waiting for something big to happen. Scanning the radios or reading online calls has never been shown to create calls. "A watched pot never boils." I have to be honest, I have been in my share of "big ones", and wonder how I survived. So live life you will get the calls, but don't hang around home just because something might happen!

Fifth, tap into a network of encouragement. Building a support network that includes both fellow firefighters and family members can significantly enhance the ability to navigate the demands of volunteer service while prioritizing family. This one can be chal-

lenging, where do you find this kind of "support group", after all, unless it involves a raging fire or adult beverages we as firefighters are not likely to attend. However, look around and see if you can find one or two people whom you can trust. Someone who knows when to be quiet, and when to offer advice. This kind of friendship can help reduce burnout and promotes a more sustainable service tenure.

Once again, I find my space has run out and I have more great suggestions that Matt has to offer. For now, let me circle back to Scott Peck, we all need to find that balance between the adrenaline rush and crashing and burning from burnout or PTSD. What has kept me around for 40 years is learning I am not 20 years old any more. However, I still have a place and a purpose around the fire station, and one of those things is to help those around me reach a ripe old age, not burnout prematurely. Until next month, look for balance, take that significant other who enables you to go chasing fires on a date night, and every once in a while, don't be afraid to shut the pager off!

CHAPLAIN RODNEY V

# DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

## Thomas Blair

January 8, 1945 - January 25, 2026

Retired Deadwood Volunteer Firefighter and former Deadwood City Mayor / Captain Thomas "Tom" Blair

The angels have finally come, given our blessed friend his wings, and allowed him to pass into the Kingdom of God. Firefighter Thomas Mitchell Blair passed away peacefully early Sunday morning, January 25, 2026, at the Good Samaritan Home in New Underwood, South Dakota.

Tom was a faithful friend, mentor, caregiver, pioneer, soldier, firefighter, statesman, businessman, and advocate — but most of all, a beloved husband and devoted father.

He was born to Lyle Blair and Dawn (Darlington) Blair on January 8, 1945, a date he proudly shared with the King himself, Elvis Presley. He grew up as a typical South Dakota boy, learning to hunt and fish while working in

his father's service station.

He played every sport available in the small town of Groton, proudly representing the Tigers. Tom graduated from high school in 1963, studied at Presentation College earning his nursing degree, and went on to enlist in the U.S. Army.

He served nearly 12 years, achieving the rank of Captain in the Army Medical Corps, with deployment overseas during the Vietnam War.

In 1965, Tom met the love of his life, Linda Hanson, and they were married the following year. Tom and Linda's life together included many moves, including Oklahoma, Washington, Texas, and Alaska. In 1978, they settled in Deadwood, where Tom worked as a nurse anesthetist at St. Joseph's Hospital. Together, they raised four children: Roberta, Christopher, Matthew, and Chad.

One of Tom's greatest accomplishments, alongside Linda, was helping transform Deadwood through the Deadwood — You Bet Committee, ushering in a new era of prosperity with the establishment of gaming in the historic Old West town.

Tom was well known for his Irish gift of gab and natural leadership, which led him into a life of public service — first as a city councilman and later as Mayor of Deadwood. He was also actively involved in Deadwood Historic Preservation, the Lead-Deadwood School Board, the Black Hills Forest Advisory Board, the Deadwood Volunteer Fire Department, the Elks Club, among others.

After leaving medicine, Tom became a successful businessman in the gaming and tourism industries. He dedicated the next 30 years of his life to civic and school organizations, youth sports programs, and building the community he called home. He also never lost his love for hunting, fishing, and, most proudly, being "Poppa."

He was preceded in death by his parents, Lyle and Dawn. He is survived by his wife, Linda; his children Roberta (Bryan) Arsaga, Christopher (Kim) Blair, Matthew (Sarah) Blair, and Chad (Christine) Blair; grandchildren Kyle, Kolbey, Kayle, Shawn, Ryan, Madeleine, Alexander, Ascher, and Ainsley; and great-grandchildren Landon, Kennedy, Blayke, Chase, Everleigh and Callan. He is also survived by his sisters, Kathy Rosengren and Patsy McCullough.

Now at peace, as he ascends into heaven, Tom may pass one final time by the Burn, watch the sunset, and head to the great Deer Camp in the sky.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial contributions be made in Tom's name to Northern Hills youth activity organizations.

Mass of Christian Burial was held at St. Ambrose Catholic Church in Deadwood SD on Friday, February 20 at 10a.m. Tom was laid to rest at Black Hills National Cemetery following the service. A celebration of Tom's



life will be held in the summer of 2026, with details to be announced at a later date.

Arrangements were under the care of Lead-Deadwood Memorial Chapel in Lead. Online condolences may be written at [www.fidler-isburgfuneralchapels.com](http://www.fidler-isburgfuneralchapels.com)

# DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

## Greg Nepstad 1960-2026

Greg was born to Gordon and Julie Nepstad, in La Crosse, WI on February 2, 1960. He was the second of five children (Ann, Jim, Jeff and Nancy), and their oldest son. He was a wanderer from the beginning, going on an unsupervised walk-about down busy Losey Boulevard in La Crosse when he was two, already desperate to explore the world around him. He kept that love of exploring and adventure until the moment of his death.



Greg and his siblings were all very close in age, and for years they travelled in a pack while exploring their surroundings in rural Holmen, and later along the railroad tracks and the shores and spillway of Lake Onalaska. His parents were avid boaters and campers, which offered up an even larger world for Greg and his siblings to explore. Summers were filled with camping on the sandbars of the Mississippi River, or in state and national parks across northern Wisconsin and the western states. He was forever grateful to his parents for introducing him to the outdoors, and for allowing him to experience a free-range childhood. In his early adulthood he was a terror and became great friends with a similar spirit. He and John remained friends always. Working at Wind Cave National Park he spent time exploring the cave with his brother Jim and his co-troublemaker, Bob. It was there that he found his love of firefighting which fit into his love of being outside, of physical work, comradery and adventure. He followed his love of firefighting to California where he met his wife of 33 years, Virginia. The two of them adventured together for a couple of years before choosing to buy land in South Dakota, but his travels and adventures continued.

In 1999, they adopted Mica and

were lucky enough to be present for her birth. Mica joined them in all of the adventures and travel.

While living in SD he became very active on the Nemo Fire Department which he was a member of for 26 years. He continued his love of nature and exploration and always pursuing the next adventure. He struggled with several health issues that threatened to take that all away

from him but he was ferociously determined to continue to do what he loved. When he was on 24/7 oxygen he would be out on his land with a backpack containing an oxygen bottle with his chainsaw cutting down trees. He was incredibly fortunate to get a double lung transplant which allowed him to breathe freely and he grasped that opportunity, bought a camper van which he named Carter after his lung donor, and at the time of his death was traveling in Utah. He spent his last days wandering through the Southwest, chatting on the phone with friends and family, texting pictures of the beauty that he found and finding the peace in nature that he so loved.

Donations can be made in his memory to Breathing New Life <https://breathingnewlife.org/> 6417 Penn Ave S, Ste 7 – 1210, Minneapolis, MN 55423-1196. This is an organization to provide financial assistance to people starting their lung transplant journey so that worrying about finances is something that does not prevent them from supporting their loved one during an incredibly stressful and usually long process. Greg loved this fund because it has no overhead it is run by the social workers of the lung transplant group who directly give people the assistance that they need when they need it. They may require his home address 22515 N Bogus Jim Rd, Rapid City, SD 57702

## James Lee Stevens October 29, 1960 - December 9, 2025

James “Jim” Lee Stevens, age 65, of Hot Springs, South Dakota, passed away on December 9, 2025, due to complications of cardiac arrest. Jim passed away at Monument Health in Rapid City, South Dakota, with his beloved wife, Darla, at his side.

Jim was known for his heart of gold and would give the shirt off his back to anyone in need. He carried a strong sense of humor that often masked his tender heart—using laughter to hold back tears—earning him the reputation of being the biggest teddy bear with the softest soul. Jim’s legacy will live on through his selfless decision to donate his organs, doing so with a great big hug, tears in his eyes, and his familiar calloused hands.

Jim was born on October 29, 1960, to Marvin and Betty Stevens. He was raised with strong values of hard work, service, and community, which guided him throughout his life. He grew up alongside his sister, Deb, and brother, Alan, forming lifelong bonds that remained close through the years.

Jim graduated from Hot Springs High School in 1978. He went on to earn his Journeyman Plumbing certification, later becoming a licensed plumbing contractor, and eventually expanding his professional path into real estate as a Realtor. Jim worked at Stevens Plumbing, along the side of his father, mother and brother where his reputation for honesty, skill, and reliability was well known. Later becoming co-owner and operator of Stevens Plumbing with his brother Alan. He also was a founder, owner and

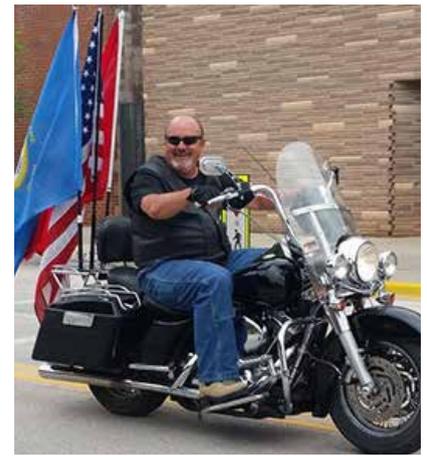
operator of the Western Dakota Strike Team from 1991-2004. In real estate, Jim owned and operated Century 21 Stevens & Associates alongside his wife, Darla.

On October 14, 1995, Jim married the love of his life, Darla Stevens. Together they built a life rooted in love, loyalty, and family. Jim was a proud father to daughters Heather and Sarah, and a devoted stepfather to Jason. Family was always Jim’s foundation, and he cherished time spent with his family.

Jim’s happiest place was on his motorcycle, riding free and enjoying the open road where he loved the wind and all the smells of the Black Hills. He was also an avid sports fan, especially devoted to the Green Bay Packers—a team he proudly “owned,” thanks to a share gifted by his nephew, Seth. Jim also cherished hunting and fishing, traditions he enjoyed throughout both his childhood and adulthood alongside his dad, brother, and cousins.

Service to others defined Jim’s life. He was a dedicated member of the Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department, joining in November 1979 and serving for 46 years. Jim held the roles of Assistant Chief and Fire Chief from 2005 to 2017, leading with integrity, compassion, and steady leadership. He was also a proud member of the Sons of the American Legion (Battle Mountain Squadron 71), Elks Lodge 1751, and served on the Hot Springs Housing Commission, always working to strengthen the community he loved.

