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DECEMBER 2025 • VOL. 18 - NO. 10

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The Iowa Firefighters Association hosted the annual States Networking meeting in Des Moines on Nov. 7-8. A total of eight states were represented as they shared ideas and information. Attending from Iowa were Kent Brix, Mike Kime, Lonnie Newhall, Adam Kutz, Chris Bylund, Aaron Clemons and Taylor Moore. Kenny Krause and Brenda Jenny represented Nebraska. Attending from Kansas were Shane Pearson, Ron Ewing, Jimmy Hubbard, Laramie McPherson, Chad Mayberry and Courtney Fegter. Barry Kuenkel and Ron Hampton represented Wisconsin. Ed Hoffman, Zach Lundberg and Travis Olson attended from Minnesota. Don Ward and Rick George represented South Dakota. Keith Smith came from Missouri. Jerry Linston and David Elick came from Indiana. Mark Billquist from the 10-33 Foundation attended.



As the year comes to a close, we'd like to take a moment to thank all of our customers and partners for your continued trust and support.

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'Jaws of Life' pulls driver out of SUV in Watertown

Watertown Fire Rescue responded to a call in which a crossover-SUV had left the roadway and rolled, coming to rest on its side. Firefighters found one occupant trapped inside the vehicle, Fire Rescue reported.

Rescue personnel stabilized the SUV to prevent further movement and began extrication using rescue tools, referred to as the "Jaws of Life," WFR reported. South Shore assisted with extrication and pulled a hose line to protect the person as the vehicle was smoking as well.

The person pulled from the vehicle was safely extricated after several minutes of coordinated effort and was transferred to a waiting ambulance for medical evaluation and transport, WFR reported. The person's condition is not being released at this time.

Watertown Fire Rescue responded with Engine 4 and Medic 4. The South Dakota Highway Patrol and Codington County Sheriff's Office also assisted at the scene.

(Watertown Public Opinion, Watertown, SD, November 4, 2025)

Grassfire breaks out in Andover

Andover Fire Department responded to a call during the afternoon of Oct. 26 for a grassfire northeast of Andover along U.S. Hwy. 12 and 417th Ave. Pierpont fire chief Morgan Holler reported that other agencies on scene included Bristol Fire Department, Groton Fire Department and Pierpont Fire Department.

Holler said the fire began in a ditch along the highway and spread to a nearby field where it burned a patch about a mile long and over 100 yards wide. Definite cause of the fire was undetermined but he said it was probably the result of sparks caused by a passing car or a discarded cigarette butt.

No structures or crops in the field were damaged as a result of the fire he stated; however, hay bales along the road were burned.

Pierpont Fire Department was on scene for two hours until the fire was under control but Holler said the Andover department was probably on scene for another couple hours until the flames had been completely extinguished.

Holler added several local farmers were also on hand with tilling equipment to help contain the spread of the fire.

(Leyton Beardslee, Webster Reporter and Farmer, Webster, SD, November 3, 2025)

Huron wraps up November training

That's a wrap on forcible entry basics for our November training. The last three days (Nov. 4, 5 and 6) were spent on improving our knowledge and skills on forcing doors and running saws. From the Huron Fire Department Facebook page.

From Dave Jorgenson for SE District-SDFA Districts

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

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

Thank You

FROM SE DISTRICT BOARD



SCAN ME

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 Letters to the editor must be accompanied by a name and daytime telephone number, and may be edited for space.



Deadwood Chili Feed

Firefighters lined up to serve chili, nachos, and hot dogs for free will donations at the annual chili feed on Sunday, Oct. 26, raising almost \$2,000 and giving away fire safety equipment to participants. Charles Fetter, fire technician, said the department gave away six fire extinguishers, almost a dozen smoke detectors, and three to four boxes of various batteries for people's smoke detectors. Fetter said the department raised more than \$700 in

silent auction funds, auctioning off a donated painting and a bike to restore a 1947 Dodge truck. In donations, Fetter said they raised \$1,807.97. "Overall, it went very well," said Fetter. "We had a good, steady amount of folks that came through. All the members that were there all chipped in and completed the task and made it another successful chili feed." Fetter said the department is grateful for the continued support they receive from the Lead-Deadwood communities. "The community always supports us, so we try to support our town and our youth and give back when we can," he said. Photo by Sara Morgan, Black Hills Pioneer.

No Gym, No Excuses

By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

Every call demands something from our bodies, whether it's climbing stairs in 60 pounds of gear, crawling through heat and smoke, or simply helping lift a patient from the floor. It goes without saying that this job requires a solid level of physical fitness. That said, this isn't another typical fire service fitness article loaded with statistics about how unfit the fire service has become; we've all heard them before. Instead, the goal here is to present a simple, effective solution that removes excuses and builds functional strength. Let me introduce the sandbag.

I have a love-hate relationship with sandbags. I love that they're inexpensive, versatile, and effective. But somewhere in the middle of a workout, I usually have a few choice words for that same bag. All jokes aside, the sandbag has given me some of the most challenging yet rewarding workouts I've ever done. Thanks to its design and shifting weight, it's also one of the best tools for building real-world strength and conditioning that directly transfers to the fireground. Before we get into the "how," let's talk about the "why."

Sandbags might be the most underrated piece of training equipment in the fire service. They're cheap, portable, and demand total-body control. Because the sand shifts as you move, every lift challenges your stability, grip, and core, the same muscles that protect your back and shoulders on the job. A barbell moves in a straight line. A sandbag fights you every inch of the way. That instability forces you to engage your entire body, just like when you're dragging a charged line or lifting a patient from an awkward position. Sandbags are also joint-friendly and require less technical skill than Olympic lifts. You can squat, press, drag, carry, or throw them without needing a weightlifting platform. Heavier bags build strength and power; lighter bags test your endurance and conditioning. With one sandbag, you can hit every major muscle group in twenty minutes, and believe me, you'll feel it the next day.

Most importantly though, sandbag training looks and feels like our work. Firefighting isn't symmetrical or predictable, and neither is a shifting bag of sand. It teaches you to brace under load, move awkward weight, and stay composed under fatigue. It's not

pretty, and that's exactly why it works so well.

