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On Dec. 17, Martin Fire Department responded to a structure fire west of Bateland, Batesland Fire and Alpha 1 Fire also responded. See additional photos and story inside.



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Aberdeen home badly damaged, no injuries reported

An Aberdeen home was badly damaged, but nobody was injured in a house fire the afternoon of Tuesday, Dec. 30.

Aberdeen Fire & Rescue responded to a fire reported in the 900 block of South Kline Street at 1:29 p.m.

"Upon arrival, firefighters encountered heavy smoke and fire conditions on the back side of the single-family dwelling. The fire was contained to the involved structure. The home was occupied at the time of the fire, and no injuries were reported," according to a news release from the fire department.

However, some animals died in the fire, per the release.

The cause of the fire will be classified as undetermined, said Aberdeen Fire Marshal Max Stoltenberg.

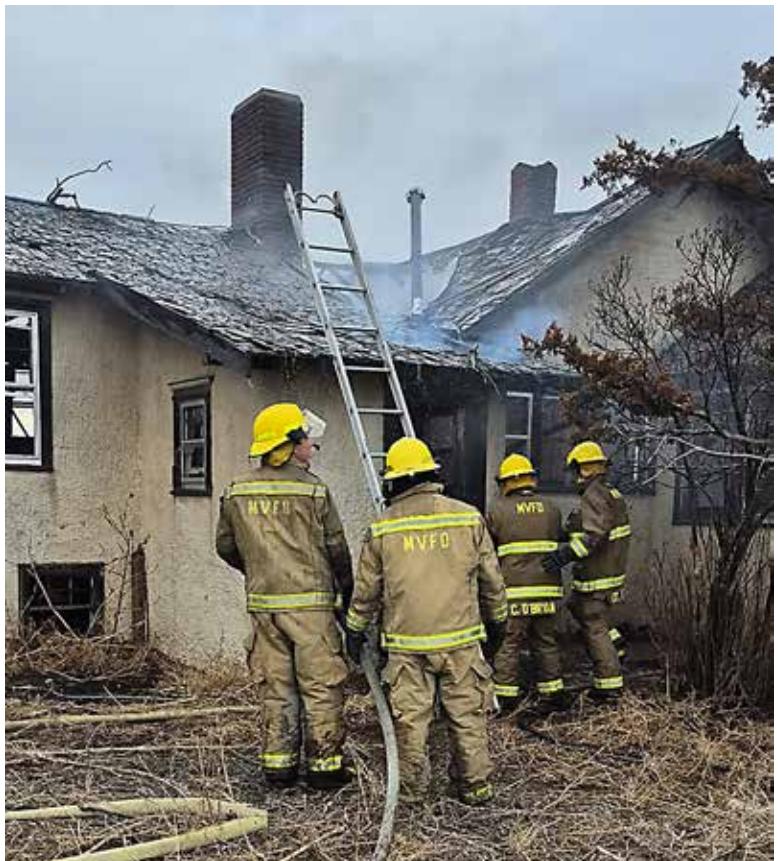
Aberdeen Fire & Rescue Battalion Commander Stacy Vrchota said the fire started inside the house in the rear portion that contained a bathroom, laundry room and kitchen.

Crews were on the scene until about 8 p.m., Vrchota said. He said there's no reason to suspect foul play.

The Red Cross is offering financial assistance to the four people who were displaced, said Jennifer Hurst, a duty officer with the Red Cross.

Other responding agencies included the Aberdeen Police Department, Brown County Emergency Management, Brown County Communications Center, Brown County Sheriff's Office, Aberdeen Public Works Department and NorthWestern Energy.

(Written by Scott Waltman, Aberdeen Insider, Aberdeen, SD, January 8, 2026)



Martin VFD battles multiple wind-driven fires across Pine Ridge area

In a week marked by multiple wind driven fires in western South Dakota, the Martin Volunteer Fire Department responded to several significant emergencies from Dec. 17-21. On Wednesday, the department tackled two major fires fueled by windy conditions. Early that morning, around 2:45 a.m., crews were dispatched to a structure fire in Pine Ridge. An occupied single wide trailer house started on fire and over the course of the response from Martin to Pine Ridge strong winds had spread flames to a second trailer house, an RV and a car. Firefighters arrived just in time to extinguish a third trailer home that had ignited and prevented a grass fire and an adjacent duplex from catching fire. With assistance from the Oglala Sioux Tribe Emergency Management, they contained the blaze by around 6:30 a.m. Later that windy Wednesday afternoon, around 2 p.m., the department responded to another fire west of Batesland, where a garage fire had spread into a neighboring house along with minor damage to several small outbuildings. They worked with the Batesland and Alpha 1 Fire Departments to extinguish the flames by around 5 p.m. On Sunday morning at 7:45 a.m., the department, with help from the Kyle Volunteer Fire Department, responded to a garage fire near Kyle. They quickly contained the fire, which involved two vehicles inside the garage and caused minor heat and smoke damage to an adjacent house.

One person treated for smoke inhalation during Aberdeen apartment fire

For the third time in nine days, Aberdeen Fire & Rescue responded to a residential fire the afternoon of Wednesday, Dec. 31.

One person was treated for smoke inhalation, according to a news release from the fire department.

A fire was reported in an apartment building at the intersection of South State Street and 11th Avenue Southeast at 2:08 p.m. It drew a sizable response. The fire started in the kitchen and has been ruled accidental, said Aberdeen Fire Marshal Max Stoltenberg.

Two adults and several pets were rescued from the building, according to a news release. In a report to the Aberdeen City Council on Monday, Jan. 5, Fire Chief Joel Weig said this fire started in the kitchen and has been ruled accidental.

Stoltenberg said on Tuesday, Jan. 6 that the eight-unit apartment building is uninhabitable and will need repairs before people can again move in.

"Upon arrival, crews found heavy smoke coming from a multi-unit apartment building. The fire was quickly located by firefighters and contained to one apartment unit. ... One adult was transported to the hospital for smoke inhalation. There was major fire, smoke and water damage to the (apartment in which the fire started) and significant smoke damage throughout the building,"

according to the release.

The apartment building was on the northwest corner of the junction. The windows in the building had been knocked out.

Other responding agencies included the Aberdeen Police Department, Brown County Emergency Management, the Brown County Communications Center, the Aberdeen Public Works Department, the Red Cross and NorthWestern Energy.

Responders were on the scene for about two hours, according to the Dec. 31 news release.

(Written by Scott Waltman, Aberdeen Insider, Aberdeen, SD, January 8, 2026)

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Tea fire crews battle New Year's Eve house fire

On Dec. 31, Tea Fire was dispatched to a residential structure fire. On approach, flames were visible from the house and garage. Crews got to work quickly to knock down the flames.

As of Jan. 1, at 03:05, Tea Fire and Harrisburg Fire were still on scene cleaning up and extinguishing hot spots. All residents and dogs made it out safely. Tea Fire was assisted by the following agencies: Harrisburg Community Fire and Rescue, Sioux Falls Fire Rescue, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, Tea Police Department, and Lincoln County Emergency Management.