Jim is survived by his wife, Darla



Stevens, of Hot Springs; daughters Heather (Orin) Robinson and Sarah (Ross) Walker; stepson Jason (Nicole) Weitzel; grandchildren Jared, Jennica, Alex, Jayme, Jennavieve (Junior), Riggs, Ryer, Sloane, Layton; sister Deb (Don) Robertson; brother Alan (Michelle) Stevens; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and great-grandchildren.

Jim was preceded in death by his parents, Marvin and Betty Stevens.

A celebration of Jim’s life was held on Saturday, December 20, 2025, at 2:00 PM at the Muller Center Theater in Hot Springs, South Dakota. A gathering followed at the Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department, where stories, laughter, and memories were shared in honor of a man who gave so much to so many.

Jim Stevens will be deeply missed and forever remembered for his kindness, humor, service, and unwavering love for his family, friends and community.

Memorial: Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department

Honorary pallbearers are family, friends, and everyone in attendance, reflecting the many lives Jim touched.

## Larry V. Jurgens 1949-2026

The memorial service for Larry V. Jurgens, 76, of Aberdeen, SD, was held at 10:30 a.m., on Friday, March 13, 2026, at Sacred Heart Catholic Church. Burial was at Sunset Memorial Gardens. Larry died Monday, March 9, at Avera St. Luke’s Hospital in Aberdeen.

Larry Vincent Jurgens was born October 10, 1949, to Vincent and Mildred (Vail) Jurgens in Milbank, South Dakota. He grew up and attended school in Milbank, graduating from Milbank High School in 1967. He later attended South Dakota State University before moving to Aberdeen, where he worked at Cambell’s Town & Country Lumber and met the love of his life, Kaye Foley. They were married on October 22, 1977.

Larry and Kaye built their life in Aberdeen and later welcomed two children, Jessica and Chad.

Larry worked for De Smet Farm Mutual and Dakota Claims before starting his own business in 2002. He also served as a volunteer firefighter for the Aberdeen Rural Fire Department for nearly 15 years.

In 2010, Larry and Kaye became snowbirds and began spend-

ing their winters at their home in Arizona. They were blessed with wonderful friends and neighbors

in their community that really felt like family. Kaye passed away in April 2022.

A selfless soul, Larry always made time for family and many who were lucky enough to call him a friend. Those close to him always enjoyed his great wit and sense of humor. Incredibly artistic, and with a passion for woodworking, he shared his incredible works of art with the world, including a “passion project” (and painfully intricate, although he was never one to complain...) wooden soccer ball for his grandson which would become his final masterpiece. He enjoyed fishing, hunting, camping (in the earlier years) and tinkering with cars and Willy’s Jeeps. His great-

est joy came from spending time with his late wife Kaye, children, grandchildren and beloved dogs.

To his family, Larry was the one they called for everything, someone who could always figure it out and be counted on.

Grateful for having shared Larry’s life are his children: Jessica (Chase) Schmitt of Denver, CO, and Chad (Jennifer) Jurgens of Aberdeen; grandchildren: Ariana, Avery, and Anders Schmitt; Mason and Morgan Jurgens; sister: Judy Jurgens; and many nieces and nephews.

Larry was preceded in death by his parents, Vincent and Mildred Jurgens, and his wife, Kaye Jurgens.

[www.spitzerfuneralhome.com](http://www.spitzerfuneralhome.com)



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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).

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# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



### Charlie Kludt, President

**"The legislative Senate Bill 136 introduced by Senator Kevin Jensen to fund the State Fire Assistance Grant for volunteer fire departments was passed and signed by the Governor. The \$5 million fund will be for assistance to departments to purchase PPE."**

## PPE Grant 2026 Coming Soon

Good news for the fire service in South Dakota.

The legislative Senate Bill 136 introduced by Senator Kevin Jensen to fund the State Fire Assistance Grant for volunteer fire departments was passed and signed by the Governor. The \$5 million fund will be for assistance to departments to purchase PPE. Similar to the program in 2023, the Fire Marshal's Office will be releasing details of the program and process

in a few weeks.

I took a statistical analysis course many years ago. The Professor started by asking us, "What do we use data and statistics for?" My response was, "To make them say what we want, to get the determination or answer we want."

He looked at me with a slight smirk and said, "Or, what's the other way to say that...?" and we both said, "Figures lie, and liars figure." But we all agreed that it can be made to show good or bad, depending on what your ideal outcome target is intended to be.

If you are a statistics person,

## Thoughts from the Tailboard

As you get or read this month's paper, Easter is here or just days away. Easter always seems like the start of spring and with spring comes thoughts of the upcoming fire season. As I put the finishing touches on this month's ramblings, we are dealing with high winds and a number of fires. The biggest is the Qury fire near Custer at over 5,000 acres. I know many other departments around the State are dealing with similar issues. Nebraska has a 35,000 acres grass fires. As so many have said, we no longer have a summer fire season, we have a four-season year-round fire season.

Congratulations to the Pierre FD for recently being featured in the Provident Insurance online bulletin. Nice write up and picture, so just a quick shout out to all the Pierre Firefighters and nice to see them receive some national recognition.

While noting the involvement of departments around the State, a "way to go" to the departments that went to Texas and south to help with all the fires down there. It's

always great when firefighters and departments are willing and able to make that commitment. That goes also to those departments that travel across the State to help us out. South Dakota is well represented.

Ok, time to spout off. In the past 30 or so years I have been fortunate to be selected as a Peer Reviewer for the Assistance to Firefighter Grants, (AFG) 20-25 times. Some narratives have been excellently written. Others, well you could tell that the day before deadline, someone said oh crud we got to get our application in. With the increase in artificial intelligence, (AI), you know that some, departments will have AI write their entire grant application. I'm not opposed to AI. I'm opposed to the department who uses it to write their application. I know some people see nothing wrong with using AI for their application, however, I do. If you can't figure out what you need to say, then don't. I hope the National Fire Academy and whoever will have some safeguards built into the program to prevent using AI or at least declare if AI assisted in the application.

Since I'm talking about AI, I can see the day some Incident

## BLOWN TIRE LIKELY CAUSE OF BRUSH FIRE WEST OF SPEARFISH

Just after noon on Wednesday, the Spearfish Fire Department was dispatched to a grass fire directly adjacent to West Highway 14, west of Spearfish. Just 3.5 hours later, crews had contained the fire at 17 acres and were mopping up the area bordered by Highway 14 to the north and Interstate 90 to the south.

Spearfish Fire Chief Scott Deaver said a blown tire on the road was the likely cause of the fire.

"We had a semi or a truck with a blown tire, that was throwing sparks according to initial reports. That is most likely," Deaver said.

Thirteen Spearfish Fire personnel responded to the brush fire.

"That was basically the first crew engine was placed there — standing by to make sure that we didn't lose the structure," Deaver said. "We are working the edge, away from different exposures, or protecting the house, but working the different flanks where it is

you know how to use data the way you want to.

According to reported data from the NFPA, (<https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research>) in 1980, of the 10.8 million calls, just under thirty percent, roughly 3 million were fire incidents, and 5 million medical calls were responded to by fire departments in the United States.

By 2024, fire departments responded to 42.6 million calls. Less than 4% (1.39 million) were fire calls. Roughly sixty-six percent, over 28 million, were medical calls.

From a fire administrative point of view, you might say that fire prevention and public education have been doing great. The number of fire responses has been cut in half. Although the number of medical calls have increased by almost 500 percent, we have maintained the same number of firefighters in the country.

From a financial perspective, it would seem the prevention and mitigation programs are less expensive than suppression. And the public needs emergency medical assistance more than fire suppression assistance.

The cost of one fire apparatus could purchase multiple ambulances, then maybe we should cut back on fire department spending and increase EMS spending.

See how the same data analysis can be worked?

The truth of the matter is, we all need to do an analysis of our coverage areas, the population that we serve, majority of our common calls, and what we truly need to accomplish our mission.

Set your standards for your community and department.

As I am finishing this article, the Custer area departments and Mother Nature were working on the wildfires out west. The annual March-State Basketball blizzard had just tromped across the state, and the forecast was for -3 and 75 degrees within a couple days.

Check the SDFA website for more information on State Fire School in June, and all the District Fire Schools going on around the state this spring.

Be ready and stay safe.

CHARLIE KLUDT



### Denny Gorton, Retired Treasurer/Past President

**"In the past 30 or so years I have been fortunate to be selected as a Peer Reviewer for the Assistance to Firefighter Grants, (AFG) 20-25 times. Some narratives have been excellently written. Others, well you could tell that the day before deadline, someone said oh crud we got to get our application in."**

Commander grabs their laptop or whatever at the scene of a fire and says, "AI, how do I put out this fire in a 100 ft X 100 ft commercial building? I can almost picture the answer, duh, put water on it!!! Ok, enough soap boxing.

State Fire School is just two months away, I hope you got your classes picked out, rooms covered, and all the other great stuff that goes on at fire school. There is no reason for anyone to say they couldn't find a class that interested them, or I've taken a ladders class, or a pump class, or whatever. If you can't find a class with something new, then you must know it all and you should be instructing at district and state fire schools. Let us know.

Let me put my Treasurer hat on for a minute. I know in this month's paper, there are two reports on the State Fund and General Fund. These are the two most important pieces of information for all of you along with the Net Worth as of December 31, 2025. They will be presented at the Membership meeting, and a motion will be made to accept them. So please take a minute to look them over. I can tell you your SD Firefighters Association, Inc. is in excellent financial condition.

With that I'll close for this month. Stay safe and pass on your knowledge.

DENNY

ed with the incident.

Deaver said it is important to remember that, despite it still being winter, a lack of precipitation and dry conditions have left the landscape susceptible to fire.

"There was enough fuels out there for this time of year. It was dry," Deaver said of Wednesday's fire.

Spring rains, which may help brush to grow, are not a guarantee

close to any potential exposures."

Deaver said departments located anywhere within 30 minutes of the fire sent support. The Spearfish Fire Department was assisted by the Deadwood Volunteer Fire Department, South Dakota State Wildland Fire, the U.S. Forest Service, Lawrence County Sheriff's Office, South Dakota Highway Patrol, and Lawrence County Emergency Management. Crews were able to contain the fire safely — there were no injuries associat-

SEE SPEARFISH, PAGE 7

# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

From Southeast district:

Remember that Spring school will be April 25th in Volga, South Dakota. May great classes to choose from. Hope to see everyone there. Always a good time to see familiar faces that you only see couple times a year.

Fall school will be held at North Sioux City, more to come after the board meeting with them.

State Fire School classes are getting sorted out, hoping to open registration soon. Post these dates on your calendar-June 11, 12 and

13. Get the word out to attend some of the best training you will get. Some new classes will be presented during fire school, watch for these classes.