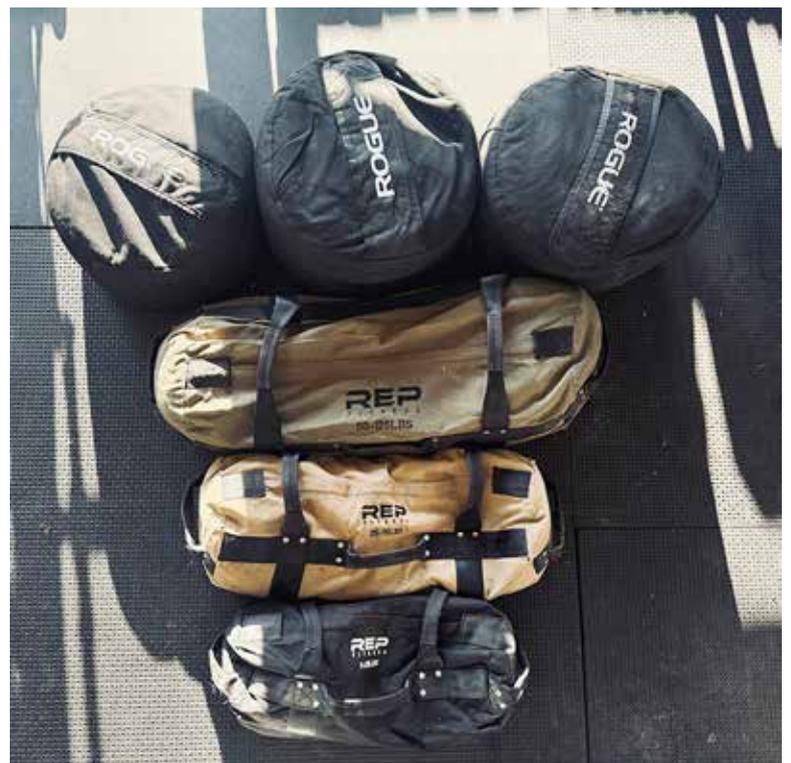
To frame the "Why", let's look at Greg Glassman's ten domains of fitness: cardiovascular and respiratory endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy. Sandbag training checks every one of those boxes. The workouts below show how a single tool can develop all ten. At the core of my own program is the twenty-minute workout, roughly the length of a SCBA bottle during intense work. Don't get me wrong, short, high-intensity sessions and long, grinding workouts both need to be integrated for a well rounded workout program, but my go-to conditioning sweet spot is between fifteen and twenty-five minutes.

EXAMPLE WORKOUT #1 - Short duration workout: Emphasis on speed

In 5 minutes, perform as many repetitions as possible of:

- 1 sandbag clean + 2 sandbag jump overs
- 2 sandbag cleans + 4 sandbag jump overs
- 3 sandbag cleans + 6 sandbag jump overs

Continue this pattern until the 5-minute time is up.



Use your medium-weight bag.

EXAMPLE WORKOUT #2 - Medium duration workout: Emphasis on cardiovascular and respiratory endurance

*modified Hero Workout in honor of Lt. Brian Sullivan (FDNY).

In 20 minutes, perform as many rounds as possible of:

- 20 burpees
- 10 sandbag shoulder-to-overhead
- 20 sandbag alternating lunges
- 10 sandbag squats

Use a light or medium-weight bag.

This modified version removes the need for specialized equipment like rowers or boxes while keeping the same cardiovascular and muscular endurance challenge.

EXAMPLE WORKOUT #3 - Long duration workout: Emphasis on stamina

*Workout from GORUCK.

- 4 rounds for time:
- 4-minute ruck
- 30 sandbag thrusters
- 4-minute ruck
- 30 lateral pulls + mountain climbers

Use a light or medium-weight bag.

EXAMPLE WORKOUT #4 - Strength-biased workout: Emphasis on strength

Every 2 minutes for 20 minutes perform:

- 10 sandbag squats
- Use a heavy-weighted bag.

Each workout has its own emphasis that targets a specific fitness domain, but if you dig a little deeper into the individual movements, you'll see how each one develops multiple areas. The sandbag clean from the short-duration workout builds power. The sandbag jump over develops agility, balance, and accuracy. The sandbag thruster (a squat plus overhead press) challenges coordination and flexibility. Together, these movements replicate the many demands of the fireground.

This article was designed to give a practical solution for fitness that actually matters. You don't need a

fancy gym. You just need a sandbag. Go online to Rep Fitness, Rogue Fitness, Brute Force Sandbags, GORUCK, or even Amazon, and pick one up for under \$25. Having three bags, light, medium, and heavy, gives you an entire gym for under \$100. The investment is small, but the payoff of being stronger, more durable, and ready for the job, is huge. Remember, the most important tool on the fireground is the firefighter. Make sure it's ready.

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

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. There is no charge.

DECEMBER 5-7, 2025: SD Fire Chief's Conference, Deadwood, SD.

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

JANUARY 9-11, 2026: SD Fire Instructor's Conference, Mitchell, SD.

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.



SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Before you even begin to read this article, let me start with a disclaimer. I am about to go into an area where angels fear to tread, and as First Responders, it is almost the “third rail” of topics. (Now where does that phrase come from? The phrase originates with the subway system, where the trains run on two rails like all railroads. The difference is these trains are electric and power to run the train is from the third rail. When you touch the third rail, you die! Hence the phrase “Don’t touch the third rail.” Meaning don’t go near it at all.) However, you know me, I am not as bright as I look. So, buckle your seat belts and read on.

Stephanie White is a 21-year veteran of the Fire Service from Virginia, and in article this year for Firefighter Nation, Stephanie took the risk to address the issue of miscarriages. (So let the sweaty palms begin, as no one, or almost no one, particularly if you are male knows what to do with this topic.) Why do I even venture into this? First of all, as a pastor I had to deal with the heartache and loss that comes from this often quiet and very personal issue for women. However, this also carries a loss their spouse/partner. When a miscarriage occurs, if it is known to others, the typical “caring” response is this. “You are young, you can have another.” As if this life the mother carried was nothing more than a biology experiment! (Sorry, I am a tad passionate here.) From the perspective of the woman who was carrying this life, this loss is more than an experiment, for

many of them it was a “hoped for child”. A life, a legacy to care for and to watch grow up and eventually lead to grandchildren. (Guys, women are wholistic this way, not like us who are linear. Trust me, I have learned that the hard way.)

Stephanie writes, not as a grief counselor but as a female professional firefighter who suffered two miscarriages on the job. Let me use her own words: “My advice from here on out is solely guided from experiencing two miscarriages on the job, and watching my fellow firefighters go through it. It was strange enough dealing with a sudden loss on my end. When my second miscarriage was a second-trimester miscarriage that ended up with multiple complications, it really got chaotic and caused stress for my shift mates, who didn’t know how to tell a physically fragile me that I needed to take time off to heal my body. As female firefighters, we often feel guilty enough taking the proper time off to heal after a baby, and the concept of taking time off to physically heal when there is no baby can make us feel as if people think we’re sandbagging it.” It was those lines that caught my attention. What follows is Stephanie’s advice to fellow first responders, but I also believe it applies to all of us when we learn of a loss like this from our friends and family members.

Don’t avoid your firefighter (or friend). Keep in mind, if you are uncomfortable with this admit it. It’s okay to simply hand someone a cup of coffee and sit with them in

silence sometimes. (I have heard it said the best way to help is to say nothing at all.) Spouses/significant others, go through it, too. Don’t assume that because a woman is the one physically experiencing the loss that your male firefighters aren’t feeling any emotion over it. Check on your people, and don’t avoid them.

This one is specific to firefighters. Are they physically ready to come back to work? (Or on the volunteer side, ready to answer calls.) Since we don’t talk about it as a society, officers and the firefighter themselves really have no guidance on the physical complications that come with a pregnancy loss. With a lack of well-publicized guidance on miscarriages, there’s a chance that a female firefighter might show back up too soon after a pregnancy loss. Officers should realize that it might be up to them to gently remind their firefighter that a miscarriage is incredibly hard on the body, and taking the appropriate time off is completely acceptable.