UPCOMING EVENTS

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

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

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.

Platte Fire Dept. has early morning call Tuesday

The Platte Volunteer Fire Department responded to a call right at 4:40 a.m. early Tuesday morning as an abandoned mini-van was on fire 10 miles west of Platte on Highway 44. Crews stayed on scene for about an hour as the van was a total loss. It was unknown who the van actually belonged to.

ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

"Ask a Better Question,
Get a Better Answer."

Part2

If last month was the appetizer, here is the main course of what Alex is driving at suggesting that better questions will get us better answers, or at least more than "Fine." I was in the middle of doing some revisions on this when a "slight" wind blew through the southern hills and then continued to wreak havoc across South Dakota. When the power went out on, December 18, just as numerous calls came in for transformers sparking and power-lines down, I thought oh a day or two and we will be back in business. Our transformer just shut off on Monday, December 22! However, I was glad to have that power supply, is just the fact that the main computer I use did not like generator power! Why do I bore you with these mindless details? It is all about questions. For 5 days, the first question was do you have power? Simple yes or no! However, if you followed up with when do you think we will have power, then you opened a discussion. You see, the question you ask, determines what you will learn and how much the person you are talking to will open up. Now, back to Alex, he listed 12 questions but I am going to harvest a few to "prime the pump" and start your creative thoughts moving.

1. DO ANY OF OUR PROCESSES SEEM INEFFICIENT TO YOU? HOW CAN WE FIX THEM? What we're asking for is if anything is broken. Often, we're doing something because someone else came up with

the method years ago and we just keep going because we don't have the time to think about it, improve it, or, for now, it's just not on our radar. The other information you get from this question is how aware of their surroundings the other person might be.

So far so good but now Alex gets into some vital questions. **2. WHAT DO YOU NEED HELP WITH?**

This is a remarkably simple but an especially important question. Alex suggests not asking that at your monthly department meeting, but rather in a space where you are one on one and can get some honest responses. Maybe you could follow up with: **3. IS THERE ANYTHING IN YOUR WORLD THAT'S CAUSING FRUSTRATION?** This question invites someone to share what's bothering them without needing to frame it as a formal complaint. It opens the door to understanding emotional friction points. What is vital here is you are validating frustration and offering to address it. Many times, we are frustrated and remain silent feeling that nothing will be done regardless of what we say. So, ask the question.

4. LOOKING BACK ON THE LAST FEW CALLS, IS THERE ANYTHING THAT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER?

This question encourages reflection and helps identify missed opportunities or areas for improvement. It's not about assigning blame, it's about learning. Alex points out this is a straightforward way to bring feedback to the surface, no hidden agendas, just straight honest feedback.

5. WAS THERE A RECENT EVENT, MEETING, TRAINING, OR

DISCUSSION WHERE YOU DIDN'T GET TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS?

Would you like to share them now? This question gives people a second chance to speak up. Sometimes, such moments pass too quickly, or someone doesn't feel comfortable speaking up in a group. By asking this, you're showing that their voice matters, even if it wasn't heard the first time. There is an old adage in group dynamics, the most anxious person will always speak first, and the one who feels the least confident remains silent. However, silence does not mean ignorance, so don't be afraid to ask.

6. DO YOU FEEL RECOGNIZED FOR YOUR WORK AND CONTRIBUTIONS?

Recognition is a powerful motivator. Recognition is not a plague, or a piece of paper, it is seeing and appreciating the individual or group effort. This question helps you understand whether your team feels seen and valued. If the answer is no, it doesn't mean they're looking for praise, it might mean they're feeling disconnected or overlooked.

7. DOES THE FEEDBACK YOU RECEIVE HELP YOU GROW AS A FIREFIGHTER?

This question evaluates the quality of feedback and coaching, not just its presence. Constructive feedback should help someone improve, not just correct mistakes. If your crew members aren't getting growth-oriented feedback, they may feel stagnant and look for it elsewhere.

Keep in mind this is not a list of questions that have to be asked every time you are at the station, but when you have a time and space that is quiet or private, you might want to



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"If someone shares something vulnerable or a problem and you dismiss it; you've closed the door. If you listen, act, and follow up, you've built trust. That follow-through is what turns feedback into progress and relationships into partnerships." So, keep in mind asking good questions, and listening is only the first part, meaningful action must follow."

explore these. The other times are when, or if you have a promotion or review of the department. Another idea would be to divide the department between the officers and see what kind of information this might gather from the membership. The fun thing with questions is that this is not some magic formula, but rather another tool in the tool box to help you gain insight into your department or walk alongside a fellow firefighter.

Alex then brings up a significant reminder, just asking questions is never enough. Just asking good questions and getting good feedback is never an end itself, it is what you do afterward. I like Alex's words here: "If someone shares something vulnerable or a problem and you dismiss it; you've closed the door. If you listen, act, and follow up, you've built trust. That follow-through is what turns feedback into progress and relationships into partnerships." So, keep in mind asking good questions, and listening is only the first part, meaningful action must follow.

Alex then wraps up his thoughts with these key points on what helps

build and maintain that trust:
Consistency: Show up the same way every time. When firefighters know what to expect from you—your tone, your reactions, your follow-through—they're more likely to speak honestly and openly.

Recognition: Acknowledge contributions, even small ones, but be genuine. Overdoing it or faking it erodes your credibility.

Support for risk-taking: Let people try new things, exploring new techniques and methods without fear.

Constructive response to mistakes: Focus on learning, not blame. Trust is built not just through listening, but through action. When firefighters see that their feedback leads to change, even small change, they'll be more likely to speak up again.

If I were to sum this up, and tie it in a bow, I would have to say, ask questions that are open ended, no yes or no answers, listen and follow up. Who knows you might change a few things around you.

CHAPLAIN RODNEY V

U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notification

FIREFIGHTER/FIRE COMMISSIONER MICHAEL K. RYAN, 61, Phoenicia Fire District, Phoenicia, NY, died on Dec. 13. Ryan was part of a crew that responded to a rescue call for an injured hiker. As the crew was carrying the hiker out of a wooded area, Firefighter/Fire Commissioner Ryan suffered a cardiovascular event. Fellow first responders provided immediate lifesaving measures and transported Firefighter/Fire Commissioner Ryan to a local hospital where, despite all efforts, he was pronounced deceased. Firefighter/Fire Commissioner Ryan served the Phoenicia Fire District as both a firefighter and the District Fire Commissioner.

FIREFIGHTER-EMT LINZIE "SCOTT" COLLINS, 50, Richlands Fire-EMS, Richlands, VA, died on Nov. 16. On November 15, Firefighter-EMT Linzie Scott Collins was on duty from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. During this shift, Firefighter-EMT Collins responded to two calls. The following day at 1:15 a.m., the wife of Firefighter-EMT Collins found him in distress. Firefighter-EMT Collins stopped breathing and CPR was performed. Firefighter-EMT Collins was transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased at 3:24 a.m.

