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MARCH 2026 • VOL. 19 - NO. 1

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Crews from Johnson Siding, Hill City, Rapid Valley, Battle Creek, Rapid City, and Rockerville combined with SD State Wildland Fire and the USFS on the initial attack of the Cosmos Fire that started Feb. 3. See more photos inside.

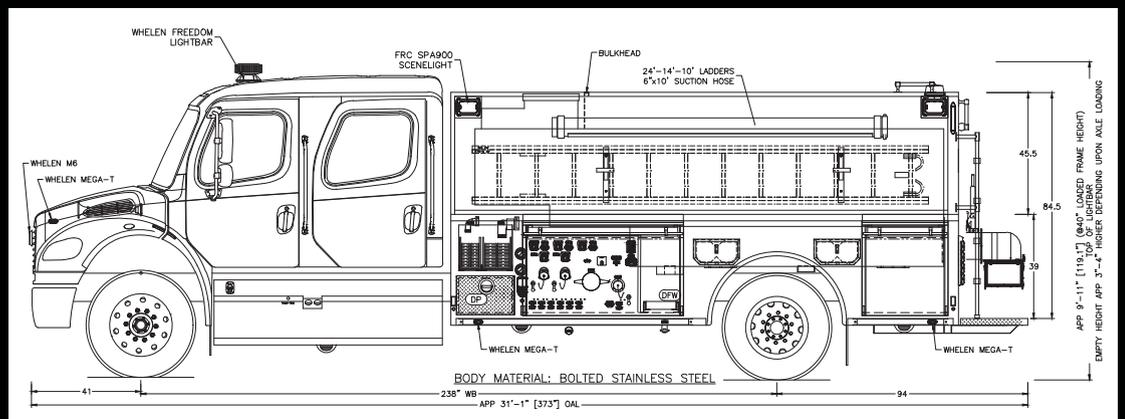


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## PROPANE GRILL SPARKS WATERTOWN HOUSE FIRE

Watertown Fire Rescue was dispatched to a possible structure fire on Friday night on 19th Street in Watertown.

Although dispatch made initial contact with the caller, they were unable to obtain additional information regarding the state of the fire, WFR reported.

Reports indicated flames were visible with smoke showing at a little after 10 p.m. Feb. 6 on the exterior of the residence at 1110 19th Street SW, the release stated. Upon arrival, law enforcement confirmed active fire conditions on the exterior side of the structure. Fire crews immediately worked to extinguish the fire, WFR stated, and perform a primary search of the residence.

The fire was brought under control within minutes of Watertown firefighters arrival, and the primary search was completed shortly thereafter. Watertown Fire

Rescue responded with Battalion 1, Engine 4, Engine 3 and Medic 3. Ten personnel were present. Firefighters remained at the house for just over one hour to complete overhaul and ensure the area was safe and flames were completely extinguished, WFR stated in the release.

The homeowner was home alone at the time of the incident, the release stated. All occupants were accounted for, and no civilian or firefighter injuries were reported. A propane grill that had been left on was allegedly the cause of the fire, WFR reported in a release. The grill reportedly, ignited nearby materials located on the exterior of the residence. Firefighters turned the residence back over to the homeowner once the fire was extinguished, WFR stated.

*(Watertown Public Opinion, Watertown, SD, February 11, 2026)*

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## Quick responds holds Cosmos Fire to an acre

Great Plains Interagency Dispatch Center updated their information about the Cosmos Fire the morning of Feb. 3. Due to the rapid response from several agencies and the coordination by dispatchers, the fire was held to less than an acre. The fire is listed by Great Plains as contained, and the cause is under investigation. Crews from Johnson Siding, Hill City, Rapid Valley, Battle Creek, Rapid City, and Rockerville combined with SD State Wildland Fire and the USFS on the initial attack. The incident serves as a reminder of the high fire danger this time of year. If you would like more information on how you might contribute, please contact your local fire department or Pennington County Fire Service for information on becoming a volunteer firefighter. From the Johnson Siding VFD Facebook page.

## Fairfax Fire honors its department members

The Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department gathered Saturday, January 31 for its Christmas party and recognition event, celebrating the dedication and service of its members while enjoying a meal and time together outside of the fire hall.

The evening included the presentation of two special awards recognizing outstanding contributions to the department over the past year.

Aaron Schmitz was named Vol-

unteer of the Year for his extensive work securing grants for the department. Through his leadership and countless hours spent on phone calls, emails, and paperwork, the department has been able to purchase much-needed apparatus, gear, and equipment to better serve the community.