Is your female firefighter mentally ready? Being physically ready is important, but let’s talk about the most ignored crisis: caring for other human beings while suffering through a very private and invisible loss. You might not have even known that a firefighter on your shift (department) was pregnant. The same applies to family and friends, you might not have known they were pregnant, but that does not minimize the loss.

Is your male firefighter mentally



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

“In full disclosure, early in my tenure as a pastor I did funerals for two infants. The first child was a “Sudden Infant Death” or SIDs death, and I carried that child to the ambulance that morning. The second child was still born when my own daughter was 3 months old. At this time, I am not even 30 and I am facing losses no one taught me about in school.”

okay? Dudes...we all know men love to talk about their feelings, right? Even less spoken about is the male grief in this entire process. While being in the firehouse and focusing on other people’s problems and being around the jokes and chaos of the firehouse might be cathartic for some guys, somebody still needs to be checking in on them. Check on your shift mate/fellow firefighters. Make sure they’re both okay and ready to handle other people’s problems. The grief they’re going through could be made much worse if they come to work and snap at a citizen because that “emergency call” isn’t really an emergency.

By now you are wondering what prompted this article. In full disclosure, early in my tenure as a pastor I did funerals for two infants. The first child was a “Sudden Infant Death” or SIDs death, and I carried that child to the ambulance that morning. The second child was still born when my own daughter was 3 months old. At this time, I am not even 30 and I am facing losses no one taught me about in school. After the second funeral I attended a seminar on

infant loss, and among the 50 participants, I was a lone male! (Give you an idea how much guys like to deal with this topic). Then, a few years later, I was involved in a support group for couples dealing with infertility and learned that the husbands experienced the losses as well as the women who hoped to bear a child. While I am no expert on this topic, I have had enough life experience to know that most of us would rather not approach this subject. It is not because we are uncaring it just that we are uncertain how to proceed.

At the end of the day, I hope and pray that realizing it took a lot of courage for Stephanie to open up about her loss, that you might be able to extend a little more empathy to those around you who have been through this. Keeping in mind, it is not just a “female” problem, it is a universal issue. When this loss occurs to someone close to us, we will respond with the kind of caring I know we are all capable of.

Blessings.

CHAPLAIN RODNEY V



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U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notification

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

ISABELLA OSCARSON, 26, Idaho Department of Lands, Boise, Idaho died on Sept. 26. Firefighter Isabella Oscarson, who was a seasonal employee from Minnesota working for the Idaho Department of Lands, was struck by a falling tree while assisting with the U.S. Forest Service’s Tinker Bugs prescribed fire in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests. Rapid medical assistance was rendered, and Firefighter Oscarson was flown to a hospital in Grangeville, Idaho, where she later passed away.

KALIF LESLIE DALY, 31, Columbia County Fire Rescue, Martinez, GA, died on Nov. 4. On November 4, Fire Recruit Kalif Leslie Daly became ill during his first day of physical training. Fire Recruit Daly was transported to a hospital where he passed away. The cause of death has yet to be determined.

BRANDON J. CLAWSON, 40, City of Bristol (TN) Fire Department, died on Oct. 1. Firefighter/Paramedic Brandon Clawson suffered a medical emergency at Fire Station 4 while on duty and after responding to multiple calls during his shift. Firefighter/Paramedic Clawson was transported to a local hospital where he passed away the same day. The cause of death has yet to be determined.

PATRICK D. BRADY, 42, Fire Department of the City of New York, Brooklyn, NY, died on Nov. 8. Firefighter Patrick Brady suffered a cardiovascular event while fighting a residential structure fire. Firefighter Brady was treated on the scene and then transported to a local hospital where he passed away.



DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

Robert Eggers 1936-2025

Quinn Volunteer Firefighter, (Ret'd) Robert Morse Eggers of Quinn, SD, passed into glory on October 29, 2025. He was born on March 6, 1936, to Ralph Harold and Helen Gladys (Morse) Eggers in Clay Center, NE. He graduated from Ogallala High School in 1956. He served in the U.S. Army from 1956-1959, where he gained skills as a mechanic which he put to good use the rest of his life. He married Frances Lorene Standiford on September 15, 1957, in Philip, SD. Bob and Frances were blessed with 5 children and lived in various places in Illinois and Iowa before returning to South Dakota in 1969. Bob wore many hats throughout his career: trucker, mechanic, ranch hand, carpenter, and handyman to name a few. He had many skills and was always willing to use his skills to help his neighbors. He loved his family, his country and his Lord.



Bob was preceded in death by his parents and his wife Frances. He is survived by his two siblings, Barbara Miller of Ogallala, NE, and Dan (Kathleen) Eggers of Barrington, IL, as well as five children, Cheryl (Paul) Reiter of Rapid City, SD, Robert (Marlene) of Black Hawk, SD, Norman (Cheryl) of Nemo, SD, Retired Lead Fire Chief, Timothy (Charlene) of Lead, SD, and Cindy (Clark) Jones of Rapid City, SD, 20 grandchildren, 25 great-grandchildren, and 1 great-great grandchild. A memorial service was held on November 15, 2025, at 11 a.m. at Bethel Baptist Church, 2212 Lance Street, Rapid City, SD 57702-4316. A luncheon was served after the memorial for friends and family to reminisce. As an alternative to flowers, a memorial fund has been established. Gifts may be mailed to Cheryl Reiter, 2211 7th Ave., Rapid City, SD 57702.

Russell Glenn Hendrix 1946-2025

Russell Glenn Hendrix, age 79 of Pierre, formerly of Sioux Falls, passed away unexpectedly on October 30, 2025 at Sanford USD Medical Center after post-surgical complications.

Russ was born in Gillette WY to Lyle and Elaine (Stoner) Hendrix on March 23, 1946. He spent his childhood in Gillette, WY prior to moving to Carthage SD with his family in 1952.

Russ lived in Carthage from 1952-1964 where he graduated from high school. He married the love of his life, Sharon Hart of Howard, SD on December 6, 1964. In 1967 he attended General Beadle State Teachers College. In 1971 he was the first graduating class of Dakota State University after they changed their name. He majored in History and Business Administration. Russ found he had a great passion and personality for sales while working at Myrl and Roy's Paving while in college and then as their office manager after graduation. He went to work for Iseman Mobile Homes as their Insurance Director. Russ started in the insurance industry when he started working for JT Miller and Associates out of Minneapolis, MN selling insurance in SD.