CHIEF DAVID HAVERDINK, 74, Hamilton, MI, Fire Department, died on Dec. 25, 2025. At approximately 5 p.m. on December 23, Chief David Haverdink responded to a medical call at a residence. As he was preparing to leave the scene one hour later, Chief Haverdink was struck by a vehicle. His colleagues immediately began emergency care, and Chief Haverdink was transported to a hospital. Chief Haverdink succumbed to his injuries at the hospital two days later on December 25, 2025.

FIRE APPARATUS ENGINEER DANIEL COOK, 45, CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department, Perris, CA, died on Dec. 31, 2025. At approximately 5:30 a.m. on December 31, Fire Apparatus Engineer Daniel "Danny" Cook along with other units from CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department responded to a residential structure fire. While on scene, Engineer Cook suffered a medical emergency. A mayday was called, and emergency care was immediately provided. Engineer Cook was transported to the hospital. Despite efforts from medical professionals, he was pronounced deceased later that morning.

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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



Charlie Kludt, President

"Their office will handle our membership system, finances, assist with state fire school instructor contracts, marketing, and online and on-site registration. They will assist with District school online registration assistance. And help solve or direct your questions to the appropriate SDFA board member. We will have more about them as we continue the transition over the next few weeks."

Association Looking Forward

My article is going to be a history and explanation of reason for understanding where the South Dakota Firefighters Association is at today.

The SDFA Board met in January for the quarterly meeting. One of the main topics continued from our fall meeting was an association management agency. The agency would assist with the continual outside duties that the board members, secretary and treasurer try to accomplish in their spare time. We had considered this a few years ago, and even received the advice and recommendation of our membership software program we now use, but did not find it feasible, at the time.

The original mission of the SDFA, since 1884, was for providing a statewide training opportunity for the firefighters of South Dakota. It was referred to as the Firefighter Convention. In the early 1900s, the

SDFA was established in codified law for this purpose. Then in 1930, it was changed from a convention to State Fire School.

The State Fire School was held each year at a different location around the state and hosted by communities and fire departments. The challenges of planning for a different location each year led the SDFA to establish a long term location. Utilizing the communities with technical colleges and facilities built for adult learning, in 2017, State Fire School entered into a new era.

The multi-year agreements have made for easier planning for courses, local availability, and increased community business involvement for the firefighter attendees.

Over the recent years, the SDFA has become more involved in requests for informational input, fact-finding, and opinion on more and more fire service and public safety issues from a local, state and national level. The expansion of SDFA duty to the roughly 8500 firefighters in the state, of which,

Thoughts From The Tailboard

If you're reading this month's paper, then you obviously survived all the holiday festivities. I hope Christmas and New Years were great for you and all your family. We now start counting days till summer.

The SD Firefighters Assn. 2026 Membership drive is in full swing. Many departments have paid their 100% Memberships and their Department Only. The Board truly appreciates your support. They can't do anything without it. Check with your department treasurer and make sure your dues have been paid.

The Firefighters Assn. held their winter board meeting January 9 in Mitchell. Great discussion and great changes coming. In the following paragraphs I'll try to summarize these updates.

A change to the amount of reimbursement to each of the fire districts. They voted to increase it from \$2,000 per year to \$4,000 per year. The Board realized the cost of bringing high quality instructors to your school has gone up, just like everything else. In 2025 the Board budgeted \$14,000 for support to the seven districts, and they reimbursed the districts for \$13,687.63. That's good.

The Mobile Live Fire Trailers' costs are not included in the \$4,000 per year for districts. The MLFT expenses come from a different budget. So, start lining up those days and weekends when you can round up several mutual aid departments and utilize this high-quality training. You can't beat it.

The Board also voted to contract with a company to help manage the day-to-day operations. The time your Board members spend on setting up State Fire School, District

about 8000 are volunteers, has been understood in increasing importance for the continued success and viability of the fire and rescue service across our state.

The SDFA has a Governor appointed representative serving on the Public Safety Communications Council. Associate representation for training on public utilities and pipeline safety. We are called upon and referred to on legislative issues that may have a direct and indirect effect on what we do and need to know.

We have two State Directors to the National Volunteer Fire Council which is one of the major advocates for the volunteer and combination fire services at a national level. Providing volunteer representation on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) committees and Federal legislation advocacy.

There are an estimated 1.1 million firefighters in the United States. Almost 700,000 are volunteers. And roughly 70 percent of those are from communities of less than 5000 in population. Of the 29,500 fire departments in the US, 82 percent are volunteer. South Dakota is 77,121 square miles. Roughly 77,000 is covered by volunteer responders.

Do I think the SDFA is important to the firefighters of South Dakota? It is more important and valuable than most of us realize. We represent more than the 6000 members of the SDFA. We are much more than State Fire School. We are all volunteer directors. On several occasions while representing the association at meetings or legislative committees, I explain that I am

there in a volunteer capacity, and my SDFA position is not my full-time job and occupation.

This is a majority of the decision for hiring Advanced Association Management (AAM) to assist us. AAM assists various associations in several states, but administers for the fire service associations in Nebraska, Iowa, Georgia, and Kansas.

Their office will handle our membership system, finances, assist with state fire school instructor contracts, marketing, and online and on-site registration. They will assist with District school online registration assistance. And help solve or direct your questions to the appropriate SDFA board member. We will have more about them as we continue the transition over the next few weeks.

The SDFA Board of Directors will still be the decision making body for the association, and provide representation at District, State and National levels.

The fire service has changed and continues to adapt to constant evolution of what is expected from us, and the challenges we have accepted as important to take. We are looking at that challenge, as well.

District Fire Schools are coming soon. And State Fire School will be here before you know it. Look forward to seeing you 11-13 June in Watertown.

Show your fire service appreciation to your special someone and family this Valentine's Day. Stay Safe,

CHARLIE KLUDT
SDFA President



Denny Gorton,
Retired Treasurer/Past President

"The legislative session has begun so keep your ear to the ground for bills that will have some effect on you and your department. Be very aware of any bills that have anything to do with property tax. If you're a rural fire protection district or ambulance district this issue may have a dramatic effect on your revenue."

Fire Schools, membership dues, and all the other things that go on is just too overwhelming. The Growth Zone membership program has been great in contacting firefighters about classes but just like everything else it takes time and dedication to make it work properly. The Board is no different than your department or any other organization. Everyone's time is less. There will be more in future articles so stay tuned.

The legislative session has be-

gun so keep your ear to the ground for bills that will have some effect on you and your department. Be very aware of any bills that have anything to do with property tax. If you're a rural fire protection district or ambulance district this issue may have a dramatic effect on your revenue.

With that I'll finish for this month and let you get on with your important business. Stay safe.