Firefighter of the Year honors went to Matt Moos for his commitment to training and service throughout the year. In addition to

attending in-house trainings, Moos traveled to other parts of the state to further develop his skills. His hard work at the fire hall and strong performance on the fire ground earned him the recognition.

The department looks ahead to another year of serving the Fairfax community and thanks residents for their continued donations, support, and encouragement.

*(Bonesteel Enterprise, Bonesteel, SD, February 12, 2026)*

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

## Watertown called to vehicle fire

On February 5, at 6:45 a.m., Watertown Fire Rescue was dispatched to a reported vehicle fire at 1715 16th Ave SE. Upon arrival, crews located an SUV with active smoke and flames coming from the engine compartment. Engine 4 personnel utilized a rotary saw to gain access to the engine area and deployed a hose line to extinguish the fire. The vehicle was parked in close proximity to a residence; however, no damage occurred to the structure. Crews remained on scene for approximately 30 minutes completing extinguishment, overhaul, and ensuring no fire extension. Watertown Fire Rescue was assisted on scene by the Watertown Police Department.



### ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

Please send them to [jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com) along with information to explain the photo.

## STEVE OBERLE NAMED 2026 SOUTH DAKOTA FIRE INSTRUCTOR OF THE YEAR

Tea Second Assistant Chief, Steve Oberle, has been named the 2026 South Dakota Fire Instructor of the Year, an honor presented at the Fire Instructors Conference held in Mitchell in January. The award recognizes exceptional dedication to firefighter education, leadership, and the advancement of fire service training across the state.

With three decades of service to the Tea Fire Department, Oberle's impact extends far beyond emergency response. His commitment to training and mentoring firefighters has helped shape not only his own department, but fire service professionals throughout South Dakota. Oberle has been instrumental in emphasizing hands on training, safety-focused decision making, and preparedness for the constantly evolving challenges faced by modern fire departments.

Throughout his career, Oberle has served in nearly every role within the department, gaining first-hand experience that informs his teaching approach. That depth of knowledge has allowed him to connect with firefighters at all stages of their careers, from new recruits to seasoned officers, reinforcing the importance of continuous learning and adaptability in the field.

*(Tea Weekly, Tea, SD, February 13, 2026)*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

**MARCH 28, 2026:** NE District Spring Fire School, Redfield Fire Department, Redfield, SD, [www.sdfirefighters.org](http://www.sdfirefighters.org)

**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.



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# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Last December, Wayne Jones, a career firefighter penned an article entitled, *Circles That Keep Us Standing*, talking about relationships in fire service. Being the guy with a weird memory, I couldn't help but think of songs that reference circles. Like the old Spiritual, "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," what about the Lion King and the Circle of Life (no don't ask me to sing a few bars, my wife will tell you I shouldn't quit my day job to become a singer). Now, don't let me go down the 1970's song list... What Wayne is talking about, is not the circle of life, but managing the stress of the job of being a first responder. While we might immediately think of the people currently on our department or if you are a paid department the people on your shift, however, Wayne wants us to look at this circle: "I am talking about your circle—the firefighters, mentors, and friends who inspire you. The ones who give you that gut check when your ego gets too big, and the ones who help hold you up when the weight of the job starts to feel too heavy. Without this circle, the job

will eat you alive, but with it you just might find the strength to thrive throughout a full career." That got me thinking, who is my circle? Who are those people who speak into my life? While I can name those folks, what about you? Who are these people for you?

The reality is it is not enough to find harmony in the department. All too often the idea of going along to get along is what I call the "lowest common denominator." Everyone is afraid to step on the toes of the long tenured firefighter, even when he should hang up the bunker gear and become the supporter of the department. Or in my case, the "tender" operator (tanker for you East River folks), or chief traffic control officer, I hold a "mean" slow/stop sign. What we need are people who push us to be better, who sharpen us, as the Bible says, iron sharpens iron. We need people to remind us why we started down this road in the first place

Second, this group can be seen as a reality check. A good circle will remind when you when your ego has

exceeded your capabilities. They will call you out when you have drifted away from the values of fire service, not because they are going to tear you down, but they care enough to keep you straight. Or once again to borrow a Bible phrase, "to remind us of our first love." There are other times when we don't need advice or a reality check, just an ear to listen to us after a tough call. If you have this good mix of encouragement, honesty and support, you will find the circle that will keep you grounded.