A lifelong public servant, Russ devoted more than 30+ years to the volunteer fire service which included Assistant Chief and Treasurer of Wayne Township Fire Department (Just out of Sioux Fall, SD). In Pierre he was Captain of Engine #2 and Captain of Pierre Rural, Pierre Fire Chief, and Pierre Rural Fire Chief, protecting his community with courage, skill, and compassion. As Chief of Pierre Rural he was instrumental in building the new fire station on Airport Road. Russ was a Lifetime Member of the Pierre Fire Department. He was a FEMA type 3 incident commander, FEMA & NWCG certified instructor for 100-200-300-400 incident command classes. He was a member of Northern Great Plains Management Team, member of SD Society of Fire Instructors, member of SD Fire Chiefs Association, and

member of SD Firefighters Association. Member of Son's of the Legion. Beyond his remarkable service as a volunteer firefighter, he brought the same dedication and creativity to his life's work as an innovator in the insurance field. Russ and his wife Sharon, moved to Pierre from Sioux Falls in 1984, where Russ started the new insurance division of the SD Banker's Association. Later, and always seeking new ways to help others and make systems better for those who depended on them, Russ left the SD Banker's Association and started working for Fischer Rounds and Associates.

During his 30 years with Fischer Rounds, Russ combined his passion for firefighting with his insurance career selling and managing insurance plans for fire departments, EMS services and municipalities throughout SD and ND.

After retirement in 2014 he and Sharon enjoyed spending time between their homes in AZ and SD and traveling throughout the world. They enjoyed exotic travels to Australia and several Viking River Cruise tours through Europe, as well as many trips to Mexico and the Dominican Republic. They also had many joyful trips to their favorite island, their "heaven on earth", St Maarten.

Known for his ready smile and joking manner, Russ could be counted on to lift spirits—even when he wasn't feeling his best. His sense of humor, kindness, and strength of character left a lasting impression on everyone who knew him.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Sharon of Pierre and Buck-



eye, AZ, three children, Tina and Chad Schiller of Cottage Grove MN, Tammi and Brad Stangohr of Pierre SD, and Travis and Sarah (Lord) Hendrix of Harrisburg SD, 8 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren, who were the pride and joy of his life. He is also survived by his brother Ron of Garretson, his sister Barbara Bauer of Sioux Falls, his sister Nancy and Kevin Miller of Jamestown ND, and sister Trude and Bob Hendrickson of Mesa AZ. He was preceded in death by his parents Lyle and Elaine Hendrix, his brother-in-law Dale Bauer, his sister-in-law Margaret Hendrix, sister-in-law Janie Hendrix, his nephew Kevin Hendrix, and his nephew Jason Bauer. Russ' legacy of service, love, and laughter will continue to live on through them and all those whose lives he touched.

A full Fire Department Honors Funeral will be held at Riverside Cemetery in Pierre on June 6th, 2026 and A Celebration of his Life will follow at The Legion Cabin in Pierre immediately following the service. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorials be made to a charity which they are looking to establish in his honor.

Improperly Discarded Smoking Materials Spark Fire in Yankton

The Yankton Fire Department was called to a porch fire on the 1000 block of Pine Street at 3:08 p.m. Friday. Fire Chief Tim Linke said the Yankton Police Department arrived on scene first and began extinguishing the blaze using fire extinguishers, and then the fire department arrived and finished putting the fire out. Linke said preliminary investigations point to discarded smoking materials that were not disposed of properly. "If there's a safety message to be conveyed, please put out your cigarettes in something wet and make sure they are completely extinguished." The police, fire, Yankton County Emergency Management and Yankton County Emergency Medical Services all were on hand for the blaze. No one was hurt or displaced by the fire. The crews were on scene for approximately 45 minutes.

CLASSIFIEDS

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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

"We volunteer to help people in their time of crisis and need. When someone calls for help, they want someone, anyone, to help. When they hear voices or sirens coming, they know help is on the way. It is our responsibility to do the best we can, with what we have, for the people who are counting on us."

The 2025 Year in Review

January: Chiefs Rick Lasky and John Salka speak in Vermillion on 5 Alarm Leadership. Longtime Chancellor VFD member Harvey Jougeling retires with 61 years on the department.

February: Black Hills area firefighters help in California wildfires and get to meet Prince Harry.

March: Unusual winter conditions have made for dry wildfire conditions and fires across the state. BIA Pine Ridge Agency and Oglala Sioux Tribe perform wildfire fuels reduction projects.

April: Absolutely nothing hap-

pened in April. April Fools!! District Schools hosted around the state. Beresford VFD retrieves cat from a tree. Dan Schmidt of Whitewood VFD honored for 50 years of service.

May: Deputy Fire Marshal Paul Coon retired! Wasta celebrates new station. Groton VFD's Dale Ringgenberg honored for 50 years of service. New Underwood VFD and Pennington County honor Jack Dustman for 52 years of service to the area.

June: State Fire School in Watertown attracts hundreds of firefighters for the training weekend.

July: Murdo volunteer fire department suffers a line of duty death of firefighter Nick Van Dam.

August: Four Rapid City fire-

fighters honored with National award from IAFC for actions at an incident involving a vehicle that crashed into the upper floors of an apartment building.

September: SDFA, Auxiliary, and Pennington County Fire Services hosts the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Fall Conference in Rapid City. Worthing VFD honors George Wallenstein for 50 years of service to the community.

October: Fire Marshal Paul Merriman and longtime office secretary Glenda Marks retire from public service. Rodney Foster and Tom Merrill talk at the Fall Fire Conference in Spearfish about the challenges and honor of being in the volunteer fire service

November: The rollout of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) starts in South Dakota. Doug Hinkle named new State Fire Marshal.

December: We think back on the year. What happened, both good and unfortunate. What we learned and what we need to learn more about.

We all have memories from throughout the year. The emotions may vary from smiles, laughter, and pride, to, tears, sorrow and sadness. These events display the comradery and respect of the fire

service family whether we honor learning, longevity, or loss of life.

We volunteer to help people in their time of crisis and need. When someone calls for help, they want someone, anyone, to help. When they hear voices or sirens coming, they know help is on the way. It is our responsibility to do the best we can, with what we have, for the people who are counting on us.

Sometimes, our success is a save or rescue. But yet, a recovery can still be a final closure and relief to a family.

Keep learning. Repeat to review. Train and practice with what you have. Pass along what you know or learned. We're all in this together.

I hope your year of moments and memories will bring a smile or feeling of satisfaction.

As the Christmas comes and always, let's all be thankful for what we have and the privilege to have had in our lives.

For all my fire service friends, Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and cheers to a New Year.

From my family to yours,

CHARLIE & DAWN KLUDT
SDFA President
and First Lady of Fire

Thoughts From The Tailboard

I would assume that by now all the Thanksgiving leftovers are gone. Just how many ways can you make a turkey sandwich taste different? Most importantly, I hope you had time with family, friends and all the things in your life that you are thankful for.

Winter is on the way, so far this fall has been pretty great, but this will come to an end one of these days. Now that I said that, watch out, we'll have that white stuff for sure. I'm ready, got the shovels out, started the snow blower, got all the patio and yard stuff put away.

The SD Firefighters Assn. Board has been discussing whether it is time to have someone, or some organization be an executive administrator. We have kicked this around for several years. It seems in today's world we all have less and less time. The SDFA Board is no different. The amount of time that Board members spend on contacting instructors, getting information into Growth Zone for registration for state fire schools, district fire schools or even other fire organizations, membership dues notices, registration and even paying bills is huge. We are no different and have less time too. There are companies that do this very thing for other statewide fire organizations, and it seems to work very well for them. There will be more on this soon but just trying to keep you up to date.