DENNY GORTON

Colome election

The Colome Volunteer Fire Department held their annual elections on December 22. All officers were re-elected: Fire Chief Glenn Sealey; First Asst Chief Kurtis Atteberry; Second Asst Chief Wayne Hofeldt; Sec/Treasurer Matt Bolie; and Training Officer Nash Atteberry.

ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Greetings to all, hoping everyone has been happy with majority of the good weather we have had. Yes would like to see more moisture, but I am glad not to move snow much. Before long spring will appear, hopefully weather holds off for March, normally a time when we see storms for all the basketball tournaments. With the dry weather, I know there have been grass fires, so we have to be prepared for them.

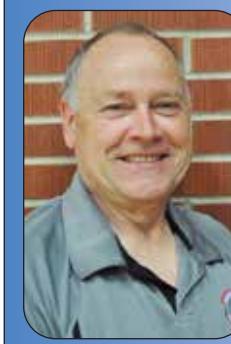
Spring school will be Volga, April 25th. Check out the SDFA

website and Volga Fire Department Facebook page for registration and classes off the QR code. They have lined up some very good classes and will have EMS hours also for this spring. So make plans to attend and others know about Spring School. Any questions or for information contact Liz Oakley @ liz.nix90@gmail.com.

The SDFA board had their winter meeting, early January, as a very productive meeting, classes are in final stages, some new class-

es coming in, some other classes repeating, but they always fill up. Registration, we are working hard to get it open by March first, so you can get registered and get your classes you want early.

There will be an election of President's position, if you are interested, we need a letter of intent sent to following board members: SEdir@sdfirefighters.org, Nedir@sdfirefighters.org, jasonmosterd@goldenwest.com. Will need the letter 45 days before fire school, so nomination crew can review them.



Dave Jorgenson, Southeast Director

"Spring school will be Volga, April 25th. Check out the SDFA website and Volga Fire Department Facebook page for registration and classes off the QR code. They have lined up some very good classes and will have EMS hours also for this spring."

Dues were sent out in November, if you have not received the notice, please let a board member know and we can get it resent, we have to make sure it was sent to a cor-

rect mailing address also.

DAVID JORGENSEN
SESD district director

SDFA AUXILIARY REPORT

Have you checked in with your heart lately? February is heart month so let's take a moment to schedule our heart screening so we don't become a statistic.

Heart disease is a significantly higher risk for firefighters due to physical and psychological demands of the job. About 50% of line-of-duty deaths are attributed to cardiovascular-related events. Heart attacks and sudden cardiac arrests are most common, but re-

search as shown that atrial fibrillation (AFib) increases with the number of fires you respond to. According to the American Heart Association, for every additional five fires fought annually, there is a 14% increased risk of developing AFib.

Where do we go to get checked? Talk with your doctor about getting a heart screen. Both Avera and Sanford have great options, along with SiteMed. South Dakota

Salutes, a non-profit organization, funds heart screenings for firefighters across the state. Talk with your department, is this something they can reach out and get lined up for the department. There's no better investment than the one you make into yourself.

AMY HORN
SDFA Auxiliary

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

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

Thank You,
FROM SE DISTRICT BOARD



SCAN ME

STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

South Dakota Fire Departments, Just a friendly reminder that all fire reporting in South Dakota is switching to the new National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS)

All Fire departments will need to start reporting their incidents to that for all 2026 incidents.

The old National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) is in sunset and will cease to exist on January 31, 2026

The PS02 South Dakota Incident Reporting System will no longer accept any incidents after January 1, 2026

The system is going to be kept operational till December 31, 2026 to give fire departments time to archive any fire report data they need to save or retain.

NERIS SYSTEM INFORMATION.

MAIN PAGE: <https://neris.fsri.org/>

TEST AND TRAINING SITE:
<https://test.neris.fsri.org/>

ONBOARDING LINKS: INFO: <https://neris.fsri.org/onboarding>

For those that didn't receive invite e-mail and still need to Onboard to NERIS go to: <https://safetyscience.my.site.com/neris/>

TRAINING VIDEOS: <https://vimeo.com/nerisdata>

This site will help if you need to get your Primary Response Boundary set up (GIS drawing site): once done you will have a file to share with NERIS to get complete. <https://geojson.io/#map=2/31.06/-97.71>

DOUG HINKLE,
State Fire Marshal
SD Department
of Public Safety
SD State Fire Marshal's Office
221 S. Central Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 773-3562 / www.dps.sd.gov/firemarshal

IQS numbers are no longer generated when a report for a wildfire is filed with the State Fire Marshal's office or NERIS. All fires in the Black Hills Forest Fire Protection District (BHFFPD) are given a state fire number and this is manually entered into the Incident Qualification System (IQS) within a week by SDWF staff. For those fires outside of the BHFFPD, an IQS number needs to be requested so it can be entered into IQS. This can be done two ways:

Email the SDWF Training and Aviation Program Manager at ta-mara.dierks@state.sd.us with the following information (this is useful for multiple fires):

- Fire(s) Name
- Fire(s) Date
- Acres

Or use this link: <https://forms.gle/7hYahAiVLiDLRMNQA> to submit an IQS Number Request.

Once the information is received by the SDWF Training and Aviation Program Manager, the IQS number will be generated and the number emailed to the requestor. The same process also applies to Prescribed Fires.

Holler with questions!

TAMARA DIERKS
Training and Aviation
Program Manager
South Dakota Department of
Public Safety
Wildland Fire
3305 West South Street
Rapid City, SD
57702-8160
Direct 605.393.4229
Fax 605.393.8044



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South Dakota Fire Departments and Fire Chiefs:

The Old NFIRS (National Fire Incident Reporting System) and South Dakota Online Fire Reporting system are going to be shut down on February 1, 2026.

Please have all your 2025 incidents entered and finalized before then.

The South Dakota Online Fire Reporting System will stop taking new incidents, but you may get into the system to archive any calls before it is officially removed from service on December 31, 2026.

If you have already onboarded and are entering your incidents into the new NERIS Incident re-

porting system, You can enter your remaining 2025 incidents in there, do not double enter calls in both.

All 2026 incidents need to be reported using the new NERIS system.

If you have not onboarded yet, please follow the attachment and get that going.

Any questions, let me know.

DOUG HINKLE,
State Fire Marshal
SD Department of Public
Safety
SD State Fire Marshal's Office
221 S. Central Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 773-3562 / www.dps.sd.gov/firemarshal



Doug Hinkle,
State Fire Marshal

"For those that didn't receive invite e-mail and still need to Onboard to NERIS go to: <https://safetyscience.my.site.com/neris/>"



Onida participates in ice water rescue training

On Jan. 14, Trevor Lightfield shared his expertise by instructing an Ice Water Rescue training for the Onida Fire Department, Inc./Ambulance Service in Onida. There's nothing better than getting out on the ice and practicing how to safely and efficiently perform ice water rescues. This type of hands-on training is a great example of the vital services they provide to their community—and to surrounding communities as well.