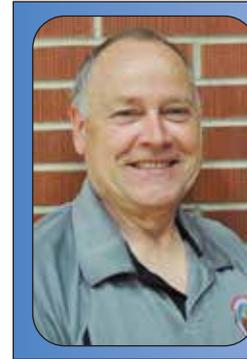
Legislature wise, some new bills introduced pertaining to first responders, have not heard if all were signed by the governor at this time, but firmly believe he will. When we hear, we will make sure everyone is aware of the content.

With all the dry weather we have seen across the upper Midwest, hope everyone was able to respond

and safely return. Many local firemen were able to respond to fires out west to help, seen many out of state departments sent help also, keep everyone in your thoughts when they go to help.

At state school, the Presidents term is up for election, anyone interested, send a formal letter to any state board member 45 days before fire school.

The SE district board will meet to discuss how we need the SE schools continue to operate, there is a QR code that was sent out in



Dave Jorgenson, Southeast Director

“State Fire School classes are getting sorted out, hoping to open registration soon. Post these dates on your calendar-June 11, 12 and 13. Get the word out to attend some of the best training you will get. Some new classes will be presented during fire school, watch for these classes.”

the newspaper, please review and send you answers and ideas to it. These schools are for your training, for your department, to better serve your community. If you

have any questions, contact any southeast district board member.

Thanks for all that you do to serve your community.  
Sincerely

DAVE JORGENSON

Greeting South Dakota Fire Departments,

As in many professions, and especially in the fire service, change is inevitable. Nowhere is that more evident than in the State Fire Marshal's Office. Recently, we've seen a series of well-deserved retirements from longtime members of our team: Steve Hartford (35 years), Paul Coon (37 years), Paul Merriman (35 years), and Glenda Marks (46 years).

While we work to get caught back up, they also reflect something we're proud of. Our people tend to stay and serve for a long time. When they move on, their experience and dedication leave a lasting impact.

For now, we simply want to extend a sincere **thank you** to each of them for their many years of service and their contributions to the South Dakota fire service.

With that said, let's pull the boots on and get to work!

## THE CURRENT STAFF FOR THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE:

New State Fire Marshal, Doug Hinkle

New Chief Deputy Fire Marshal, Damon Hartmann

New Deputy Fire Marshal, Chris Noeldner (Eastern SD)

New Deputy Fire Marshal, Michael Helgerson (Western SD)

New Program Assistant, Elizabeth Schmautz

Deputy Fire Marshal, Mike Jones, (SE SD),

Deputy Fire Marshal, Kyle Moser (North Central SD)

Chief Boiler Inspector, Aaron Lorimor

Boiler Inspector, Travis Lorimor

## CURRENT PROJECTS:

South Dakota's fire reporting process is changing over to the new NERIS (National Emergency Response Information System).



# SOUTH DAKOTA FIRE MARSHAL

Investigations • Prevention • Education • Enforcement

All fire departments in South Dakota should be working on on-boarding, updating their fire department's information, and reporting their incidents into that new system. The old NFIRS system was shut down in January of this year. The online SD Incident Reporting System will not accept any new incidents but is still available to archive and back up any incident data you may need to keep. That system will get fully shut down on December 31, 2026.

SD Fire Department Certification forms have been sent out. These need to be filled out to get your department eligible for the Fire Insurance Premium Tax funding that is available to Certified Fire Departments. This is also the method the State Fire Marshal's Office uses to update our department contact information, to make sure any fire service-related information gets out to everyone. These include grants, training, apparatus or equipment for sale, etc. The roster for those fire departments is also used to show who are active firefighters and eligible to apply for SD Firefighter license plates. Make sure they are filled out with legal names and are legible. The 2026 Fire Department Certifica-

tion Forms are due into the Fire Marshal's Office by May 31, 2026.

From the 2026 Legislative session: Senate Bill 136 appropriated another \$5 Million towards the Volunteer Fire Departments Personal

Protective Equipment (PPE) purchase program. We are working on putting the finishing touches on the PPE grand application documents and hope to have them out to all SD Fire Departments in the near future.

Spring training is also starting to happen, so pay attention to the SD Firefighters Association web-

site events page for any upcoming training.

If you have any questions, concerns or need any assistance. Please contact us.

DOUG HINKLE,  
SD State Fire Marshal  
(605) 773-3562  
[fireinfo@state.sd.us](mailto:fireinfo@state.sd.us)

## Spearfish FROM PAGE 6

that the fire season might slow. Deaver said his crews are bracing for a long, busy fire season. He urged caution.

“Any activity, even mowing the weeds to help prevent fires, can rocket over a spark, so you

just have to watch everything that could possibly be the catalyst,” Deavers said.

(Written by Sierra Ferguson, Black Hills Pioneer, Spearfish, SD, March 6, 2026)



Doug Hinkle, State Fire Marshal

“Recently, we've seen a series of well-deserved retirements from longtime members of our team: Steve Hartford (35 years), Paul Coon (37 years), Paul Merriman (35 years), and Glenda Marks (46 years). While we work to get caught back up, they also reflect something we're proud of.”

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# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Spring district fire schools start in a little over a month as of the moment I'm writing this. Which one are you going to?

The season starts in Redfield on March 28<sup>th</sup> for the northeast school. On the same day Dr Allison Barry will be holding her Fire-fighter Wellness Summit in Brookings. The following weekend is the Fair City Fireman Conference in Huron.

April 25<sup>th</sup> is shaping up to be statewide training day with the southeast district school in Volga. Then the central district school in Wessington Springs and not to be left out, the Rushmore Conference takes place in Rapid City April 25 & 26. State fire school is coming together nicely. With the help of Taylor Moore, our new senior account executive, we hope to have things run a little smoother this year. You can expect some familiar faces with new material along with new instructors from across the nation and local talent. We hope to start dropping classes next month.

Be sure to save the dates of June



**Rick George, Central District Director**

"State fire school is coming together nicely. With the help of Taylor Moore, our new senior account executive, we hope to have things run a little smoother this year. You can expect some familiar faces with new material along with new instructors from across the nation and local talent."

11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>. One class we will need help with is a water supply/tanker shuttle class. Mark Davis will be returning this year with a new 8 hour hands on session. Mark will be needing 2 engines, 2 tanker/tenders, 4 lengths of 6 inch suction and a variety of strainers. If you are able to supply any of these items, please contact me or another board member. You will be compensated for the use. So if you have someone in your department that is interested in the class and needs some experience this will be a perfect time for them to learn

from one of the best in the country.

One other fire school note, I'm hearing that there will be another Pints & Perspectives event. If you missed it last year it was spectacular and we thank the crew from Firefighter Skill Mastery for taking the lead on that. See you on the training ground. Stay safe. Stay hungry. Stay motivated.

**RICK GEORGE,**  
Central District Director

Hello from the Northeast – As I am writing this (March 15<sup>th</sup> ish) we are waiting out another blizzard that is threatening to shut down our corner of the state. The last blizzard we had in Aberdeen there were departments in the southern half of the state were fighting grass fires and it's hard to believe that 150 miles can make that much of a difference. We haven't had many wildland fires in this part of the state, but with warmer weather in the forecast I am sure that we aren't far behind.

With Spring comes District Fire Schools – if you are reading this you probably missed Northeast District Fire School that is being held Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>. There are several other training opportunities in April that could attend, we

try to keep a complete listing on our website – [www.sdfirefighters.org](http://www.sdfirefighters.org) and look under the events tab.

Your state SDFA Board will have met in Watertown the weekend of March 21<sup>st</sup>. We will be finalizing plans for State Fire School in June and also work on plans for the Fall Conference. State Fire School will be at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown June 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>. Make plans to attend, we have many talented and knowledgeable instructors coming to put on some top tier classes.

Thanks,

**MARK STOKS**  
Chief  
Aberdeen Rural Firefighters  
605-380-9817



**Mark Stoks,**  
Northeast District Director

"State Fire School will be at Lake Area Technical College in Watertown June 11<sup>th</sup>- 13<sup>th</sup>. Make plans to attend, we have many talented and knowledgeable instructors coming to put on some top tier classes."

## SOUTH DAKOTA STATE FIRE AUXILIARY AWARD APPLICATION

The South Dakota State Fire Auxiliary is offering two \$1,000 awards to be given to (2) two SD Volunteer Fire Dept and/or SD Volunteer Auxiliary. Award money will be awarded on July 1, 2026.

Applications will be accepted from May 1, 2026, thru June 1, 2026.

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIRMENTS:

1. The fire dept must be a member of the South Dakota Firefighters Association.
2. The auxiliary must be a member of the South Dakota Firefighters Association Auxiliary.

### REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS:

1. Essay explaining how this award will benefit your fire service along with how many members are on your department.

Please email to [southdakotafireauxiliary@gmail.com](mailto:southdakotafireauxiliary@gmail.com) or mail to:

SDFA  
ATTN: CHERYL ANDERSON  
PO BOX 54  
BELLE FOURCHE, SD 57717

# SDFA AUXILIARY REPORT

The Auxiliary would like to announce our award opportunity. Below you will find the application. This award was created to help the volunteer departments and auxiliaries within South Dakota. Over 92% of SD fire departments are volunteers and rely on fundraisers to support their departments. Please note application deadline is June 1, 2026.

**HOLLY BAUER**  
Vice President SDFA Auxiliary



## Deadwood paged to accident

On March 10 at approximately 5:20 p.m., Deadwood Fire and Rescue was paged to the Presidential District in Deadwood for a single vehicle rollover with individuals trapped. First arriving firefighters quickly stabilized the overturned vehicle. The windshield of the vehicle was cut out, and the individuals were able to be removed. Both occupants were treated on scene by Monument Ambulance.

## Spearfish responds to wildland fire

At approximately 12:12 on March 4 the Spearfish Fire Department was paged out for a report of a fire in the ditch on West Highway 14 west of Spearfish. Upon arrival firefighters were faced with a wildland fire burning in open pastures along with small stands of trees. The fire was contained to less than 17 acres bordered by West Highway 14 to the north, and Interstate 90 to the south. One structure was threatened but not involved. The Spearfish Fire Department was assisted by the Deadwood Volunteer Fire Department, South Dakota State Wildland Fire, the U.S. Forest Service, Lawrence County Sheriff's Office, South Dakota Highway Patrol, and Lawrence County Emergency Management.

# Picking up the pieces after blaze

### Brookings couple calls off move to new location after fire

It's been a life-changing week for David and Kristina Bauer. A Monday fire destroyed a metal pole barn building at 3026 Sunnyview Drive that housed vehicle-sand equipment for their trucking company.

Fire departments from Brookings, Aurora, Volga, Bruce, Elkton, Sinai and Arlington were called in to help extinguish the blaze.

The machine shed was destroyed, but the firefighters were able to make sure the fire did not spread to other buildings.