As Christmas and New Year's approach those very lives I just talked about are getting busier with all

the holiday activities. I hope your Christmas is super Merry and your New Years is what you were hoping for. A new year always seems to bring about changes some good and some, we'll see.

With that, I'll close, wishing you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Be safe and take a little extra time.

DENNY GORTON



**Denny Gorton,
Retired Treasurer/Past President**

"The SD Firefighters Assn. Board has been discussing whether it is time to have someone, or some organization be an executive administrator. We have kicked this around for several years. It seems in today's world we all have less and less time. The SDFA Board is no different."



Brandon Volunteer Fire Department in Brandon, SD, hosted a bus training for neighboring departments and entities.

STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

Longtime staff members in SD Fire Marshal's Office retire

Three longtime staff members with the South Dakota Fire Marshal's Office have joined the retirement ranks in 2025. Glenda Marks, Paul Coon, and Paul Merriman have all left a legacy in the South Dakota Fire Marshal's Office and across South Dakota.

Glenda Marks, Senior Secretary has worked in state government for an astonishing 46 years. She has spent the majority of those with the South Dakota Fire Marshal's Office. Through the years, Glenda leaves behind a legacy of loyalty, kindness, and commitment to others. From supporting firefighters through the Pierre Fire Department Auxiliary to being a

friend for life to so many, Glenda has made a lasting impact on her colleagues, her community, and her state. Glenda has always had a knack for getting us all what we needed and for keeping us in line as well. Glenda will always be remembered for her dedication to the fire service in South Dakota. It will be very different for everyone, not hearing her answer the phone in the office anymore. We all wish Glenda the very best in her well-deserved retirement. Glenda's last day was October 8th, 2025.

Paul Coon, SD Deputy State Fire Marshal, has worked in the SD Fire Marshal's Office for over

35 years. Paul has been a champion of educating firefighters, as a mentor, and most importantly, as a friend to all. Paul is an outstanding fire investigator and has been a part of some of the highest profile and extensive fire investigations in South Dakota history. He has been a mentor to all of us and we certainly won't forget the knowledge he provided. You would have to look far and wide to find a firefighter in South Dakota that hasn't been trained or tested by Paul. Paul was a longtime responder as well. From his early days with the Martin Fire Department to ending his career with the Plankinton Fire Department, Paul has been a vital

member to his departments and communities in which he served. Paul is a legend in the South Dakota fire service and his legacy runs deep. We wish Paul the best in his well-deserved retirement. He is looking forward to not getting calls in the middle of the night and when the temperature is below 50 degrees. Thank you, Paul, for everything you have done for all of us. Paul's last day was on June 8th, 2025.

Paul Merriman, SD State Fire Marshal has worked for the State of South Dakota for 35 years. Paul has spent the last 14 years as the South Dakota State Fire Marshal. Paul has always had the best in-

terest of the fire service in mind when leading the State Fire Marshal's Office. Paul has always been a champion for driving legislation that directly impacts the safety of firefighters in South Dakota. Paul is also a master at understanding fire code and educating everyone on the safety it provides the citizens of South Dakota. We all wish Paul the very best in retirement and in his future endeavors. Paul's last day was on October 8th, 2025.

By SD State Fire Marshal Office Staff: DOUG HINKLE, DAMON HARTMANN, MIKE JONES, KYLE MOSER, AARON LORIMOR AND TRAVIS LORIMOR

SDFA AUXILIARY REPORT

Hello, I hope you all enjoyed Fire Safety Week! I am Jamie with the South Dakota State Fire Auxiliary. I am a new member, recently voted in at fire school.

Firstly, introductions. I am married with three boys that are all 18-20 years old. I have three long haired dachshunds. In Brandon, SD, I am part of the auxiliary for their fire department, and a former firefighter myself. My husband, Joseph Relhak, has been a member of Crooks Fire Department and more recently Brandon Volunteer Fire Department. He currently holds an assistant chief position. My dad has served the South Dakota State Firefighters, as well as the State EMT board for many years, and is now retired. His name is Cal Stange (Tea, SD). For those of you wondering, he just bought a new place and is thriving in retirement.

A few weeks ago, Brandon Volunteer Fire Department in Brandon, SD, hosted a bus training for neighboring departments and entities. In attendance were Minnehaha County Emergency Management, Medstar Ambulance personnel, Split Rock Fire Department as well as Valley Springs Fire Department in addition to Brandon Fire. The training focused on Mass Extrications, School bus acci-

dents, and working with mutual aid departments. The team at Brandon Fire provided lunch and drinks for everyone on site.

As you know, bus accidents can happen anywhere. In 2024 there were 14 bus accidents in South Dakota. This number is significantly lower than our neighbors in Iowa and Minnesota who were well over 100. Approximately 50 percent of bus accidents in the US resulted in injury to someone. The state of South Dakota had one bus accident in 2024 resulting in fatality. With our vast landscape, schools are trekking students and athletes across the state often for various events or competitions. Tourists are coming to our state and taking buses to see our various landmarks. We need to keep our fire departments prepared on Mass casualty drills, Bus drills and we need to keep our resources on hand for when the inevitable strikes; fatality. Brandon Fire wants to thank Nordstroms Auto and Husets for providing vehicles for training, as well as the local departments that attended the training.

JAMIE RELHAK,
SD Auxiliary



Submit Your Nominations for the NVFC's 2026 National Fire Service Achievement Awards

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is now accepting nominations for the William J. Darley Lifetime Achievement Award, Chief James P. Seavey Sr. Health and Wellness Leadership Award, Junior Firefighter of the Year Award, and Junior Firefighter Program of the Year Award. Recognize the contributions of outstanding fire service volunteers by submitting your nominations by 5pm EST on January 16.

The recipients of the Lifetime Achievement, Health and Wellness Leadership, and Junior Firefighter of the Year awards will

be honored at an awards celebration on May 16, 2026, in Alexandria, VA, in conjunction with the NVFC's spring conference. The Junior Firefighter Program of the Year Award will be presented in a local celebration to make sure that all their juniors can attend.

The **WILLIAM J. DARLEY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**, sponsored by Darley, recognizes a volunteer firefighter who has served at least 20 years and has made a major contribution or achieved significant accomplishments in the volunteer fire service at the local, state, and/or national

level.

The **CHIEF JAMES P. SEAVEY SR. HEALTH AND WELLNESS LEADERSHIP AWARD**, co-sponsored by VFIS and Ward Diesel Filter Systems, honors an active volunteer firefighter, EMS provider, or rescue worker who has served as a leader in creating or promoting emergency responder health and wellness programs or initiatives.

The **NVFC JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR AWARD**, sponsored by California Casualty, honors a junior firefighter who has gone above and beyond in their

service to their fire department.

The **NVFC JUNIOR FIREFIGHTER PROGRAM OF THE YEAR AWARD**, sponsored by California Casualty, honors a junior firefighter program or Explorer Post that has demonstrated significant community impact, innovation, and creativity.