Wayne also reminds us that this job is hard on your head and your heart. "We see things that don't leave us no matter how hard we try to forget them. Far too many of us carry that weight in silence. We throw up a wall, crack some kind of joke, or try to bury it deep, hoping that it will fade away. We all know that it doesn't." Recently the Federation of Fire Chaplains updated our training material for teaching aspiring chaplains. In that training is a video that is actually a montage of the scenes we would like to forget. I try to view that video a few times before I teach a class, hoping that repeated viewing will help desensitize me. It never does; I still get a tear every time I see it. (when my wife hears the music she asks me: "Why are you torturing yourself?") Why? Because of the real-life images that I carry in my head.

This is where your circle comes in. As Wayne says: "When you have trusted people you can confide in, you never have to fight anything alone. You can say, "Man, that call really got me," and know that you will never be judged. You can openly admit that you are struggling without the worry of feeling weak. The kicker to it is this—being open doesn't just help you. It helps the whole crew." As a therapist I tell clients anyone can change the cul-



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"I try to view that video a few times before I teach a class, hoping that repeated viewing will help desensitize me. It never does; I still get a tear every time I see it. (when my wife hears the music she asks me: "Why are you torturing yourself?") Why? Because of the real-life images that I carry in my head."

ture around them by doing one thing different, and if you start this in your department, who knows what will be different, but I know you will be.

While I could rewrite the "How To" of this process, let me give you Wayne's suggestions on starting this process:

**Connect in real life.** Sit at the table, put your phone down, and be present while you are there. The best conversations are not in a meeting, but over coffee or a meal

**Invest in people.** Take time to listen to people's stories. Be the firefighter whom others want to be a part of their circle

**Stay connected.** Don't let a station transfer, retirements, or distance break that bond. Pick up your phone now that you're not at the kitchen table and call them or send a text.

**Be real.** This one can be a little hard, but don't just share your wins, share your struggles as well. Vulnerability builds trust.

**Mix up your circle.** Surround yourself with people who think differently than you do. The variety of thoughts and ideas will help make you stronger.

This is not complicated, but it takes effort. The relationships that you build now will help carry you through the highs as well as the lows of your career.

**Start today.** At the end of a career, nobody brags about the number of calls that they ran, the fires that they fought, or the rigs that they rode on. They talk about the people they

worked with, the people who were in their circle. The brothers and sisters who helped shape them, challenged them, and stood by them through the storms of life. Your legacy will not be measured by the buildings that you helped save or the calls that you ran. Your legacy will be measured by the lives that you touched and the relationships that you built along the way.

As I write this, I find Wayne's comments about the people I worked with stands out the most. I can name and picture the men and women from my career. I remember the personalities, the laughs and the tears (although we did our best to hide those). The calls, I can remember, but the people I shared those calls with, will always have a place in my heart that nothing will ever replace.

Let me wrap this up with some good advice from a seasoned firefighter (no not me) "The fire service will test your strength, but it is the people that stand beside you who will help keep you standing. Build your circle, protect it, and when the weight gets heavy, lean on it." (Wayne Jones, Firefighter Nation)

Once again, I have a standing offer to all of you. If you have no one else to call, feel free to reach out to me. I can be reached by email @ [rv627443@gmail.com](mailto:rv627443@gmail.com).

Blessings,

CHAPLAIN RODNEY V.

## U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notification

**BRITTANY HATHAWAY**, 36, Cliff-Gila Fire Department, Cliff, NM, died on Jan. 22. On January 20, Firefighter/EMT/Dispatcher Brittany Hathaway suffered a medical emergency while responding to a medical call. Firefighter/EMT/Dispatcher Hathaway was transported to a local hospital where she passed away on January 22. The cause of death has yet to be determined.

**KEITH T. LONG**, 58, District of Columbia Fire and EMS, Washington DC, died on Feb. 4. Soon after completing a 24-hour shift, Battalion Fire Chief Keith Long went to complete an annual stress test as required by the District of Columbia Fire and EMS. During the stress test, Battalion Fire Chief Long suffered a medical emergency. He was then transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased. The cause of death has not yet been determined.

**DALE MALONE**, 66, White Level Rural Fire Department, Louisburg, NC, died on Feb. 10. Firefighter/Safety Officer Dale Malone responded with the White Level Rural Fire Department to a residential fire as a passenger in a fire department vehicle. Upon arrival at the scene but while still inside of the vehicle, Firefighter/Safety Officer Malone suffered a medical emergency. Firefighter/Safety Officer Malone was treated and transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased. The cause of death has yet to be determined.