Bauer said the recent snowfall was a blessing in that it helped prevent the fire to spread to other areas of the neighborhood.

In a Tuesday news release, Brookings County Assistant Sheriff David Biteler said the fire crews were on the scene for more the three and one-half hours on Monday. And firefighters were called back to the scene shortly after midnight Tuesday morning after the fire rekindled.

The Bauers began the process this week of working with their insurers to rebuild the structure.

The building contained a tractor and vehicles and various tools and equipment that they used to run their transportation business.

"And the most important thing was that our three cats were in there," she said. And those pets lost their lives. "But thankfully no other lives were lost or hurt."

Kristina Bauer said he couple were planning to make a move to a new house and shop south

of Brookings, but now they have cancelled the move and plan to rebuild again at the current location. "I even had flooring picked out. Then Monday I get a phone call that your shop is on fire," Kristina said. "This was a sign to either go or stay and we decided to stay. We're going to rebuild the shop."

"The outpouring of support from Sunnyview residents was awesome," Kristina Bauer said. "This was a sign from God that he wanted us to stay, so we're going to stay."

She said the previous owner built the shop with living quarters, where the cats were. But the rebuilt structure will not include living quarters.

"We're very thankful for the neighbors, the support, the phone calls, the visits and firemen working tirelessly," Kristina said.

The Bauers said the vehicles and equipment in the building is valued at more than \$250,000. They were able to salvage one tractor from the building.

The Bauers said they just had real estate people in to take pictures of the property prior to their planned move and those pictures will help the insurers.

They said they were not fully covered by insurance, but they should be able to rebuild the structure.

"We'll struggle, but we'll get through it" David Bauer said.

*(Written by Doug Kott, The Brookings Register; Brookings, SD, March 6, 2026)*



# JIM STEVENS MEMORIAL RIDE

## June 27, 2026

- Registration: 9:00 AM @ Hot Springs Fire Hall**
- Kickstands Up: 10:00 AM**
- Route: TBD**
- Final Destination: American Legion, Hot Springs**

**\$ Ride Fee: \$20 per Rider**

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## Cheyenne Crossing camper fire reported

On March 6 at 8:11 a.m., the Deadwood Fire Department was paged to Cheyenne Crossing in rural Spearfish Canyon for a reported camper fire that was fully engulfed and threatening structures and vegetation. Arriving firefighters found a camper fully involved. Multiple propane tanks were removed from the vehicle. Fire did spread to the adjacent garage. Crews knocked the fire down quickly and were able to save the garage that was exposed with minor damage. Responding agencies: Lead Fire Department; Spearfish Canyon Fire Department; Lawrence County Sheriff's Office; Lawrence County Emergency Management; Monument Health Ambulance; and Black Hills Energy.

## BLACK HILLS WILDFIRES PROMPT EVACUATIONS, POWER SHUTOFF

Wildfires fueled by high winds broke out Thursday afternoon across Pennington, Meade, and Custer counties in the Black Hills, prompting evacuations and an emergency power shutoff in the Southern Hills.

Three fires — the Quarry, Deer, and Hazelrodt fires — are burning in Custer County southeast of Custer, east of Sidney Park Road. The fires are threatening structures and closing roads in the area.

Residents living between Highway 16-A and Flynn Creek, Lower French Creek, Hazelrodt, and Glenn Erin roads are being told to evacuate.

The Custer County Sheriff posted on social media: "The Custer Armory will be open for all evac-

uees. Please feel free to seek shelter there for you and your family. As conditions can change rapidly, please do not wait for first responders to notify you. Be proactive and ensure your safety."

Black Hills Energy enacted an Emergency Public Safety Power Shutoff in the Southern Hills, affecting about 540 customers in the eastern part of Hot Springs where the nearby Hot Brook Canyon fire is burning. Other impacted areas include the Buffalo Gap, Oral, and Maverick Junction areas.

The utility said power will remain off until conditions improve and it is safe to re-energize power lines serving those areas.

(KOTA-TV ABC 7 Rapid City, March 13, 2026)

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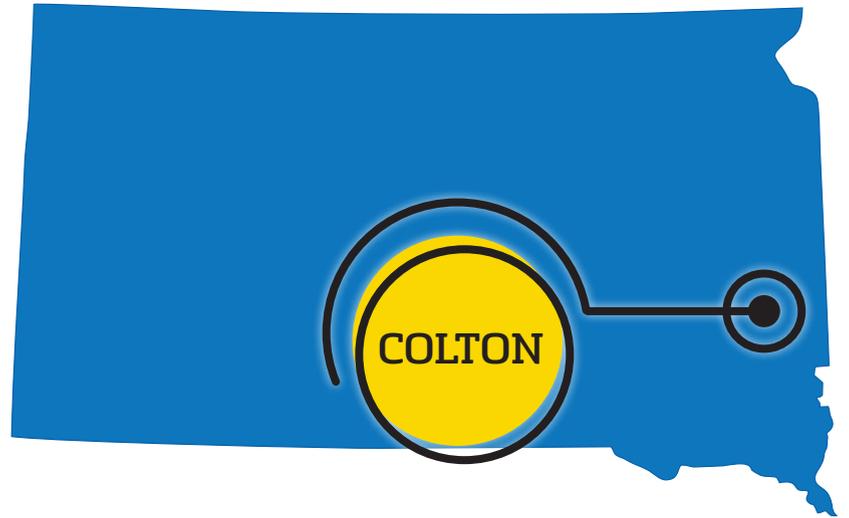
# FEATURED DEPARTMENT

## Colton Fire Rescue

**Members:** 30 **Volunteer:** 30  
**Year Established:** January 9, 1911 - Fire & EMS Combined

**Fire Calls Per Year:** 33  
**Rescue/Extrication Calls Per Year:** 67  
**Equipment:** 2 Pumpers, 2 Tankers, 2 Rescue, 1 Wildland, 1 Grain bin Engulfment trailer

**Fire Chief** Jerrit Pedersen  
**1st Assistant Chief** Wade Egger  
**2nd Assistant Chief** Monte Koopman  
**3rd Assistant Chief** Dave Jorgenson  
**Sec/Treasurere** Kurt Anderson



Members of the Colton Fire Department include, back row: Rylin Fods, Ryan Fods, Tyler Evans, Jeremy Hoek, Kelly Peterson, Devan Fods, Kaden Egger, Brandon Fedeler, Tayte Randby, Ethan Koopman. Middle row: Gracie Pedersen, Gerrit Pedersen, Jason Lonning, Dan Bunjer, Keith Degen, Corey McDonald, Carter Warne, Matt Swartwout, Lane Egger, Mason Hollaren, Gage Egger. Front row: Matt Kraner, Jon Randby, Kurt Anderson, Dave Jorgenson, Monte Koopman, Wade Egger, Jerrit Pedersen, Jerry Hoek, LeRoy Koopman, Dick Johnson. Not pictured, Tyrel Ellsworth, Lois Vandervliet, Austin Stover.

### 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: \_\_\_\_\_  
 # Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ # Paid \_\_\_\_\_ Year Department Established: \_\_\_\_\_  
 # Fires Per year \_\_\_\_\_ # Rescue/Extrication Calls Per Year \_\_\_\_\_ Is Your Dept. Fire & EMS Combined? \_\_\_\_\_  
 # Pumpers \_\_\_\_\_ # Tankers \_\_\_\_\_ # Rescue \_\_\_\_\_ # Ambulance \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Names in picture: (on separate form please)

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

Officer's Name:

Office:

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Mail to: South Dakota Firefighter Newspaper,  
 PO Box 122, Humboldt, IA 50548  
 E-mail to: [jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com)

# Going Long: Stretching 300' and Beyond with the Supply Side Leadout

By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

Access to certain structures can be difficult. Long setbacks, extended driveways, garden apartments, and large commercial footprints all challenge the traditional 200' preconnect. Because of this, every engine company should carry at least one line capable of "going long," along with a clear game plan for stretching it quickly and efficiently. The exact length needed will depend on your district, but simply having the hose isn't enough — crews must be comfortable deploying it.

This article examines a hose stretch technique known as the Supply Side Leadout. While the method can be adapted for use with a traditional 200' preconnect, it becomes especially valuable when deploying longer hose loads of 300 feet or more. This article uses a 300' × 1¾" preconnected attack line to illustrate the technique, but my engine company also applies the same concept when stretching our 400' deadload of 2½" hose.

For this stretch to work effectively, the hose should be loaded as either a flat load or a modified minuteman load. For the purposes of this article, the technique will be illustrated using a flat load, as that is what my engine company runs.

Our engine carries a 1¾" × 300' attack line off the rear of the apparatus. The hose bed is arranged with a loop every 100 feet and includes a clear loop located after the first fold in the bed. This configuration allows firefighters to quickly identify and pull sections of hose during the stretch.

## HOW TO STRETCH IT

Firefighter #1 begins by shouldering the first section of hose. For our engine, this is the top 100 feet. As Firefighter #1 steps away from the engine, they should move in the direction of the intended stretch. For example, if the fire building is to the right of the apparatus, Firefighter #1 should take a couple steps to the right as they move away from the rig.

Once Firefighter #1 has cleared enough space, Firefighter #2 shoulders the next section of hose; for my engine this is another 100 feet. After this section is shouldered, Firefighter #1 returns to the hose bed and pulls the remaining section of hose, which is the final 100 feet.

When pulling the last 100' hose, Firefighter #1 should grab a fold approximately halfway up the remaining bundle (roughly 50 feet mark) along with the clear loop at the bottom of the load. This will clear the bed quickly while still being able to easily flake out.

At this point, both firefighters are positioned with hose shouldered. Firefighter #2 now leads the stretch toward the objective. This is intentional because once the pull section is deployed, the hose on firefighter #2's shoulder will be the first to flake off.

As Firefighter #2 moves forward, Firefighter #1 drags the final section of hose behind them (see Picture 1). The clear loop will pull tight first. When this occurs, Firefighter #1 should drop that loop while maintaining control of the 50' fold. Once the 50' loop pulls

tight, it should also be dropped.

When the bottom 100 feet of hose is fully deployed, Firefighter #1 should communicate this to Firefighter #2. This lets Firefighter #2 know that once the line pulls tight, the hose on their shoulder should begin flaking off. If Firefighter #2 feels the hose pull tight before Firefighter #1 communicates that the bottom 100' is flaked, they know that the hose caught on a pinch point somewhere and to not let the hose begin flaking off their shoulder bundle yet.

Once Firefighter #2's shoulder load has deployed, the stretch naturally transitions. Firefighter #1 moves past to continue advancing the line while Firefighter #2 drops behind the nozzle to manage the remaining hose and address any friction points (see Picture 3). As the crew closes in on the objective, the final 100' section carried by Firefighter #1 can begin deploying to finish the stretch and position the line for the attack.