Find the full criteria and submit your nominations at www.nvfc.org/awards.

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.

ABOUT DARLEY

You serve others. We serve you. Darley provides the highest quality technology and equipment solutions to the federal defense community and first responders. With its origins in Midwest manufacturing, Darley offers our nation's heroes a complete line of unmanned systems, technology, equipment, and pumps. More information is available at www.darley.com.

ABOUT VFIS

VFIS is the largest provider of insurance, education, and consulting services to emergency service organizations such as fire departments, ambulance and rescue squads, and 911 centers. They have a long history of helping the emergency service community protect their assets and manage their exposure to loss. They pioneered the first tailored insurance package and formed a program for emergency service organizations. VFIS drafted the first specialized insurance policy in 1969 and continues to be the leader in the industry, insuring more emergency service organizations than any other provider. www.vfis.com

ABOUT WARD DIESEL FILTER SYSTEMS

Automatic and vehicle-mounted, Ward Diesel NO SMOKE Systems offer diesel exhaust protection on scene, in the station – anywhere you need it. Building modifications are not required for installation and there are no mechanical pieces to be attached by the firefighter when exiting and returning to the station. NO SMOKE is the only diesel exhaust removal solution on the market today that provides complete protection against harmful diesel exhaust both inside and outside the fire station. Visit us online at www.warddiesel.com or call 800-845-4665 to learn more.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA CASUALTY

California Casualty is a proud longtime partner of the NVFC and its National Junior Firefighter Program. They have been the chosen Auto & Home Insurance provider for first responders across the nation for over four decades. California Casualty offers a variety of insurance products with exclusive benefits that protect firefighters and their families. Coverages and product availability vary by state. For more information visit <https://www.calcas.com/nvfc>.



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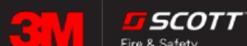
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Hermosa forum focuses on ambulance district

The possibility of forming an ambulance district to serve eastern Custer County was discussed at a heavily-attended community forum Oct. 28, at the American Legion in Hermosa.

The forum brought together Hermosa and Custer County residents, area ranchers, members of the Hermosa Board of Trustees, Custer County Commissioners and representatives from various sectors of public service in and around Pennington and Custer counties, including Battle Creek and Fairburn fire districts, emergency management and the Rapid City Fire Department.

Leo Van Sambeek, a long-time Hermosa resident and a part of Hermosa Connects, Inc. (HCI), and Hermosa Area Growth and Development (HAGD), says that ambulance service to the Hermosa area is about to change, and will no longer be paid for by Rapid City tax dollars.

HAGD, as the economic development side of Hermosa Connects, took interest in the formation of an ambulance district because of the economic impact the presence of ambulance service (or lack thereof) would have on Hermosa and the surrounding area.

“There are certain businesses that require that an ambulance service be available,” Van Sambeek said. “An example is Black Hills Electric Cooperative. When they build their complex west of town, they need to have an assurance that there is going to be an ambulance available as far as their safety.”

Van Sambeek also mentioned the possibility of building an adult care facility in Hermosa, which would also require availability of ambulance service.

“When we look at economic development, those were two areas where we had questions as far as the ambulance,” Van Sambeek said.

Rapid City Fire Department (RCFD), since a 2007 agreement, has provided ambulance service to Hermosa and eastern Custer County for \$2,000 per year, and at the time of the agreement it was a sustainable situation due to the low call volume and the benefit to Rapid City from Hermosa’s sales tax dollars.

However, the call volume has increased over the years, both in Custer County and in Rapid City, RCFD’s costs went up, and \$2,000 per year ceased to be sustainable. Earlier this year, the fee was increased to \$60,000 per year for 2025 and 2026, and a long-term solution EMS availability was sought.

RCFD runs roughly 23,000 calls per year, 80 percent of which are medical in nature.

Out of RCFD’s 12 ambulances, four are considered primary ambulances, together running 4,000 calls each year. A single call into Custer County generally takes one hour minimum, and usually falls to Medic 4, one of the four primary ambulances, and is dispatched out of Station 4 on Fairmont Blvd. This effectively removes a key

ambulance from service to Rapid City residents and can easily cause a cascade of shifting response areas and lagging response times, as the remaining ambulances have to cover for the absent ambulance, a situation that can run RCFD EMS providers into the ground.

Last year, RCFD ambulances responded to 140 calls in eastern Custer County, at an estimated cost of \$1,000 per incident. Van Sambeek was adamant that RCFD should not be viewed as the bad guy in this situation, and said that the years they provided eastern Custer County with such inexpensive service were a gift, and even at \$60,000 it is still a gift. But Rapid City taxpayers will no longer be paying for service to eastern Custer County, and the question going forward is how to keep EMS coverage available.

Custer County residents have a choice, Van Sambeek said. Either they can choose to do nothing, and RCFD’s essentially free ambulance service coverage will cease, leaving citizens responsible for either their own transportation to the hospital in an emergency or personally footing the costs of an ambulance transport; or citizens can choose to form a tax-supported ambulance district, which would require a commissioners’ resolution and the election of a board of directors.

Van Sambeek said that the formation of a district would be necessary to have an entity able to collect and operate off tax money, but the way EMS services would be provided would be determined by the board of directors. If the decision is made to form a district, then the question is whether to contract for service with an existing ambulance service or multiple services, or to start a new ambulance service and build it from the ground up.

Either option presents challenges. Van Sambeek laid out some different scenarios and cost estimates, estimating that the annual price tag for operating or contracting for an ambulance service would be roughly \$400,000. With a maximum statutorily allowed mil levy of 0.6 mils, the maximum tax revenue that could be raised to fund the ambulance district ranges from \$317,800 to \$405,000, depending on how the district boundaries were defined.

“Even being fairly generous with the definition of this ambulance district, we’re possibly getting just down to the bare bones,” Van Sambeek said.

Taxes for residents of the ambulance district would increase by an estimated 3.2 percent for owner-occupied and nearly 9 percent for ag land, a disparity and source of conflict and resistance that could potentially be remediated with a special assessment.

“That’s a healthy increase,” Van Sambeek said. “We could split the way this revenue is collected using property tax and special assessment. Special assessments could be applied only to certain classes, like owner occupied, but there is a provision that if you take the sum

of the property tax and the special assessment, the sum cannot exceed the equivalent of a 0.6 mil levy. So there is some opportunity there for the directors to figure out how they’d like this to work.

If we want ambulance service to continue in this area, we need to pay for it, and we need an am-

bulance district in order to collect money to pay for it,” Van Sambeek said.

Over the next weeks and months, discussions will continue and boundaries will be discussed and defined, but the intent is that action would be taken in time for the formation of an ambulance dis-

trict to be on the ballot for the June 2026 primary election.

Citizens are encouraged to respond to a questionnaire posted on the Hermosa Connects, Inc., website at hermosaconnects.com and engage in discussions on this topic.