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Volunteer _____ # Paid _____ Year Department Established: _____

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

Pumper _____ # Tanker _____ # 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: _____

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

Aerial Operations at Structure Fire

By CHIEF RYAN HILL

Every one of us has seen the pictures of the giant career-size fires that we may only get to respond to a few times during our career. Have you ever sat back and thought about how you would deploy your aerial resources if you were called to one of these events? Is it really as easy as just throwing your 100' ladder or tower up into the air and just lobbing water down at the structure until it goes out? Is that really the most effective way to utilize these pieces of equipment, or the safest for all of the people operating on the scene? The short answer is no. While there is nothing more majestic or awe-inspiring than multiple elevated master streams unleashing their fury onto a fire-involved building, it often ends up being nothing more than a show and isn't truly effective at getting done what we're trying to accomplish. We will try and cover a few techniques and tips that you can hopefully rely on when you're called to one of these events.

The first thing everyone needs to take care of is their apparatus checks. These trucks are complex and have multiple components that all need to be working so we can place these devices into service when needed. From my own experience, an electric monitor often has a battery that is needed to be able to control it. If this battery fails, the monitor may not move at all and would need to be adjusted manually, a time-consuming process during a very chaotic incident when seconds may count. Are your jack pads ready to be deployed, or are they rusted together because of the road salt and winter debris, or they haven't been deployed in over a year? Are your safety harnesses where

they need to be and ready for use, or if you have turnout gear with an integrated ladder belt, do you have the tether and carabiner on your gear ready for you to hook up? Truck and equipment checks are a vital part of our readiness and need to be actually done. It never fails when someone pencil whips a checklist, we end up finding out that we're missing something critical.

Make sure you know how your truck needs it's water supplied. In Iowa, most of the aerial apparatus you will find are going to be Quints. While this is not a bad thing, it does require some knowledge about how your apparatus will perform. When you are using the pump on your aerial, the engine RPMs are going to be dedicated to the water supply function, which will eliminate "high-idle" movements of the aerial device and cause them to be much slower. If you have the resources available, task an engine company to supply the aerial inlet on your aerial. This way, the Engine company can send as much water as you can handle, and you will still have high idle available to position your ladder or tower and adjust water flows or angles of attack. With engines and ladders on scene, hopefully the engines will allow the truck to position in front of the structure or "take the address" for ideal positioning. If the front of the structure isn't available, make every effort to get your turntable, whether it's a mid-mount or rear-mounted device, onto a corner so you can have the maximum scrub angle available on the structure. This can get tricky when you're talking about a truck that is normally 40-45 feet in length. With the emergence of tiller ladders in our area, those units can be 55-60 feet in length, some even more. If the engines arrive first and leave you room at the



structure, great care must be taken by the engineer not to drive over any hose lines. Again, ask how I know! If aerial master streams are going up in the air, take the time to move or break down hose lines if feasible so you can get your truck or trucks into position for maximum effectiveness.

Now you're on scene, trucks set up, and you're getting ready to rain down on this fire from above! You've waited for this day, and finally, here it is! Let's go up as high as this ladder will fly and start dumping thousands of gallons of water onto the building, or is there a better option? Yes, yes there is. If you're on a multi-story building or a house where you've decided to use an aerial master stream, what do these buildings have in common? They all have something built into them that is designed to keep all of the elements out. They have a roof, whose sole function is to prevent water or snow, or whatever from getting into the house. What happens when we start hitting it with our elevated stream?

Water starts going everywhere but where we need it. Even if a portion of the roof has vented or started to collapse, the roof, and even the damaged section, is preventing us from getting to the seat of the fire. The optimal method of attack is to go low and shoot your stream up into a window on the fire floor, or below the fire if it's in the attic space or voids above the top floor. This way, your stream is still making its way into the building – almost all of it. The high power of the stream punches through drywall and does massive amounts of opening walls and ceilings to get at hidden fire. You can move window to window and keep attacking with your aerial master stream and get the maximum effect of your GPMs on the BTU's. You're completing overhaul and pushing debris out of the way, which ends up helping us when extinguishing these larger fires. While every situation may be a little bit different, switching to this style of attack is much more effective than just raining on the

building from above.

While a discussion on tactics or tools is always a great way to start arguments at the table while having a coffee with your crew, always be open to trying new things. Tactics and equipment are changing so drastically anymore, that it truly is our duty to explore what may be a more effective method. At the end, our goal is always the same. To do the job we love, arguably one of the best on the planet, and share our knowledge with our crews, our professionalism, skill, and compassion with the citizens who need it, and to be able to talk about the "big one" one day and how we slayed the beast!

Author bio - Entered the fire service in 1992 and has worked all aspects since as a volunteer, pay-per-call, part-time, and now serving as a career Assistant Fire Chief with the City of Pleasant Hill Fire Department, a Des Moines area suburb located just east of the Capital City. Always seeking to better those in this calling, that is the Fire Service.



North side fire station planned to cut response times, boost EMS coverage Council approves design agreement for second Mitchell fire station

A second fire station means growth for the Mitchell Fire Department.

The Mitchell City Council, during its regular meeting on Monday, Jan. 5, approved a \$161,900 design agreement with DesignArc Group for a fire station architectural design and build. The new \$2.5 million fire station is expected to be designed and constructed this year, and located on the north side of town.

DesignArc Group requested to provide full architecture and engineering services for the project, according to the staff request. The agreement covers professional services from the schematic design phase to project closeout, with civil, structural, mechanical, electrical engineering and geotechnical work. DesignArc has locations in

Mitchell, Sioux Falls and Brookings.

Public Works Director Joe Schroeder told the Mitchell Republic that the fire station construction project will go out to bid as soon as possible.

The plan is for the building to be erected by November. Previously, DesignArc Group provided preliminary design services at no cost to the city. This preliminary design was showcased during the Mitchell City Council work sessions for setting the 2026 budget. The proposed location for the second fire station is the front property of the former water treatment plant south of the Lake Mitchell spillway on Highway 37.

Chief of Fire and EMS Shannon Sandoval told the Mitchell Republic that the city has

the equipment it needs for the personnel, but needs the new personnel to be trained.

"For us, it's just another place that we can have guys, and that's great, too, but being able to get to somebody in their time of need quicker is always going to be what we want," Sandoval said.

The new fire station will have four apparatus, including an ambulance, fire truck, boat, and grass rig. This is equipment the city has already on hand. Sandoval noted that processes have not been finalized for the new station.

The new location will most likely be staffed with a mix of EMS and firefighters, with a minimum of seven or eight staff members, but no official staffing level has been

set. Mitchell Fire Department personnel will most likely bid on the chance to be at the new fire station, according to Sandoval.

An academy for the new hires will start in February for training in firefighter and EMS skill sets, and in how the Mitchell Fire Department operates.

"We've never had an opportunity to have more than one or two people hired at a time," Sandoval said.

Until the new station is built, the station on First Avenue will be busier with more personnel to operate a second ambulance. The station will have one battalion chief and seven firefighters.