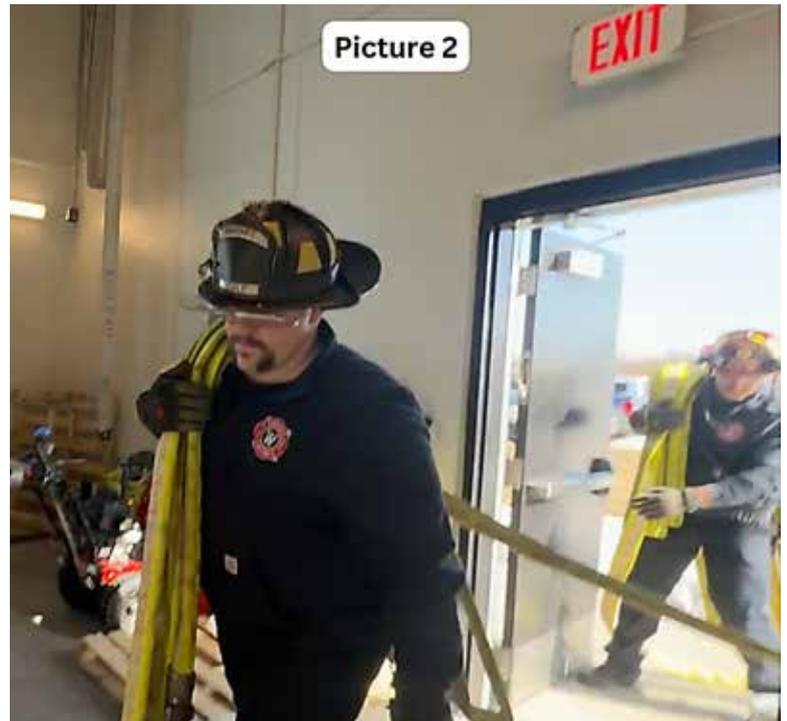
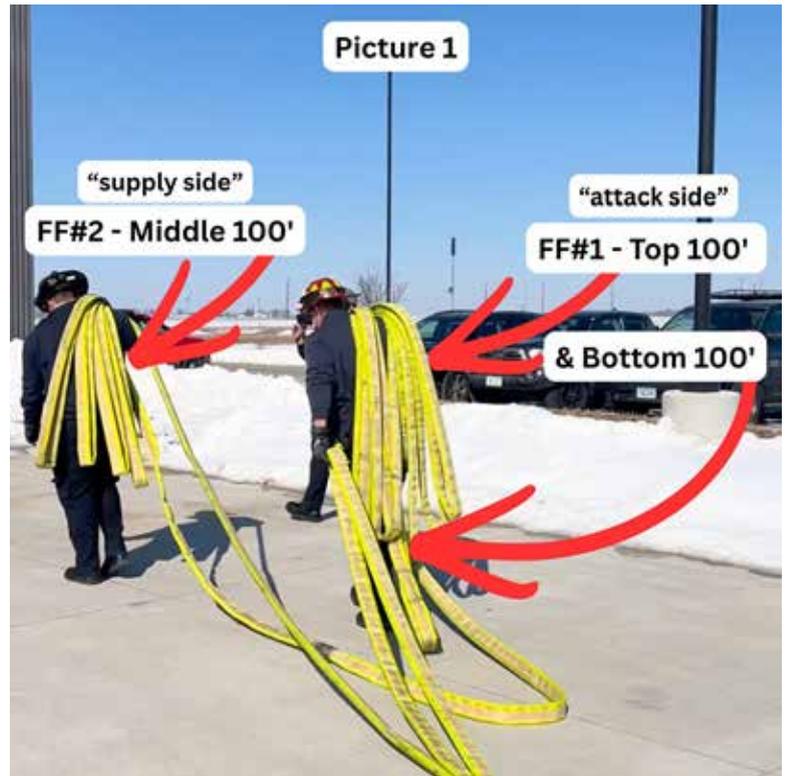
Upon reaching the destination, Firefighter #1 can place the hose on their shoulder onto the ground and flake out the hose as needed to properly position the line for the attack.

There is a video example of this on the Iowa Firefighter Training Article Archive website ([tinyurl.com/3mpjcsuv](https://www.tinyurl.com/3mpjcsuv)).

## WHY THE SUPPLY SIDE LEADS

Many engine companies tradition-

SEE GOING LONG, PAGE 13



**NEED NEW GEAR FOR YOUR VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT?**

EVERY YEAR FIRE AND IRON MC. STATION 49 (MITCHELL SD) HOLDS A RIDE FOR RESPONDERS EVENT. A PORTION OF THE PROCEEDS WILL GO TO A RANDOMLY DRAWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT IN EASTERN SOUTH DAKOTA AS A CASH DONATION.

USE THE MONEY FOR GEAR, EQUIPMENT, TRAINING, UPDATES OR WHATEVER YOUR DEPARTMENT CHOOSES.

HOW DO YOU APPLY? SIMPLY CLICK ON THE LINK POSTED WITH THIS FLYER. ANSWER 4 SIMPLE QUESTIONS AND YOU WILL BE ENTERED INTO THE DRAWING. ALL APPLICATIONS MUST BE TURNED IN BY MAY 10TH 2026.

---

**PLEASE SUPPORT AND JOIN US DURING OUR RIDE  
JUNE 20TH 2026 IN WOONSOCKET SD**

Only one application per department please.

**MORE INFO: [HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/SHARE/P/1FEMUAV8WU/?MIBEXTID=WWXIFR](https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1femUAV8WU/?mibextid=WWXIFR)**

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

A classified ad in the South Dakota Firefighter!

To get your truck moving fast email [jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com)

## Going Long FROM PAGE 12

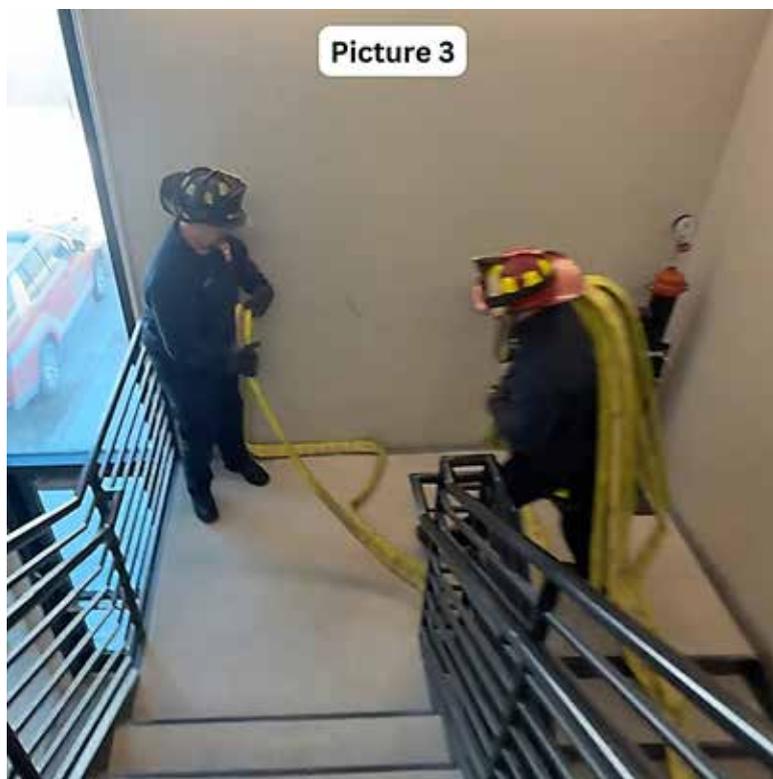
ally stretch bulk hose loads with the nozzle firefighter leading while the second firefighter shoulders additional hose and follows behind. While this method works, it has several drawbacks.

During a traditional stretch, nobody is watching the back end of the line. Friction points at corners, doorways, or stair landings can go unnoticed. The nozzle firefighter may feel tension in the line and mistakenly begin flaking hose early, thinking the line has run out when it is actually hung up somewhere behind them.

By allowing the supply side firefighter to lead the stretch, these problems are reduced. The nozzle firefighter can stay focused on the back end of the line, managing friction points and ensuring the hose moves cleanly around corners, through doors, and up stairs (see Picture 2).

### THIS APPROACH IS ESPECIALLY VALUABLE FOR THREE-PERSON ENGINE COMPANIES.

On three-person crews, the officer often has to assist with stretching the line, which limits their ability to move ahead of the hose line, perform reconnaissance, open doors, and ensure the stretch is accurate. In single-family dwellings this may be manageable, but in multi-family occupancies it can

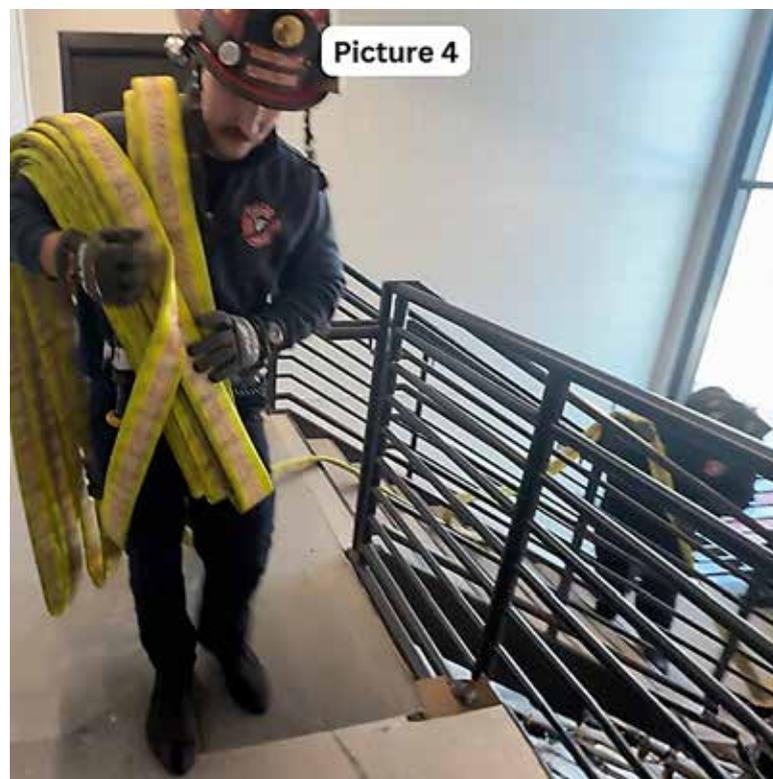


quickly become problematic.