**HOWARD BENNETT**, 61, Camden (NJ) Fire Department, died on Feb. 5. While preparing to leave a marina after fire department training, Firefighter Howard Bennett fell into the Delaware River and became trapped under ice-covered water. Firefighter Bennett was rescued by crews and transported to a local hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

**BRITAIN JAMES REEVES**, 46, Fairchild Volunteer Fire Department, Richmond, TX, died on Dec. 26, 2025. Firefighter Britain Reeves responded to a medical call at 1:40 a.m. and returned home from the incident around 2:30 a.m. Around 4 p.m. that same day, Firefighter Reeves' wife found him deceased in a chair in the home's garage.

**LARRY D. "MUFF" MUSTION JR.**, 44, Luxora, AR, Volunteer Fire Department, died on Sept. 19. On September 18, 2025, at 9:15 p.m., Lieutenant Larry Mustion Jr. responded with the Luxora Volunteer Fire Department to an outdoor fire that was spreading toward a dry wooded area. After extinguishing the fire, firefighters packed up the hoses and returned to the station. The following day at 12:12 p.m., Lieutenant Mustion passed away after suffering a cardiovascular event.

**ALEXANDER G. TRENIER**, 63, City of Mobile, AL, Fire-Rescue Department, died on Feb. 23, 2025. On February 22, 2025, at 7:33 a.m., Deputy Chief Alexander Trenier responded to a residential fire call. After returning to the station, Deputy Chief Trenier reported that he was not feeling well and turned duties over to another chief. He then went home sick. On February 23, 2025, family was unable to reach Deputy Chief Trenier by phone. When the family went to his house to check on him, they found Deputy Chief Trenier deceased.



## Watertown rope training

The last week of January, Watertown Fire Rescue launched a new series highlighting the training and tasks that help them stay ready to serve their community. They trained on rope ascents and descents used during complex rescue operations. These skills allow them to safely access and remove patients from challenging environments, and they require constant practice and teamwork. From the Watertown Fire Rescue Facebook page.

# DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

## John William Gerdes 1953-2026

John William Gerdes (72) of Kimball, SD passed away on January 20, at the Sanford Hospital in Chamberlain, SD. He was born on May 22, 1953, in Mitchell, SD to John and Darline (Powers) Gerdes.

Services will be celebrated at Saint Margaret Catholic Church in Kimball, South Dakota.

Family Viewing will start at 9 am on Saturday, January 24th at the St Margaret's in Kimball, SD.

The Rosary will be held at 9:30 am following that will be the funeral mass starting at 10:30 am followed by the burial at St Margaret's Catholic Cemetery. A lunch reception will be held at the American Legion in Kimball.

John was born at St Joseph's hospital in Mitchell, SD. John's father (John Gerdes) was working for the State Highway Department at the time when John's mother (Darline Gerdes) started going into labor while living in White Lake, SD. An elderly couple living next to them offered to drive them to the hospital and off they went going 100mph on Old Highway 16. When they got to Mitchell, it was told, they were driving 50mph through the streets. The wife of the elderly couple was said to be waving a white handkerchief outside the car to alert people they were going to the hospital. John's mother, Darline, was so relieved when they finally made it to the hospital because there was no way John was going to be born in the back of a car of the crazy old couple!

John proudly served as a member of the United States Air Force. He served as a sergeant for three years. On June 9, 1972 a flood had hit the Black Hills. Ellsworth Airmen were quickly dispatched to Rapid City to help with rescue and recovery operations. The Airmen worked countless to rescue citizens from the violent floods. One of those men happened to be John. This was one of his many accomplishments in the Air Force that he was proud of.

In 1974 John started his career with the Brule County Highway

Department where he would eventually retire after 43 years in 2018.



During his years he would blade roads, fix equipment, haul gravel, and oil the highways. During the winter months John would be out in the early mornings to plow the roads after a long winter storm. John enjoyed working with his co-workers and always giving them a tough time. Those coworkers ended up becoming lifelong friends.

In 1979 John gained two children - Riley and Carrie. Which weren't his kids biologically, but they quickly became like his own children and he loved them like so. John would frequently take Riley and Carrie to go fishing and hunting which he enjoyed a lot. He was a great dad to his kids.

John is best described by the many people he has impacted in his life as, tough on the outside but a good, funny, kind man on the inside. He loved (mostly) every person he came across. Whether that be his kids he took in at a very young age, his many grandchildren he would eventually have, his friends from the bar, his friends from the Air Force, his friends from his job, and even the nurses who took care of him. John however, loved his wife Maureen most of all. John and Maureen had been together for 47 years and married for 22 years. They met in 1979 at the bowling alley, which is now Club Vega, after Maureen moved back to Kimball from Wisconsin.