About 32 full time Mitchell Fire Department will share the First Avenue fire station and a few part time EMS operators.

Once the new station is operational, Sandoval noted the First Avenue station will feel different with less people in it. "It's not going to affect how we run calls or times that we get out of the building," Sandoval said.

The dorm rooms at the new station will be a nice change for department personnel, according to Sandoval. It'll be one person per room. Personnel don't have their own space in the First Avenue fire station, according to Sandoval. Personnel have a bunk bed and a closet or locker. If personnel are going through paramedic school or continuing education, there's not many private areas for study.

The fire station will have dorms instead of barracks. The Fire Station on First Avenue uses a barracks model, where fire department personnel are housed in a single room and female personnel have a separate dorm. The new dorm rooms will have three lockers, one for each shift to store bedding.

"The oncoming crew can make their beds and make it their own space," Sandoval said.

90% of Mitchell Fire Department calls are EMS-related, according to Sandoval. A priority is placed on firefighter personnel being able to be in an ambulance and function as a care provider.

"We are unique in that not every fire department requires emergency medical training, but we do ask that people do that in order to get hired," Sandoval said. "Everyone's cross trained, so you might be on the fire truck one shift, the next shift you're on the ambulance."

The EMS coverage for Davison Hanson Ambulance District is operational, according to Sandoval.

The city of Mitchell is receiving \$700,000 from the tax district to pay for the salaries of six new EMS hires. New personnel for the EMS coverage of the Davison Hanson Ambulance District are in the hiring and interview phase. Mitchell hires EMT-trained individuals and cross trains EMS and firefighters personnel, so that each person can do the other job. These employees will not be full-trained until June, according to Sandoval. In the meantime, Sandoval and Assistant Fire Chief Tiffany Boehmer may be pulling double duty to maintain rural EMS coverage.

The north side fire station is expected to lower the insurance rates for Mitchell residents around Lake Mitchell, according to officials.

Sandoval looks forward to cutting down the department's response time north of West 23rd Avenue. Sandoval noted that it can take seven or eight minutes for a fire truck to get to North Harmon, South Harmon or National Guard Road from the fire station on First Avenue.

"If there's a fire, that's a huge amount of time," Sandoval said.

(Written by Marshall Mitchell, Mitchell Daily Republic, Mitchell, SD, January 7, 2026)



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26-0847

Rapid City structure fire

On Jan. 16, the Rapid City Fire Department was dispatched shortly after 9 a.m. to a reported structure fire in the 300 block of Wright Street. The reporting party advised there were flames and smoke coming from the roof of the building. Upon arrival, crews began an initial offensive attack. Due to strong winds and increasing fire conditions, firefighters transitioned to a defensive attack to reduce risk and maintain scene safety. Wind-driven fire can rapidly change fire behavior, increase collapse potential, and limit visibility ... all of which pose significant hazards to firefighters operating on scene. We would like to extend a huge thank you to Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department for bringing their cascade trailer out to refill air bottles and North Haines Volunteer Fire Department for bringing their warming trailer and hot coffee to help crews warm up during operations. That support makes a real difference during cold-weather responses. No injuries were reported. The cause of the fire remains under investigation. From the Rapid City Fire Department Facebook page.

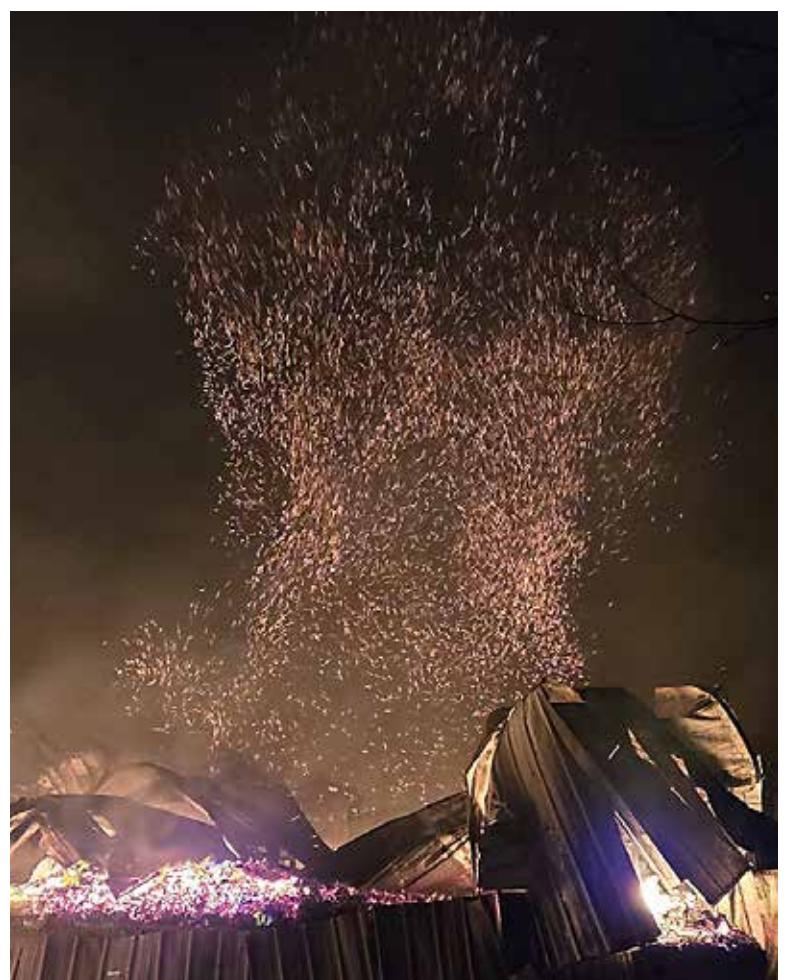
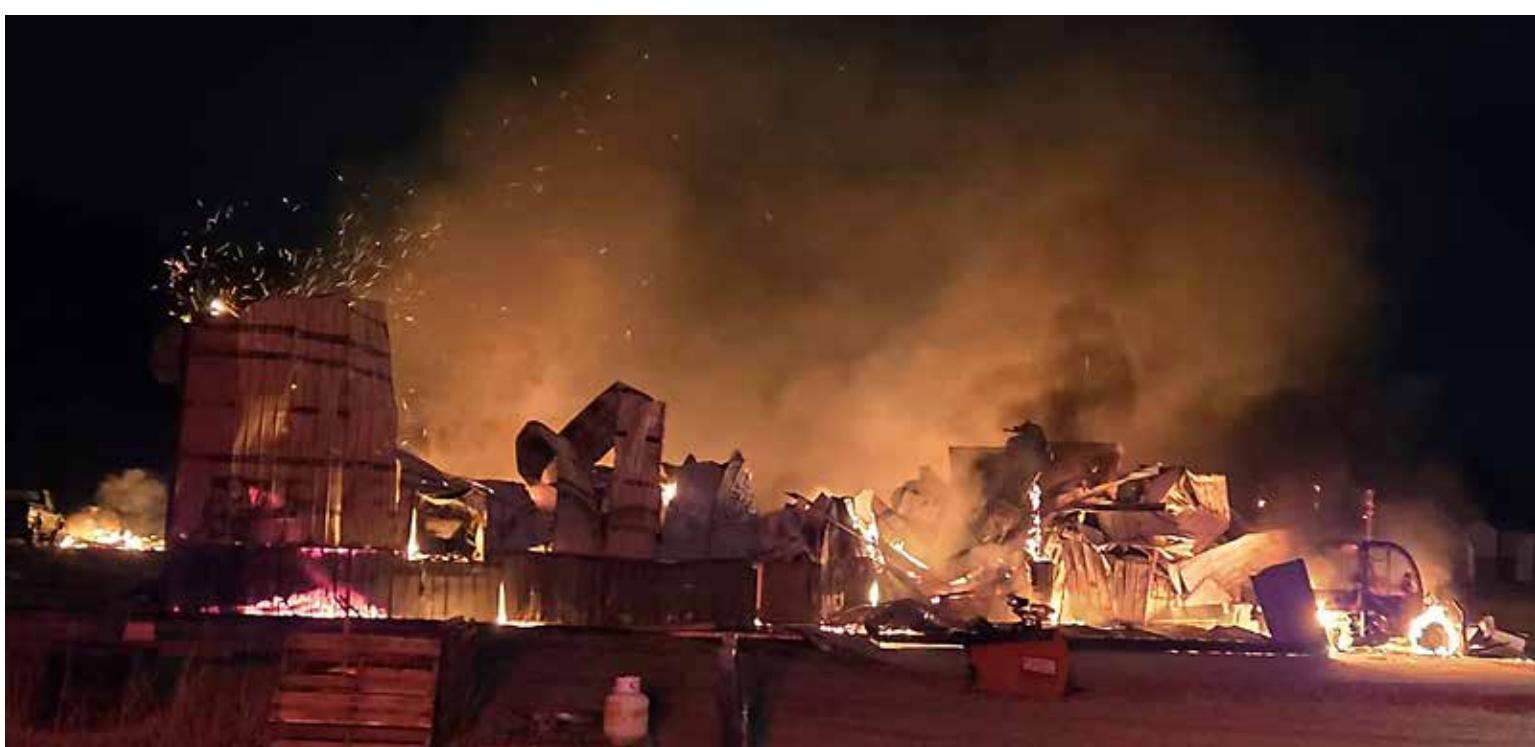