Using the supply side leadout allows the driver/operator to assume the supply side role, leading out the stretch while the nozzle firefighter manages the line behind them. Once the driver's shoulder load has deployed, they can

communicate that the line is on the nozzle firefighter and begin working back toward the apparatus. As the driver returns to the rig, they retrace the stretch, ensuring the hose is free of kinks, not trapped in doorways, and properly aligned before making the connection and charging the line (see Picture 4).

All of this happens while the officer is free to work ahead of the line, confirming the location of the fire, controlling doors, and ensur-



ing the first line is placed where it will have the greatest impact.

For engine companies operating with limited staffing or longer hose loads, the Supply Side Leadout can be a simple adjustment that significantly improves the efficiency and accuracy of the stretch. By allowing the supply side to lead out, crews can better manage friction points, maintain awareness of the back end of the line, and keep the stretch moving toward the objective. If your com-

pany has never experimented with this method, it is worth putting it on the training ground. You may find it quickly earns a place in your engine company's playbook.

*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 with any questions, comments or inquiries.*

# WHAT? SO WHAT? NOW WHAT?

By JERRY KNAPP

## WHAT?

Lithium ion battery fires are the hot topic in our Fire Service today. Fires started by thermal runaway in these batteries often spread fire quickly and progress to flashover and full involvement of the fire compartment in seconds. We have all seen the videos.

## SO WHAT?

The great researchers at FSRI have done live burn studies to determine if residential sprinklers will control this hazard. From the UL FSRI press release: "As part of this research, we conducted experiments in both a bedroom and an open-design living room. The National Fire Sprinkler Association designed and installed a residential sprinkler system in the rooms to meet NFPA 13D requirements. We started the fires by intentionally generating thermal runaway in a sit-on, two-wheeled e-scooter LiB."

Press release continues, "The results demonstrated that a residential automatic fire sprinkler system, designed and installed in accordance with NFPA 13D, can

effectively prevent flashover and stop the fire from spreading to other fuels in the room after sprinkler activation, thereby controlling the hazard."

## NOW WHAT?

For complete details read the peer-reviewed journal article, "Examining the Impact of Residential Fire Sprinklers on e-Scooter Fires Initiated by Thermal Runaway of Li-Ion Batteries," has been published in *Fire Technology*. Co-authored by Charles Fleischmann, PhD, PE Principal Research Engineer with Dan Madrzykowski and Craig Weinschenk.

Of additional importance if you are a student of our game, commit the above names to memory. If you see them presenting at venues like FDIC and other conferences, make sure you attend and look for their other spectacular world class work that provides us science and engineering based understanding of our enemy fire and how best to control it to insure we all go home. Now go to the FSRI web site and take in the free world class training that is there. It provides information that can save your life and the life and health of both civilians and firefighters.



## Chamberlain-Oacoma ice water rescue training

Chamberlain-Oacoma Fire Department and Game Fish and Parks joined together for February training ice water rescue.

General Fund 2025 Inc/Exp - Last year  
1/1/2025 through 12/31/2025

Category	1/1/2025-12/31/2025	OVERALL TOTAL
<b>INCOME</b>		
DOT Income	230	230
Fall Conference Income	1,423	1,423
Fallen Fighters Memorial	0	0
Grants	300	300
INTEREST	2,162	2,162
MEMBERSHIP-MEMBERSHIP INCOME	158,315	158,315
State Fire School	16,414	16,414
FROM REG FUND SAVINGS 1056040 A	9,810	9,810
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>188,654</b>	<b>188,654</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Advanced Association Management	932	932
Board Travel Expenses	3,174	3,174
Contract	8,800	8,800
Fall Conference Expense	5,326	5,326
FALLEN FIREFIGHTER MEMORIAL-E...	311	311
INSURANCE-INSURANCE (ROBOT, B...	111,219	111,219
Membership Drive	568	568
Membership Software	12,717	12,717
NEWSLETTER	24,000	24,000
NVFC-NVFC EXPENSES FOR 1 MTG.	11,411	11,411
OFFICE EXPENSE	1,978	1,978
Scholarship	5,000	5,000
SD FIRE SCHOOL-FIRESCHOOL EXP...	19,661	19,661
SD Joint Council	869	869
SDFA BOARD EXP-SDFA BOARD EX...	1,096	1,096
TO GF CHECKING DSFCU 1038930 7	9,810	9,810
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>216,870</b>	<b>216,870</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>-28,217</b>	<b>-28,217</b>



**Lemmon structure fire**

On March 7, at 3:56 am, the Lemmon Fire Department responded to a reported structure fire in Lemmon. On arrival units found a two-story home with moderate to heavy smoke and flames exiting a window of the house. Upon entry crews encountered heavy smoke and high temperatures and began an aggressive interior attack and search of occupants of the residence. Two occupants were removed from the home by fire personnel and taken by the Lemmon Ambulance to the West River Regional Medical Center. One victim did not survive and the other is being treated. The fire was completely extinguished, and extensive overhaul was conducted by the department. The response included five fire and rescue apparatus and 20 fire personnel. The Perkins County Sheriff's Office and Lemmon Ambulance also responded and were on scene for the duration of the incident. "Our sympathy and prayers are extended to the family affected by this tragic loss," said Fire Chief Brent Dirk. "Thank you to all that responded including the Lemmon Ambulance, Perkins County Sheriff's Office and the South Dakota Fire Marshal's Office." The cause of the fire is under investigation by the South Dakota Fire Marshal's Office.

Net Worth 2025 YTD - As of 12/31/2025  
(Includes unrealized gains)

Account	12/31/2025 Balance
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Cash and Bank Accounts</b>	
Gen Fund 6 Month CD 1038930-3-22-2026	40,028.13
GEN FUND SCHOLARSHIP CD1027050D 10-7-27-Matures 10/7/27, 1.8...	39,724.54
GENL FUND MONEY MARKET DSFCU103890M-Dues Interest Bearing ...	3.38
GF CHECKING DSFCU 1038930 7	8,719.11
GF Sav DSFCU 1038930 A	5.06
MEMORIAL FUND SAVINGS DSFCU 1027050 A-Membership Acct.	4,752.21
REG FUND SAVINGS 1056040 A	16,044.32
STATE FUND CHECKING DSFCU 1039100 7	595.42
STATE FUND MONEY MARKET DSFCU 1039100 M	343,635.01
STATE FUND MEMB ACCT SAV DSFCU 1039100 A	5.08
<b>TOTAL Cash and Bank Accounts</b>	<b>453,512.26</b>
<b>Other Assets</b>	
<b>TOTAL Other Assets</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>453,512.26</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	
<b>Credit Cards</b>	
<b>TOTAL Credit Cards</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Other Liabilities</b>	
<b>TOTAL Other Liabilities</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>453,512.26</b>

State Fund 2025 Inc Exp - Last year  
1/1/2025 through 12/31/2025

Category	1/1/2025-12/31/2025	OVERALL TOTAL
<b>INCOME</b>		
District Fire School Income	-466	-466
INTEREST	1,378	1,378
State Fire School	-5,460	-5,460
State Fund Budget	246,865	246,865
FROM STATE FUND MONEY MARKE...	133,259	133,259
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>375,575</b>	<b>375,575</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Board Travel Expenses	6,047	6,047
District Fire Schools-DISTRICT FIRES...	13,688	13,688
Fall Conference Expense	13,698	13,698
Mobile Fire Trailer #1 - Expense	8,550	8,550
Mobile Fire Trailer #2 - Expense	926	926
OFFICE EXPENSE	52	52
SD FIRE SCHOOL-FIRESCHOOL EXP...	85,876	85,876
VOIDED	0	0
TO STATE FUND CHECKING DSFCU ...	133,259	133,259
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>262,096</b>	<b>262,096</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>	<b>113,479</b>	<b>113,479</b>

# Application Period Now Open for MSA's Globe Gear Giveaway

52 sets of turnout jackets, pants, and helmets will be awarded in 2026

MSA Safety, Nomex® and Kevlar® for Personal Protection, and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) are pleased to announce that the 2026 application period is now open for MSA's Globe Gear Giveaway. Through this annual program, volunteer fire departments in need can apply to receive new Globe® turnout gear and MSA Cairns® helmets to enhance the protection and safety of their firefighters.

Now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year, the program has provided 186 departments with a total of 819 sets of turnouts and 364 helmets. In 2026, an additional 52 sets of gear will be awarded to 13 departments. Eligible volunteer fire departments can apply for four sets of turnout jackets, pants, and helmets to help protect their responders and increase the capabilities of their department.

"Turnout gear is critical to the health, safety, and effectiveness of firefighters, yet there are many volunteer fire departments across the U.S. and Canada that struggle to find funding for the gear they need," said NVFC Chair Steve Hirsch. "For 15 years, this program has helped address that need and ensure more firefighters are properly equipped to serve their communities. We thank MSA Safety for this ongoing partnership and their commitment to supporting the volunteer fire service."

"We're proud to support firefighters who are dedicated to protecting their communities," said Joann Serakowski, MSA Safety Vice President of United States and Canada Fire Business. "Through our long-standing partnership with this program, we remain committed to helping keep firefighters safe by providing safety gear to those who need it most. We're grateful for the opportunity to help enhance the safety of those who serve on the front lines every day."

"Our partnership with the NVFC and MSA remains incredibly important to us, as both organizations share our passion for equipping front-line volunteers with cutting-edge gear, research-driven solutions, and ongoing education," said John Denison, DuPont Personal Protection Market Leader. "DuPont proudly supports the Globe Gear Giveaway each year as part of our focused mission in the emergency response market – to develop innovative Nomex® and Kevlar® fibers designed to help protect firefighters who work tirelessly to keep our communities safe. Through this program, we are able to turn that mission into action by delivering gear directly to the departments that need it most."

The application period is open through noon ET on June 1. To be eligible to apply, departments must meet the following criteria:

- Be over 50% volunteer.
- Serve a population of 25,000 or less.
- Be located in the United States or Canada and be legally organized under state/province law. \*Indian/tribal entities not organized under state/province law are eligible.
- Have at least one active NVFC

member. To help departments meet this requirement, MSA will provide one-year individual NVFC memberships to the first 500 applicants.

- Demonstrate a need for the gear.

View the full criteria and apply at [www.nvfc.org/gear](http://www.nvfc.org/gear).

Winners will be announced monthly between July and December. Stay tuned to the NVFC [web site](#) and [Dispatch newsletter](#) for details.

## ABOUT GLOBE MANUFACTURING COMPANY AND MSA SAFETY

Globe Manufacturing Company, a leader in fire service protective clothing, is a subsidiary of MSA Safety Incorporated. MSA Safety Incorporated (NYSE: MSA) is the global leader in advanced safety products,

technologies and solutions. Driven by its singular mission of safety, the company has been at the forefront of safety innovation since 1914, protecting workers and facility infrastructure around the world across a broad range of diverse end markets while creating sustainable value for shareholders. With 2024 revenues of \$1.8 billion, MSA Safety is headquartered in Cranberry Township, Pennsylvania and employs a team of more than 5,000 associates across its more than 40 international locations. For more information, please visit <http://www.msasafety.com/>.