John has left a lasting impact on all the people he loved and cared about and will continue to do so even in death. John's kindhearted, sarcastic, witty, and strong spirit will always be remembered by his friends and family.

He is survived by his wife Maureen Gerdes (London); two children, Carrie Fletcher of Tucson, AZ and Riley Fletcher of Kimball, SD; nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

He is preceded in death by his parents John and Darline (Powers) Gerdes; his sister Rosemary Rasmussen (Gerdes) and other sister Marlene Kerner (Gerdes).

## Worthing Community Fire Department Awarded \$61,169 from FEMA Grant

By **ABBY JENSEN**

The Worthing Community Fire Department (WCFD) received \$61,169 from the 24FY FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant. This funding will be utilized to update fire hoses. The grant allows the WCFD to update every fire hose on every fire truck. "People don't realize how expensive it is to buy even just one section of hose. We are a rural department, and this is a cost that we could not have afforded outright" Assistant Fire Chief, Jeremy Jacobson stated. The WCFD is a 100% volunteer-based department that draws funding from a housing count within their jurisdictional area in addition to donations, and grant funds.

The WCFD's current inventory of fire hoses consists of 6,850 feet of fire hose of varying diameters. Various hose diameters are vital in firefighting operations. A large diameter hose (LDH) is 5 inches in diameter and allows firetrucks to fill significantly faster than a 2.5-inch diameter hose. Similarly, firefighters will utilize a combination of different diameter hoses on any given fire. Any combination of 1.5, 2-, and 2.5-inch diameter hoses may be used to extinguish a fire. In this total, they had fire hoses dated from the 1990s or prior and 75% without a date altogether, which draws questions regarding their age and reliability. "Some of the fire hose that we replaced was on (the fire department) before me," stated training officer Nico-

las Weisenbach, who has served 20 years for the WCFD. According to National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) suggestions starting in 1954, fire hoses should be replaced every ten to twenty-five years depending on the manufacturer. "The fact that we were able to replace all of our fire hose at one time is a very big deal," expressed

Fire Chief Justin Appel. The WCFD is currently one of four South Dakota Fire Departments that have been awarded an Assistance to Firefighters Grant through FEMA for FY24.

The Worthing Community Fire Department is thankful to FEMA and the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program.





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# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



Charlie Kludt, President

**"If you want to be the best responder you can be, put yourself in the position of the victim. Put your training and response mindset as if it was your friends and family that is calling for your help. Let's face it, for most of us, that's who we are responding to."**

## The Go To...

March is here. Which means, only 2-3 more blizzards before spring is really here!

When someone has an emergency, they call 911. Perceived or actual emergency is another story, but the calls are still dealt with by a dispatcher. They don't hear it enough, so, thank you dispatchers. Once determined, based off the information received, location, and availability, an appropriate agency is notified to respond. Who is the most frequently notified agency? Of course, it varies.

Every emergency response agency is realizing that we should be and need to be as ready as possible for the incident we are responding to. What is our primary function and our alternative capability and ability to assist?

"That's not my job," and "That's not what I signed up to do," is not

the ethical motto we use.

When it all started out, fire departments used to just fight fires. Then as the need evolved, added rescue. Then HAZMAT. Then EMS. The requests increased and the necessity and availability of personnel shifted.

Now, response has morphed into, law enforcement carries AEDs and basic EMS supplies; FDs carry traffic control signs, AEDs, EMS supplies and EMTs of all levels; Training with EMS personnel so we can properly assist the patients while performing rescue operations.

Because we have determined who is available, capable to provide initial service, and thinking like a victim. Working together for best response to the people in need.

When people need help, and they hear the sirens coming in the distance, they don't care who it is,

## Thoughts from the Tailboard

As I write this month's article, I wonder what in the heck is going on with the weather. It's mid-February and the temperatures are in the 50's and 60's sometimes reaching 70. This isn't normal for any of us in South Dakota. I know some of you have had really cold stuff, but in Rapid City, something's going to happen. Knock on wood.

It's that time of year when spring district fire schools are popping up. Keep a close eye out there could just be one near

you. Take these opportunities to increase your already vast knowledge of fire. Don't take the attitude that I've already had that class so there's nothing new to hear or learn. As someone who has been fortunate to attend the National Fire Academy a number of times, there is as much to learn talking to someone you haven't met. It can be amazing what you will pick up. Besides, it's generally a short drive and the cost is literally nothing.