Rapid Valley volunteers focus on winter readiness

As temperatures begin to drop, the Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department is taking action to make sure firefighters are ready to respond to cold-related emergencies. During a recent training session, Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department members gathered to review protocols for treating people affected by extreme cold. The session focused on recognizing and managing cold-related conditions such as hypothermia and frostbite, as well as preventing injuries that commonly occur during winter weather events. Firefighters also discussed the unique challenges posed by severe winter conditions, including bitter cold and blizzards, and how these factors can impact patient care and emergency response efforts. The evening concluded with a conversation about personal readiness, emphasizing the importance of being well-equipped and mentally prepared to respond in harsh environments. Photo courtesy of the Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department.

Benefits of being a 100% Department Member

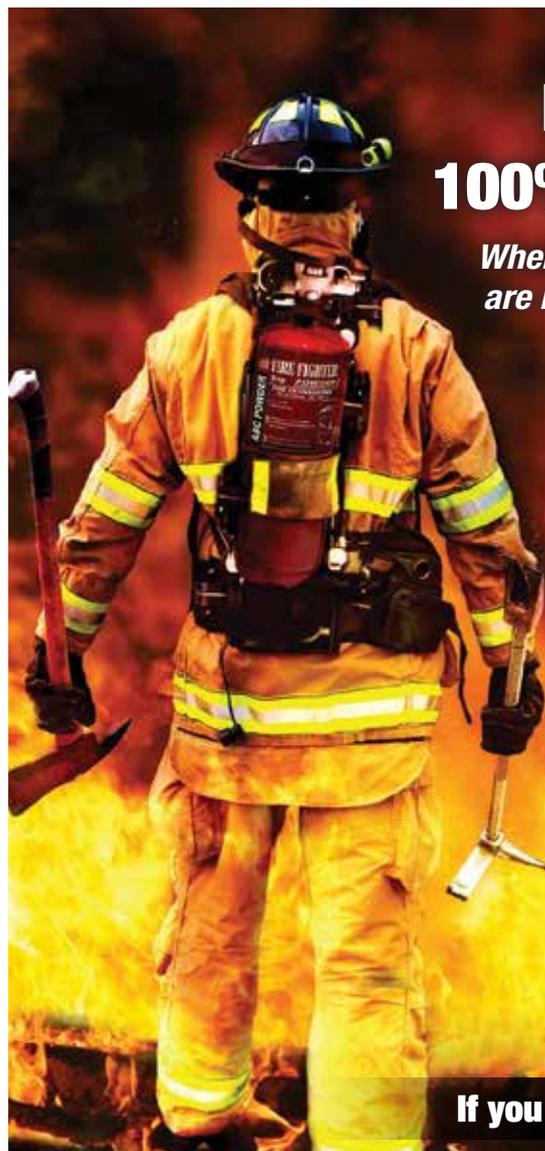
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If you haven't paid your dues, it's not too late!



Firefighter Resilience

By: JERRY KNAPP

South Dakota FF Association provides world class training to its members and I have been blessed with the opportunity to be a small part of it for the past 3 years. Their conferences and hands on training are spectacularly organized, supported and presented. Like most state organizations they produce a monthly newspaper.

In their monthly newspaper, Chaplain Rodney Veldhuizen has been a rabid supporter of Firefighter mental health and for the past several months, has provided readers with expert tips. Here are a few highlights from his Oct column. His full column is available at: rkWj9Zor

1--No one told us that along with the glamour came the cost of seeing broken bodies, of not saving the accident victim, or hearing the cries for help we could not answer.... There is a hidden cost, however that does not have to be the end of the story.

2--Rather than bore you with statistics, let me bluntly state that by choosing to be a firefighter you are three times more likely to develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than the general population.

3--The constant exposure to trauma, loss, and high-pressure situations makes resilience a necessity, not an option.

One of the most important points Chaplain Rodney made was this: "While PTSD treatment is critical, real progress starts with proactive mental conditioning.

The purpose of this article is to share, in FF terms and based on my experience some "proactive mental conditioning" that I learned the hard way, after my near LODD that will be helpful to you as your own prevention as Ch Rod explained more eloquently in his column.

VERY CLOSE CALL

My FD was operating at a severe natural gas leak. In a micro second

I went from cool guy firefighter that had evacuated several people, taken gas readings in nearby buildings and helped stabilize the situation to instant victim when the building was shredded by a violent explosion. My captain and I were about 8' from the front door which ended up across the street. We went almost as far. Only the grace of God was why we survived. Severe physical injuries were only the start and the easiest part to fix.

RESILIENCE LESSONS LEARNED

First the good news: **POST TRAUMATIC GROWTH.** Yes you can have positive actions as a result of mental trauma. In my case, I was obsessed with figuring out how this could happen to me. I was a Battalion chief of my Hazmat Team, this was only natural gas, not even toxic, I thought I knew what I was doing, how could this happen to me? Dan Moran a good friend and better listener helped me sort this out, bit by bit piece by piece we uncovered clues, procedures I did not know, facts that were not in any of my training and probably not in yours. Many important details, but the end state from post traumatic growth was a training program called Tactical Response to Explosive Gas Emergencies that I taught in SD where I was blessed to meet these great American Firefighters and their association officers like Chaplain Rodney.

FIREFIGHTERS PERSPECTIVE

Here is some of what I learned in years following my near death experience. In rough terms, you have an emotional brain and a rational brain. A bad call and you know what they are or a near death experience of your own puts those parts of your brain in overdrive. I describe it as sending your emotions both happy and sad further than you have ever been and want them to go. Out of control, seems like a good description. It is too late, you need to deal with it, like

a bad cut on your arm....easier said than done. It is like a scar, you can whine over it for the rest of your life or understand it and accept it. For me, understanding my reactions took years and counseling and research. Understanding it and counseling saved my marriage and likely my life. It is not easy for me to admit that.

My wife pointed her finger at me about 8 months after the explosion and said "You act like an ass." I blew her off. Seven days later at the fire house my captain pointed his finger at me and said, "You act like an ass." The same powerful words, from people I love, from the nicest person I know and the most unfiltered person I know.

The first two things Dr Steve Levy said to me were: you are not crazy and you are having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. Long, silent pause in the conversation. Think about it he said...a building blew up, you were almost killed, that is abnormal. Another key phrase: if you were not having a normal reaction to situations like this I would be very worried about you.

Personal ignorance: It took me a long time, several months to realize this was a really big deal. On the drive home from the hospital my wife tried to tell me it was a big deal. In my mind, we operate at uncontrolled situations, sometimes things go wrong, its part of the deal as a FF/EMT. Not an ego or hero mentality, my rational brain had this figured out. In simple terms that is what I signed up for and got away with it this time, clearly a rational thought. My emotional brain was out of control and I did not know it. Which for some reason is a common symptom.

ABNORMAL SITUATIONS

Fast forward a couple years. When I do the gas class described above I tell a quick version of my story so others understand. In most classes a Firefighter will come up to me on the break and say they had similar

reactions/symptoms. Some have shared stories of divorce and even attempted suicide as a result of abnormal situations they saw or were are part of.