Rockerville provides mutual aid for Battle Creek

Just after midnight on Jan. 3, Rockerville units were paged mutual aid to support Battle Creek Fire for fire and smoke visible from Hwy 79. After Battle Creek arrived in the area along Hwy 79, they communicated with Rockerville that the fire was likely on Pine Grove Rd. Rockerville units ended up finding a fully involved structure fire at the far end of Ember Rd. The structure was a large metal out-building. All responding units diverted to the new location. Due to the remote location of the fire, Rockerville requested a second alarm for tender support. The nearest water source was miles away on Neck Yoke Rd. After working all night, all resources were clear around 6 a.m.

Thank you to all our mutual aid resources: Rapid City Fire (ladder truck and ambulance), Battle Creek Fire, Rapid Valley VFD, Hill City VFD, Johnson Siding VFD, Whispering Pines Fire, North Haines VFD, Pennington County 911, Pennington County Fire, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Pennington County Search and Rescue (brought big scene lights so we could see the area we were working in), Black Hills Electric Coop, and Pine Grove Water Association. Huge shout out to Allen Keiffer who brought out a backhoe, upon request, to assist with tearing out the metal sides of the building so we could get to the interior of the structure. Sabo Electric also brought down a skid steer. No injuries were reported due to the fire. From the Rockerville Fire Department Facebook page.



Fire Damages St. Joseph Catholic Church in Wessington Springs

Firefighters from four departments responded Friday morning, Dec. 26 to a fire at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Wessington Springs that caused significant damage to the building.

The Wessington Springs Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched at 9:03 a.m. to the church at 507 Barrett Avenue North after reports of smoke billowing from roof vents.

"When we first got on scene, there was heavy smoke billowing from the vents and eaves in the church," said Wessington Springs Fire Chief Eric Schroeder. "The smoke was heaviest on the west side of the building."

Firefighters initially made entry on the northwest side of the church, where smoke conditions were most severe. Schroeder said crews located the seat of the fire near the front of the church, but the layout of the building made suppression difficult from that position.

"We initially made entry on the northwest side of building where the heaviest smoke was," Schroeder said. "We found the seat of the fire was at the front of the church. Due to building layout, though, it was tough for the guys on the northwest side get a good knock down."

Crews then doubled up their attack and also entered the east side of the building through the main doors.

"Then we started attacking it from the east side through the main entry doors, and we were able to get a good catch on it and get it stopped," Schroeder said. Schroeder said firefighters encountered significant fire extension within the walls, which made the operation la-

bor-intensive.

"The problem was that there was a lot of extension — that's where fire breaches inside the walls," he said. "That's when it got pretty labor intensive, with the tearing down of walls, and the floor where it got to the basement."

Once the fire was extinguished, crews began ventilating the structure to clear smoke and locate remaining hot spots.

"Finally with the fire out, we started ventilating to get the smoke out," Schroeder said. "We started making vents in the roof, and got the smoke cleared. That helped us find the hot spots where the fire extended into the walls and ceilings. The ceiling has been pulled down, you can see straight out to the sky."

According to Schroeder, fire damage was contained to the front of the church located in the west side of the building. There was no fire damage to the parish hall or bathroom area on the south side of the building, and no fire extension into the additions on either side of the church. However, smoke and water damage occurred throughout the entire structure.

Mutual aid was provided by the Alpena Volunteer Fire Department, Town and Country Woonsocket Volunteer Fire Department and Gann Valley Volunteer Fire Department. A total of 39 firefighters responded to the scene. Five personnel from Jerauld County Ambulance and members of the Jerauld County Sheriff's Office were also on scene.

The fire is being investigated by the State Fire Marshal's Office. More information will be released once the investigation is complete. From the True Dakotan.



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Wolsey called to rural house fire

On Dec. 22 at approximately 18:00 Wolsey Fire was dispatched to a rural address on 209th Street for a structure fire. Upon arrival firefighters were met with heavy fire conditions throughout the home. An interior fire attack was attempted, however due to deteriorating conditions and lack of water supply, firefighters were forced to withdraw and conduct exterior operations only. Unfortunately, the structure was nearly a total loss. Aid was received from Huron and Hitchcock Fire Departments along with Wolsey Ambulance and Beadle County Sheriff. The cause of the fire is still under investigation. From the Wolsey Firefighter Association Facebook page.