On a sad note, 2025 was tough. Al Christie, Jim Stevens, Mike Maier, Russ Hendrix, Nick Van Dam. Al was the State Fire Marshall, Jim a long-time member of

## Milbank firefighters dispatched to residential fire

Members of Milbank Fire and Rescue were dispatched to the Tim Stengel residence at 306 Gause Avenue in Milbank on Monday, February 9, at 10:37 a.m.

According to Kevin Schuelke, Grant County fire administrator, a contractor's drill made contact with an electrical component, triggering the response. In addition to the firefighters, officers from the Milbank Police Department, an electrician and representatives of Otter Tail Power Company were on scene. The fire was reportedly extinguished by Eric Stengel, a firefighter and son of the property owner.

Minimal damage resulted. Firefighters stayed on the scene to assure no further issues came up and used ventilation fans to clear smoke from the residence.

(Milbank Grant County Review, Milbank, SD, February 11, 2026)

they're just thinking help is on the way.

As fire departments, we are making ourselves more viable to the general public. As fulltime departments, that is more likely to accommodate and available for a change in emergency response needs and increase in call volume. For volunteer services, it can become a potential challenge and burden. But when there is a crisis and people need help, the go to is usually the fire department.

If you want to be the best responder you can be, put yourself in the position of the victim. Put your training and response mindset as if it was your friends and family that is calling for your help. Let's face it, for most of us, that's who we are responding to.

Just remind yourself, if that was you or your family member waiting for help, would you rather have too many people show up to help?

The legislative session was still going when I wrote this article. There have been a couple bills passed already concerning EMS and ambulance driving requirements. Take a look at them if your community has an ambulance service and your department members are ever asked to drive.

The bill for another state fire grant opportunity was introduced and a bill for possible vehicle registration reduction for volunteer firefighters and EMTs. We'll keep you posted on who everything

turns out in the April edition.

Speaking of April. The SDFA President position is up for election this year at State Fire School. If you or someone you know is interested in running for SDFA President, submit your letter of intent to run, or, an acceptance letter of nomination to any of the SDFA Board members or the nominating committee members listed on the notice in the paper or our website. Letters must be submitted and received by April 29, 2026.

I would like to thank all the departments that have submitted their memberships to the SDFA. It is never too late to submit your membership. If your department would still like to be members, you can send in your membership payment and roster, and still receive the basic coverage and benefits of the SDFA.

The high school scholarship applications are due on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Check our website for the application guide.

Spring District fire schools and wildland trainings are being held around the state. Whether for new or review. Go check them out.

And as I have done for several years going into March and celebrating the Irish heritage of the fire service, Thank you to all the Fir Na Tine. Which means, Men of Fire, in Gaelic. And Fir bhean, which is lady of fire. Stay safe,

CHARLIE KLUDT  
SDFA President



Denny Gorton,  
Retired Treasurer/Past President

**"Fire school in June planning is well underway. Instructors contacted, classes determined, there is no reason it will not be another great learning opportunity. Keep a close eye on our Facebook page, and email when pre-registration will open. Stay tuned!"**

the Hot Spring VFD and Mike long time member of the North Haines VFD, Russ a member of Pierre FD and Nick with the Murdo VFD. All these gentlemen have made me think. I never fought fire with Al, Russ, or Nick but they were firefighters. Jim we worked together on several large wildland fires in the Hot Springs area over the years. Always someone who had a great outlook on life no matter what was happening. Mike and I were in North Haines together for 39 years. We fought lots of fires, had long talks about who knows what. As I sat and thought about each of them during their service I realized it all came down to a small wooden box. Their entire fire service life. I don't mean to make this sound trivial, but it seems there should be something more. I don't know what, but something. As was said at the Fall Conference at the memorial service, as long as you say their name they are not forgotten.

So, here's saying their names, Al, Jim, Mike, Russ, and Nick you are not forgotten.

Of course, I have to make a pitch for making sure your departments 2026 Membership dues are paid. A quick ask of your treasurer and that should answer that. The benefits far outweigh the costs. Ok that's it for this month; I won't harp on dues any longer.

Fire school in June planning is well underway. Instructors contacted, classes determined, there is no reason it will not be another great learning opportunity. Keep a close eye on our Facebook page, and email when pre-registration will open. Stay tuned.

With that I'll close for this month, hopefully there is something here worth your time to read.