## ABOUT DUPONT PERSONAL PROTECTION

From first responders to industrial workers, DuPont provides a wide range of personal protection solu-

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

## ABOUT DUPONT

DuPont (NYSE: DD) is a global innovation leader, providing advanced solutions that help transform industries and improve everyday life across our key markets of healthcare, water, construction, and transportation. More information about the company, its businesses and solutions can be found at <http://www.dupont.com/>. Investors can access information included on the Investor Relations section of the website at [investors.dupont.com](http://investors.dupont.com).

DuPont™, the DuPont Oval Logo,

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## ABOUT THE NVFC

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire 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](http://www.nvfc.org).

# IF YOU'RE FIRST TO RESPOND,

# BE FIRST TO REPORT NATURAL GAS LEAKS.

## REPORT MAKE THE RIGHT CALL FAST

Report a natural gas emergency to the First Responder Hotline: **1-800-275-5743**

- For additional questions and information on emergency coordination, contact MidAmerican Energy at [publicawareness@midamerican.com](mailto:publicawareness@midamerican.com).

## RESPOND TAKE CONTROL OF THE SCENE

**If you encounter blowing gas from a pipeline:**

- Approach from upwind
- Keep all ignition sources away from the gas
- Set up a perimeter to keep people at a safe distance

**When responding to a gas leak inside a building:**

- Evacuate the building immediately
- Move people to a safe distance
- Eliminate all ignition sources
- Check all nearby buildings for a gas presence

**If you need to shut off gas:**

- At the meter, turn off the service valve to a horizontal position
- **DO NOT** reopen the valve yourself; only MidAmerican can restore service

## PREPARE TRAIN FOR REAL-LIFE SCENARIOS

MidAmerican offers free, in-person pipeline emergency training for first responders. Learn how to identify, respond to and report a natural gas emergency before it happens.

Learn more at:  
[sd.pipeline-awareness.com](http://sd.pipeline-awareness.com)





## Notice of Election for S DFA President Saturday, June 13, 2026

State Fire School, Lake Area Technical College, Watertown SD  
11:00am – 2:00pm cst

### S DFA By-Laws ARTICLE IV OFFICERS

1. Election and Qualification: The Officers of the Association shall be elected to a three (3) year term by the members of the Association at the Annual Meeting. The terms to be staggered, so one officer shall be elected each year.

The 2023 election will be for a president for a three (3) year term.

The 2024 election for a vice-president for a three (3) year term.

Elections shall be by ballot. A simple majority will constitute election.

If more than two candidates but less than four candidates are running, the person with the largest percentage of votes is elected.

If there are four or more candidates for an office, and there is no majority of votes for any one candidate, then there will be a runoff of the two highest vote getters.

### ARTICLE V NOMINATION AND ELECTION

1. Nomination and Election Committee: The nominating Committee will be made up of appointed chairperson and four (4) members. Two (2) of the members to be Board members not up for re-election and two (2) members appointed from the membership by the President.

2. Duties and Responsibilities: It shall be the duty of the Nominating and Election Committee to submit a slate of candidates for the vacancies of each election. This slate to be circulated to the membership forty-five (45) days prior to an election.

3. Installation: Officers and Directors shall be installed as the last order of business at the Annual Meeting. All Officers and Directors terms shall commence on the 1st day of July following their installation, after the general membership meeting.

**Accepted letters of nomination or intent to run by eligible candidates are due to the committee by April 29, 2026.**

#### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Dave Jorgenson, Chair – [SEDir@sdfirefighters.org](mailto:SEDir@sdfirefighters.org)

Jason Mostard – [BLDir@sdfirefighters.org](mailto:BLDir@sdfirefighters.org)

Mark Stoks – [NWDir@sdfirefighters.org](mailto:NWDir@sdfirefighters.org)

Kevin Schuelke - [schuelke1@itcmilbank.com](mailto:schuelke1@itcmilbank.com)

Lawrence Karsky – [lkarskyfire@gmail.com](mailto:lkarskyfire@gmail.com)

## Huron FD called to large grass fire

On Feb. 27, the Huron Fire Department responded to a large grass fire. This fire was wind driven with dry conditions making it a very dynamic and dangerous situation. Approximately 30 structures were in the possible path of this fire with some being extremely close. The fire department responded in full force with six trucks, each having to operate independently to protect different areas until further help could arrive. There was a tremendous effort put in by the members of the Huron Fire Department. What made the difference was the help from the community and surrounding departments. Several people in the community worked hard to protect their own properties as well as their neighbors with the use of farm equipment and UTVs. Additionally, they had support from Cavour Fire Department, Wolsey Fire Department and Alpena Fire Department. Approximately 20 fire department apparatus operated on this scene. Assistance was provided by the Huron Police Department, Beadle County Sheriff's Office and SD Highway Patrol in keeping the road shutdown for fire personnel to work safely.

## FIREFIIGHTERS SENT TO FACILITY IN NORTH SIOUX CITY

Fire crews in North Sioux City spent part of their Wednesday evening responding to an alarm at a business in that community. That call came in just before 7 o'clock PM Wednesday at a manufacturing facility located at 1000 Fimco Lane. The North Sioux City Fire Department tells KTIV there was a small equipment fire, but sprinklers came on and extinguished most of the fire. There was no major damage to the building, but some equipment inside was damaged. All the employees evacuated, and no injuries were reported. (KTIV-TV NBC 4 Sioux City, March 6, 2026)

# Rapid City ambulance to require contract, fees for continued service in Meade County

By Wendy Pitlick  
Black Hills Pioneer

The Rapid City Ambulance Service will require a contract with Meade County in order to continue providing services in the southern half of the county.

STURGIS — Since 2003, the Rapid City Fire Department has been providing ambulance services to southern Meade County with no charge to the county, but rising costs and decreased insurance reimbursements have prompted the agency to require cost-sharing contracts with the 3 main counties that receive service.

On Tuesday, Rapid City Fire Department Chief Jason Culberson explained a new requirement for ambulance services, during the Meade County Commission meeting. The Rapid City Fire Department took over the ambulance service operations in 2003 from private ambulance company American Medical Response. The department provides service for Pennington County, southern Meade County, eastern Custer County, parts of Lawrence County, Box Elder, and parts of Summerset.

“We are at max capacity for our current response units with no financial capacity to increase the

number of units we provide.” — Jason Culberson, Rapid City Fire Chief

Recently, Culberson sent letters to each of the counties, cities, and townships it covers, asking for a contract in order to continue providing services.

The Rapid City Ambulance Service will require a contract with Meade County in order to continue providing services in the southern half of the county.

The Rapid City Ambulance Service will require a contract with Meade County in order to continue providing services in the southern half of the county. Courtesy photo

“The cost of providing ambulance services has increased significantly and reimbursement has stagnated,” according to the letter.

“The RCFD ambulance service is faced with the rising expenses associated with maintaining and operating our ambulance fleet, ensuring compliance with state regulations, staffing qualified paramedics and emergency medical technicians, covering the costs of equipment and medical supplies, and our ever-increasing call volume in all areas of our response districts. We are at max capacity for our current response units with no financial capacity to increase

the number of units we provide. The city of Rapid City, and surrounding areas in which our ambulances respond, including the unincorporated areas of Meade County are growing quickly and we need to be able to respond and provide the service we all expect.”

Culberson said the ambulance service responds to about 22,519 calls per year, and 2,655 of those are outside of Rapid City limits. In Meade County’s unincorporated areas, the ambulance responded to 255 calls last year. In Box Elder, which is partially in Meade County, it responded to 850 calls.

In Meade County, the Rapid City Ambulance Service serves the north boundary to Tilford, east of Wicksville, down to Elm Springs, and back to Interstate 90.

The ambulance service has a total of 40 employees, with 4 24-hour ambulances. The city of Rapid City provides some funding for the service, and other funding comes from user fees. Culberson said that model is not sustainable anymore, because of low insurance payouts. He explained that it costs about \$20.59 in mileage fees to respond to the average call. About 72% of patients have government insurance such as Medicare or Medicaid, which pays less

than \$9 for mileage, and 10% of patients have Blue Cross Blue Shield, which pays \$14 per mile. Ultimately, Culberson said the cost to provide an ambulance outside of city limits is about \$1,080 per call, and Medicaid reimburses about \$255 of that.

“We take what they tell us it costs to provide the service, which is significantly less by up to 50%,” he said. “Some of them are at 20% of what it costs us to provide the service. This is nothing new. This has been talked about for years. Things are starting to get to an emergency throughout the state. This area is not the only one.”

“We are committed to working closely with the Meade County Commission to ensure that these services remain sustainable, and that we continue to meet the county’s needs,” Culberson wrote in his letter. “We are open to discussing possible options for addressing ambulance services in the county and the financial impact this would have on you. I assure you we want to be a good partner and help you find quality care.”

The letter gives the county until Dec. 31 to negotiate a contract with the ambulance service. According to the letter, state statute does not require the ambulance

service to respond in other counties.

“Ultimately the service that is provided is on track to not be provided at the end of the year,” said Commissioner Rich Liggett. “You have been more than kind with providing the service. We as a county have to figure out what this looks like.”

Liggett said he expects the county will have to form an ambulance district, which uses a property tax assessment to pay for emergency medical services in a certain geographical boundary. Some ambulance districts use a percentage levy on properties, while others charge a flat rate for residences and commercial buildings within the district.

But Meade County Equalization Director Rhea Crane said the commission can’t institute an ambulance district without applying it to the whole county. Formation of an ambulance district needs to be a grass-roots effort, brought by the citizens of a particular area, she said.

Meade County already has two ambulance districts. The Piedmont district, which includes Piedmont, Tilford, and parts of Summerset and Black Hawk, and charges a property tax levy for the services. The Rural Meade County Ambulance District includes about 575 square miles on the western side of the county, with boundaries along the Interstate 90 corridor from Exits 28-40, east to the Belle Fourche River, and north on Highway 79 to Vale. That district charges \$75 per residence, and \$150 per commercial property to fund emergency medical services.

Pennington County Fire Coordinator Jerome Harvey, suggested that members of the Meade County Commission meet with Custer and Pennington County representatives to formulate a plan for continuing ambulance services. He also said there have been efforts in the state legislature to require counties to contract with emergency medical services.

“There is definitely a strong effort underway to require this,” Harvey said. “So I would encourage you to have that tri-county meeting, get ahead of this, so that you’re making the decision and the decision isn’t being made in Pierre for you.”