Early morning fire reported in Aberdeen

On Dec. 23 at 2:18 a.m. Aberdeen Fire Rescue responded to a structure fire on SE 8th Avenue. Crews were advised of possible occupants trapped inside. Upon arrival, firefighters encountered heavy smoke and fire conditions on the second floor of the home. Firefighters worked quickly to contain the fire. One fatality was confirmed. Also responding were Aberdeen Rural Fire Department, Aberdeen Police Department, South Dakota Fire Marshal's Office, Brown County Office of Emergency Management, South Dakota DCI, Salvation Army, Red Cross, Brown County Communications, Brown County Sheriff's Office, Aberdeen Public Works and Northwest Energy. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.



White River Fire Department celebrates service

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

A classified ad in the South Dakota Firefighter!

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

In spite of the cold, wind and snow the Volunteer Fire Department at White River hosted their soup, sandwich and dessert fundraiser supper prior to their live auction with Jake Lolley acting as auctioneer. Jake kept the bidding hopping even getting \$400 for a handcrafted miniature "Santa Sleigh."

During the evening Karen O'Brien was presented with a

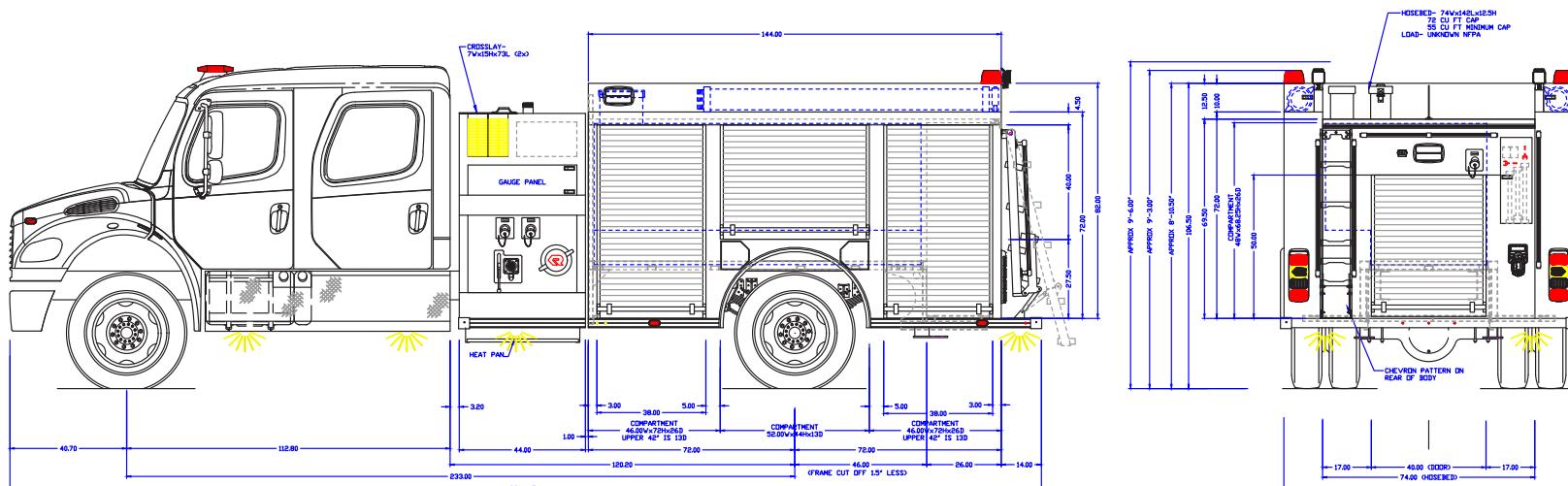
bench that shows the county's appreciation for her 36 years in Mellette County Emergency Services. The White River, Wood and Norris Fire Departments presented the bench to Karen at her home on Saturday. Jon McConkey, Galloglas LLC of Rapid City, crafted the bench.

Tanner Lolley and Lane Siedschlaw received certificates at the

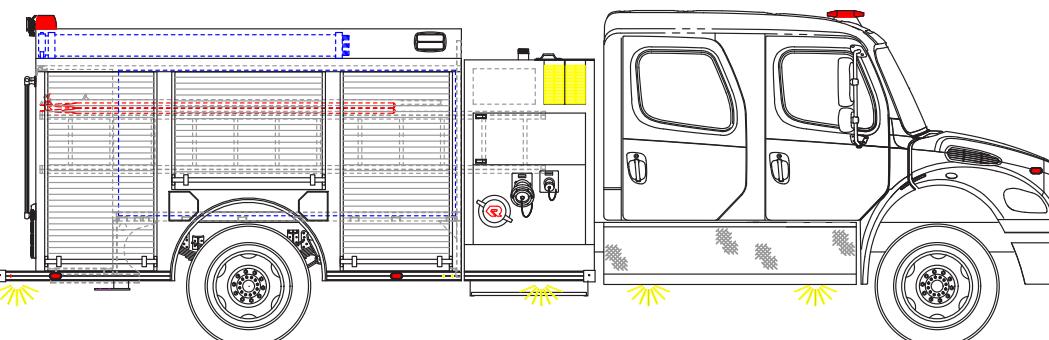
event, also.

All proceeds from the free will meal and auction will go to help the fire department with expenses of maintaining an active volunteer fire department.

(Written by Linda Baldock, White River Mellette County News, White River SD, December 3, 2025)



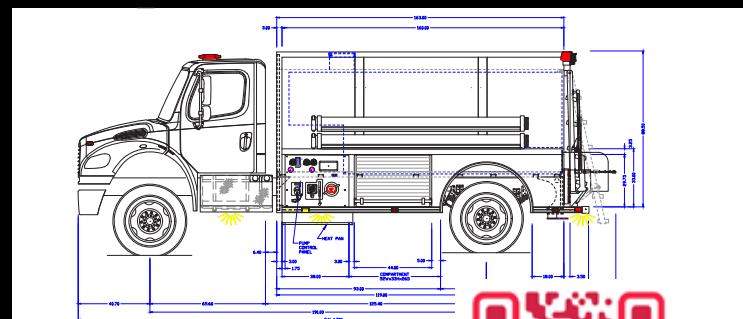
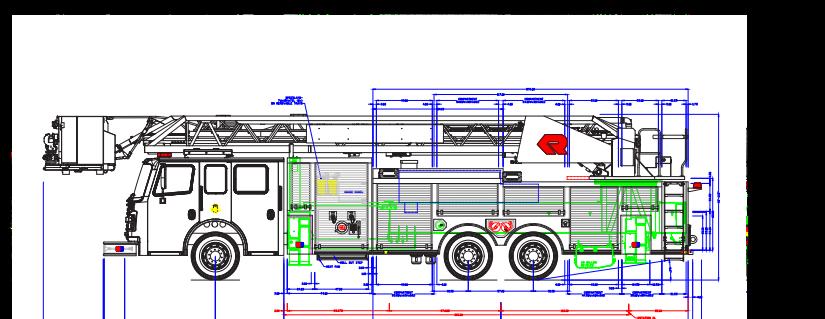
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