Stay safe and learn something new and pass it on.

DENNY

# SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Hello firefighters,

Here it is mid-February and it will be 60+ degrees today. There is basically no snow in the Black Hills and we have had a few fires that consumed vegetation normally covered with snow. Let's hope we get some rain/snow that will lessen the chance of large wildland fires this summer.

Spring is on the way and as they say, it is a season of renewal. Plants wake up from the winter and lawn care returns. Wildlife, domestic babies appear and out-

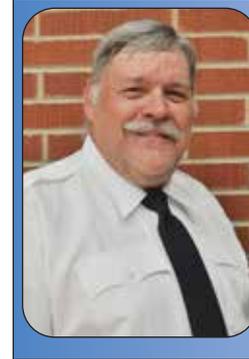
door activities show increases in action. Time to get the wildland gear ready, checking things like boots, including the shoelaces, do your gloves need replaced, is that helmet in good condition, inspect the condition of and the contents of you gear bag. The things of winter are put in storage until they are needed again.

This could also be a season of refreshing your commitment to the fire service. Attending trainings, spending a bit more time at the fire hall learning, inspecting equip-

ment, getting rid of things that will never be used again or one of the many "chores" needing done. In general, just making the fire service better.

Training opportunities can be found on the SDFA web site and state fire school is not too far away. The MLFTU schedule is also on the training calendar and some of these are open to outside students. Stay active and stay safe,

**DON WARD**  
SDFA VP



**Don Ward, Vice President**

"Time to get the wildland gear ready, checking things like boots, including the shoelaces, do your gloves need replaced, is that helmet in good condition, inspect the condition of and the contents of you gear bag."

# SDFA AUXILIARY REPORT

Spring has (almost) arrived here in South Dakota. Usually, it takes a few times for spring to really catch on here in the Midwest. We have to jump back into winter at least 2 times before it sticks. :) Each time it warms up and I ride around with my sunroof open and the windows down (and the heat on--because it isn't that warm yet). Springtime usually means spring cleaning and with that are some fire safety tips we should be doing in our homes.

First and foremost, we test our smoke detectors/CO detectors and change batteries in them all (no one likes hearing that low battery beep go off.) While I am checking all of these, I am also making sure my fire extinguisher is not expired/need servicing and is not pushed all the way to the back of my cupboard. In an emergency, I need to be able to get to it quickly.

After being shut up all winter, I like to open the windows to get some fresh air circulating through the house. Changing the air filters at this time ensures that the air quality in our homes is at its best. Speaking of filters and dust, I clean/vacuum inside of the vents. A new task that I am adding to this year's list of spring cleaning is checking outlets/extension cords. The article said to double check the outlets and extension cords to make sure they are not overloaded. Since some of my cords have been there for a while, I am going to make sure that they all look ok and aren't showing signs of wear/damage.

Doing all the spring cleaning tasks all at once can be daunting.

Maybe that is why Mother Nature gives us a few warmup rounds before spring has truly sprung in

South Dakota.

**TONI SCHMIDT,**  
Auxiliary

**Toni Schmidt, Auxiliary**

"I am also making sure my fire extinguisher is not expired/need servicing and is not pushed all the way to the back of my cupboard. In an emergency, I need to be able to get to it quickly."

## Notice of Election for SDFA Vice-President

Saturday, June 13, 2026

State Fire School, Lake Area Technical College, Watertown SD

11:00am – 2:00pm cst

### SDFA By-Laws ARTICLE IV OFFICERS

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

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

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

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

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

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

### ARTICLE V NOMINATION AND ELECTION

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

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

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

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

#### NOMINATING COMMITTEE

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

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

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

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

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

**ACTION  
FIRE  
PHOTOS  
NEEDED!**

Please send them to [jeff@nebraskafirefighter.com](mailto:jeff@nebraskafirefighter.com) along with information to explain the photo.