Commissioners Rich Liggett and Earl Severn have already been working with the Rapid City Ambulance Services to learn about the cost of emergency response and other issues facing the service. Following some further discussion, Commission Chairman Gary Deering asked them to meet with representatives from Pennington and Custer County.

“This is something we need to get figured out,” Deering said. “There’s no doubt about that.”



## Brookings machine shed lost in fire

A late-afternoon blaze destroyed a machine shed at 3026 Sunnyview Drive on Monday, March 2, but no injuries were reported among firefighters or others at the scene of the fire. The shed is owned by David and Kristina Bauer. “We’ve pretty much got it knocked down and we’re in the overhaul process; we called the state fire marshal to come out here and help with the investigation,” Brookings Fire Department Chief Troy Hughes said. Fire departments from Aurora, Sinai, Volga, Bruce, Elkton and Arlington provided mutual aid. From the Brookings Register.

# Happy Birthday NVFC

By **STEVE HIRSCH, NVFC Chair**

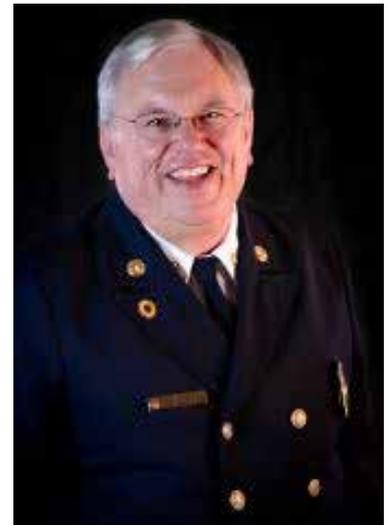
In November of 1975, representatives from seven state firefighter associations gathered in Chicago to talk about establishing an organization, national in scope, to represent volunteer firefighters. The first meeting of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) was held on March 15, 1976, with twelve states represented. Over the

years, the NVFC has continued to grow and mature.

It is exciting that our birthday coincides with the bicentennial of our great nation – and just as exciting that we will be celebrating 50 years when the nation celebrates its 250th! We have a lot in common with this great country's founding. George Washington was a volunteer in Alexandria, VA, Ben Franklin was one of the

founders of Union Fire Company in Philadelphia in 1736, and Thomas Jefferson started a volunteer fire department in Richmond, VA, in 1779. President Franklin Pierce was a volunteer in Concord, NW, President Calvin Coolidge in Northampton, MA, and President Herbert Hoover in West Branch, IA. Of all of these, I believe that West Branch is still a volunteer department.

Our country's founders believed in individual liberties – the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness – but they also knew that protection of the citizens and their property from the ravages of fire was not something that could be done alone, which is why they organized fire companies. They knew that one wooden house built close to one another in our cities was a recipe for disaster. They



knew that a wildfire in grasslands would ultimately find a house or a barn unless checked by the townspeople.

That's why my dad got involved in the fire service – and I suspect why many of you got involved – to serve our communities, to help out our neighbors when they need our help the most. We know that if we don't volunteer, there isn't anyone to handle those calls.

Over the years we evolved into a service that doesn't just handle fire, but rather are an all-hazards agency. The country started that way too. A nation founded over the love of liberty that found that when it stood for what was right, it would grow and prosper. There is no country on this earth – none was ever founded – that can match our nation's strength, its generosity, and its kindness. The same can be said for the nation's volunteer fire service. Volunteer firefighters make up the overwhelming majority of firefighters in our nation. Volunteer firefighters cover the largest land mass in the nation. Volunteer firefighters are professional, they are strong, they are generous and they are kind.

Have we made mistakes as a nation and as a fire service? Sure. We didn't give women the right to vote for many years – and we couldn't quite see the need to have female firefighters. We were okay that a huge section of our population was enslaved – and we couldn't bring ourselves to have anything other than Caucasian firefighters. Just as the nation grew in might, it changed its attitudes and as the volunteer fire service grew we understood that we couldn't exclude segments of our population from among our ranks.

I am a proud American. I am very proud to serve this nation as a volunteer firefighter. Every day our brothers and sisters are fighting fires, extricating people in rescue situations, caring for our citizens when their health demands it, responding to gas meters that are broken off, responding to wildland fires, watching the clouds for the next weather event, and so much more.

If you are reading this and are a volunteer firefighter, thank you! If you are reading this and aren't, then now is the time. Your community – yes even your nation – needs you. God bless the volunteer fire service, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.



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## Latest Tactics on Tap Event a huge success

Firefighters from three states made their way to Watertown on March 22<sup>nd</sup> for the latest Tactics on Tap event. These training get-togethers are put on by the Firefighter Skill Mastery cadre and are free to attend. Both career and volunteer departments, and all ranks, were in attendance. Speaker Max Glueckert from West Fargo brought his Ethos of Firemanship program to share with the group.

## Rapid City records warmest winter ever since 1800s, fire risk up across Black Hills

### LACK OF SNOWFALL LEAVES GRASSLANDS DRY AND RESERVOIRS SHORT HEADING INTO SPRING

A near-snowless, record-warm winter has left the Black Hills at extremely high fire risk. National Weather Service meteorologist Melissa Smith explains.

By RYAN HILL

Rapid City averaged 34.7 degrees this winter, making it the warmest winter on record since records began in the late 1800s — two full degrees warmer than the previous record set in 1930.

The city received just 6.5 inches of snow and 0.6 inches of precipitation, about half the normal amount.

#### FIRE RISK RISES AS GRASSLANDS STAY DRY

The lack of snowfall is now creating a fire risk as spring approaches. Melissa Smith, lead meteorologist and hydrologist with the National Weather Service, said the absence of snow cover is a key factor.

“The problem that we’ve had this winter was the lack of snowfall that would actually lay those grasses down, which would reduce our fire risk,” Smith said.

Smith said the region is entering what forecasters call the shoulder season for fire weather — the period before green-up when grassland fire danger is typically at its highest.

“We’re getting into kind of our shoulder season for fire weather,” Smith said. “It’s typically the time of the year that we see before green-up, so our grassland fire danger has been extremely high lately because of that lack of snowfall, and any kind of precipitation we can get over these next few months will be very beneficial to our area.”

**LA NIÑA PATTERN WEAKENED, WHICH PUSHED STORMS EAST**  
Smith explained that a La Niña pattern, which typically shifts the jet stream south, was pushed eastward throughout the winter as La Niña weakened. That shift left the Black Hills warmer and drier than usual.

Smith said there is a possibility the jet stream could shift to bring more moisture from the Pacific and the Gulf of America. However, she warned that reservoirs across the Black Hills are short on winter recharge, and that problem could worsen if El Niño contributes to a drier summer and fall.



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1:00 PM-4:30 PM Classes

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### Mobridge FD hosts Ice Water Rescue Training

The weekend of March 14-15, the Mobridge Fire Department, joined by several area departments (including law enforcement and emergency management), hosted Ice Water Rescue Training. Under the instruction of our very own Trevor Lightfield, crews trained on three different rescue methods designed to safely reach and recover individuals who have fallen through the ice. Training like this strengthens coordination between agencies and ensures that responders are ready to act quickly and safely when seconds matter. By working together and continuing to build these skills, we're better equipped to protect and serve our communities. A big thank you to everyone who braved the weather, participated, and helped make this training possible. Stay safe and remember—no ice is safe ice this time of year. From the Provident Insurance Facebook page.



### Woonsocket Firefighters Receive Sim Table Training

On February 28<sup>th</sup> firefighters from Woonsocket attended wildland fire simulator table training. Instructor Clint Corey covered all aspects of wildland firefighting including command, tactics and safety. Most of the lessons learned can be used on all aspects of firefighting.



### Sioux Falls cadets participate in training

Building construction, forcible entry, fire dynamics, and search and rescue filled this busy last week of February of learning for Sioux Falls Fire Rescue's 2026 spring cadets.

## Letcher VFD hosts extrication training

On March 14, Letcher Volunteer Fire Department hosted the extrication portion of our Firefighter I & II class. In addition to the students participating in the course, several department members also attended to train and refresh their skills. It was a great day filled with learning, teamwork, and valuable hands-on experience as participants practiced critical rescue techniques and reinforced the importance of safe and efficient vehicle extrication. Training opportunities like this are essential to maintaining the skills and readiness required to serve our community effectively. During the training, we also had the honor of recognizing former Chief Rodney Clarambeau for his extraordinary dedication to the department. Chief Clarambeau served 48 years as Fire Chief and an incredible 50 years as a member of the department. His decades of leadership, commitment, and service have had a lasting impact on our department and the community we proudly serve. To commemorate this remarkable milestone, we presented Chief Clarambeau with a plaque in appreciation of his years of service and leadership. Achievements like this are rare and truly reflect a lifetime of dedication to the fire service. We extend our sincere gratitude to Chief Clarambeau for his unwavering commitment and the legacy he leaves behind. Clarambeau officially passed command to new Fire Chief Carter Star. Rodney shared that while he's stepping down from the chief position, he's not done serving just yet. As long as he's able, he plans to remain an active member of the department and continue giving back to the community he cares so much about. From the Letcher Fire Department Facebook page.



## Rapid City participates in training

Members of the Rapid City Fire Department were sharpening their hazardous materials response skills the first week of March during a Tactical Chemistry course taught by Dr. Hazmat, Inc. The course combines live demonstrations, hands-on activities, and real-world chemical identification exercises to help responders understand the science behind hazardous materials incidents. Throughout the week, students work through simulated dispatch scenarios that require them to analyze instrument readings and make strategic and tactical decisions just as they would during a real hazmat incident. This regional training brings together responders from the Rapid City Fire Department, Sioux Falls Fire Rescue, Aberdeen Fire Rescue, the 82nd Civil Support Team, and Ellsworth Air Force Base Emergency Management.



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## Custer County Qury Fire

A fast-moving wildfire burned through approximately 7,000 acres of South Dakota wilderness as of 5:15 p.m. Friday, March 13 (the older estimate was 5,000 acres), forcing residents to evacuate and prompting a multi-agency response across Custer County. The Qury Fire ignited Thursday and spread rapidly, placing homes in its path and giving some families only minutes to decide whether to leave. Custer County Treasurer Walt Krol said his wife later joined search-and-rescue efforts related to the fire. "She said you'd better get back to the house... this whole place was lit up in big smoke clouds. It was kind of scary," Krol said. By Friday, more than 20 engines, four bulldozers, and two crews were on the ground. Local, state, and federal agencies are working together to protect structures and eliminate hot spots. Crews are mopping up the fire scene, digging out smoldering roots and stumps to prevent reignition. Improved weather conditions have also helped slow the fire's spread. Qury Fire Incident Commander Todd Hoover said progress is being made. "The crews are making great headway today... their emphasis is still to get those homes secured, try to get the mop up and the hot spot areas taken care of," Hoover said.



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