Finally, like Chaplain Rodney's article, we have started to face the problem of firefighter mental health. We train to do searches under severe fire conditions; we train to remove vehicles from around entrapped victims. We need to train to deal with the normal reactions to abnormal situations we will see, experience and smell as a firefighter. We had a fatal fire several years ago, to this day, many of us that were on that fire can still be found sniffing the air at working fires for that putrid smell of burning human flesh. Like a scar on your body, you can't erase it but you can learn to control it.

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS TEAM

Chaplain Rodney discusses debriefings as a first step to help us understand our normal reactions to abnormal situations. These are very helpful first step. As a peer member of the team I am the dumbest guy in the room. A total of 16 hrs of training is all a peer member needs, highly trained members, psychologists and mental health professional round out the team. My CIST uses a canned system developed by Dr Jeffrey T Mitchell. Here are some of the details on how the system works to help you understand how great they are.

Some rules. Only people at the call that has caused the trauma can be in attendance. No notes or records kept. Rank does not matter. Attendees may speak or not, simply say pass. It is not a critique of the operation. We go around the room introduce ourselves and then attendees. Next question: what was your role in the call? Next time around the circle: how do you feel about it? The discussion often gets emotional and lively. Most importantly, and you don't need a PhD to see the body language change from super tense to a bit looser then almost back to normal for most attended.

A few common points often comes up from FF/EMTs....i keep seeing the same scenario over and over in my head I cant get it out.... or the smell of the blood, I cant get it out of my head....screams, I hear them constantly....her distorted face will be with me forever. For some responders the simple hour long debriefing is not enough for are referred to counseling and we offer 3 free private sessions with a professional and more if necessary.

Another common point that comes up in almost all debriefings....i should have done this instead of that. NO. You did what you did and made the best decisions you could have based on what you were presented with. Sure, after you had time to see the real details of the emergency you may have chosen an alternative...but you did not know it at the time. And...you did the best you could physically and mentally execute at the time. Monday morning quarterbacks al-

ways win yesterday's game, it is a losing strategy for our well being.

DARK HUMOR

Chaplain Rodney discussed using dark humor to help relieve stress. It can be helpful to show the situation is not overwhelming. There was a rumor going around that I rang the doorbell igniting the explosion. At first, I was offended when guys would ask me did you ring the door bell? To cope with this, I would tell them, "No I had a flare in my hand and that is what started it." Situation defused, followed by laughter.

FLASHBACKS

For me, the memory and emotional trauma I keep in a box, it comes out only when I want it to, well most times. Doc asked me about flashbacks, no, been really good. About 2 years after my close call I heard a similar radio transmission to what I heard just before the building was shredded. My emotional brain took over in a flash(back). Before I knew it I ran to hide behind a nearby engine. It took my rational brain time to catch up...how did I get here? Then, it caught up and I pretended to looking for a tool. No one saw me but this shows the power and speed of your emotional brain. O yea, when the snow plow driver drops the blade and it makes that loud low bang, sleep is over for that night.

So to Chaplain Rodney's point...how do we prepare ourselves and our trainees? Simple, be honest....understand that you will have normal reactions to abnormal situations and get help to deal with them especially if they persist and learn about the effects as part of our training.

You can be the hottest well trained/experienced Firefighter there is, you may not find that victim that will die at your next fire. This, despite your best efforts, the best rigs the best gear, sometimes you and the operation will all fall short. A good example is extrications. Should we call them the jaws of death? When these great tools first came out we all saved lives at extrications, not every time but most of the time. Today, if you need the jaws at an extrication it is likely so bad that air bags, seatbelts crumble zones were not enough to protect the victims. Make sure your members and your trainees know that. Sometimes there is nothing you can do.

It is my hope this article will help you prepare yourself and your members for the mental challenges they will face as FF/EMTs. Here are three excellent books that provide more information: Deep Survival by Laurence Gonzales, Post Traumatic Growth by Jim Reddon and Resilience by Eric Gritens.

In the end, it's really simple.... don't call it mental health or a disorder...call it what it is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. You know, the ones we signed you for but were never taught how to understand or deal with. I hope this article has helped some.

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Yankton residents displaced after fire

Six people were displaced after a structure fire in Mission Hill on Oct. 20. The Yankton Fire Department was called to the blaze shortly before 7 p.m. Monday night. According to Yankton Fire Chief Tim Linke, the structure was an older farmhouse that had been moved into town and was currently being utilized as a two-apartment dwelling. No one was hurt in the blaze. Linke said preliminary investigations look like it may have started from "discarded smoking materials." "It started outside, and with the wind, it got a little bit of a head start on us," Linke said. "It was pretty well involved by the time we arrived and got inside the house." Linke said many of the crews were already assembled, having gathered from a field fire earlier in the day and a monthly meeting for the Yankton Fire Department. The home/apartment also had good access for the fire crews in the front and back. "Gayville was able to take the backside and hit it pretty hard with their deck gun and knocked down a large body of fire," he said. "That made it easier for our crews that were on the front of the structure to stretch our hose line and then go inside and finish putting out the fire." There were no functional smoke detectors in the structure, according to the fire chief. "If there's a safety message, it's a reminder to make sure that you take care of that kind of thing and make sure it's completely out," Linke said. "Then also make sure you've got working smoke detectors." In all, Yankton, Gayville, Vermillion and Volin responded to the call along with Yankton County EMS and Yankton County Emergency Management.



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83-YEAR-OLD MAN DIES IN MARSHALL CO. TRACTOR FIRE

An 83-year-old man was killed in a tractor fire on Friday, Oct. 24 in Marshall County, according to a news release from Marshall County Emergency Management.

Emergency responders were dispatched for a tractor on fire at 4:21 p.m., according to the release.

"During scene operations, responders discovered the body of an 83-year-old male. Investigators have determined that a farm accident resulted in the start of the fire," per the release.

The cause of the fire has been determined to be accidental.

The Langford Fire Department, Marshall County Ambulance, Marshall County Sheriff's Office, Marshall County coroner and South Dakota state fire marshal also responded to the incident.

(By Shannon Marvel, *Aberdeen Insider*, Aberdeen, SD, October 30, 2025)



Accidental fire totals Pierre mobile home

The Pierre Fire Department responded to a residential fire at approximately 2:35 p.m. on Monday, November 10, in the 100 block of Lakeview Court. Upon arrival, firefighters encountered heavy smoke and flames coming from the home. Firefighters initially launched a defensive attack, battling the fire from the exterior due to the intensity of the flames. "The home was too involved with heavy fire to safely send anyone inside," said Pierre Fire Assistant Chief Brandon McCarthy. "We conducted a majority of our operations from the exterior with minimal interior work due to the condition of the structure." Two adults were displaced because of the fire, and one resident was treated for smoke inhalation, but fortunately, no serious injuries were reported. The single-wide mobile home sustained significant damage and is considered a total loss. The fire appears to have originated in the area of the kitchen and investigators have determined the cause to be accidental. No foul play is suspected. Firefighters remained on the scene for approximately 2 1/2 hours, with assistance from AMR, Ft. Pierre Fire, local law enforcement, and City of Pierre Electric Department. Photo Courtesy of Pierre Fire Department.

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