# NE District Spring Fire School

**March 28, 2026**

Redfield Fire Department -- 40 W 7th Avenue, Redfield, SD

Registration 0730-0815  
Intro and Safety 0815-0830  
Classes 0845-1200  
Lunch 1200-1300  
District Meeting 1230-1300  
Classes 1300 to complete

School cost \$30.00

Class descriptions and online registration available under the events tab at [www.sdfirefighters.org](http://www.sdfirefighters.org)

**Water Supply – Strategy and Tactics SATURDAY – ALL DAY \*\*PPE REQUIRED\*\***

Instructor: Lt. Mike Eliason, Aberdeen Fire and Rescue

**Grain Bin Entrapment, ALL DAY \*\*RESCUE PPE REQUIRED\*\***

Instructors: Agtegra Cooperative

**Aerial Operations for Rural Fire Departments, ALL DAY \*\*PPE REQUIRED\*\***

Instructor: Zach Ordal, Watertown Fire and Rescue

**Traffic Incident Management, Saturday AM ONLY**

Instructor: Andy Wicks, Performance Towing – Watertown SD

**NERIS Fire Reporting, SATURDAY AM ONLY**

Instructor: Doug Hinkle, SD State Fire Marshal

**Managing Large Scale Emergencies - Coordination During Crisis' – Saturday PM ONLY**

Instructor: BC JR Huebner, Aberdeen Fire and Rescue

**Building Construction, SATURDAY PM ONLY \*\*DRESS FOR THE WEATHER\*\***

Instructors: Stefan Schroeder, Redfield Fire Department, Tyler Gorrell, Watertown Fire and Rescue

**Hotel Rooms available**

at Redfield Super 8,  
*mention NE District Fire School for secured rate*

Friday, March 27 | 6-9pm  
**FIREFIGHTERS SOCIAL**  
at Crystal's Bar  
(1203 W 3rd Street)

**Please contact the following  
with any questions:**

Chris Noeldner (SD Fire Marshal's Office) – 605-520-2203  
Kyle Schwandt (Milbank FD) – 605-949-0627  
Leonard Diebert (Webster FD) – 605-216-4189  
Stefan Schroeder (Redfield FD) – 605-460-0305  
Mark Stoks (Aberdeen Rural FD) – 605-380-9817  
Kyle Moser (SD Fire Marshal's Office) – 605-881-2247

# When the Window is the Only Exit

By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

This article focuses specifically on single-firefighter window bailouts using a personal escape system. While the hardware referenced throughout is the CMC LEVR, the fundamentals discussed are not unique to one manufacturer. These concepts can be adapted to other NFPA-compliant bailout systems with appropriate training and an understanding of how each system operates.

The CMC LEVR is used here simply because it is the system I personally carry and understand best. Its inclusion should not be interpreted as an endorsement. Emergency escape is a last-resort skill. When that moment arrives, success depends far less on the logo on the equipment and far more on repetition, positioning, and disciplined execution under stress. Firefighters should train with, and deploy, the bailout system issued or approved by their department, and ensure they are proficient with its specific capabilities, limitations, and operating procedures.

## SYSTEM DEPLOYMENT AND ANCHORING

The firefighter begins by deploying the system from its stowed position by pulling out the Flash Escape Anchor. An appropriate anchor point is selected based on building construction and available features. Both styles of hook options, the Flash G and Flash.2 anchors, are rated as emergency escape anchors per NFPA standards.

## ESTABLISHING A CONTROLLED EXIT

The actual bailout sequence begins with a window hang, which allows the firefighter to transition from the interior to the exterior in a controlled manner while maintaining system integrity.

From a low position in the window opening, the firefighter should get their top 50% out of the window while their anchor side arm hooks the corner of the window sill (if using a remote anchor) or their anchor side hand holds the

Flash.G or Flash.2 Anchor in place on the window sill.

The opposite hand, referred to as the tail-side hand, maintains continuous contact with the escape webbing distal to the anchor. This practice, known as tail-hand discipline, keeps constant tension on the system and helps ensure the anchor remains properly seated throughout the bailout.

As the firefighter leans farther out of the window, the first leg (opposite the anchor-side arm) is moved completely outside the opening. The second leg, on the same side as the anchor-side arm, briefly hooks the opposite side of the window. As proficiency increases, this hook becomes minimal, and the firefighter transitions smoothly toward full exit. From the window hang, the firefighter pivots on the anchor-side arm and transitions the entire lower body out of the window, fully loading the system.

## EDGE TRANSITION AND DEVICE PLACEMENT

Ideally, the LEVR descender is positioned outside the window once the firefighter has fully exited. However, if it remains inside, the descender's egg-shaped profile allows it to roll smoothly over the window sill without getting hung-up and caught.

## RAPPELLING BODY POSITIONS

Following a successful window exit, the firefighter transitions into a rappel position to support a controlled descent and obstacle negotiation. There are two basic rappelling positions: standard and feet-down.

In the standard rappel position, the firefighter places both feet against the exterior wall and leans away from the building. When transitioning from the window hang, placing the outside knee against the wall before full exit positions both knees against the wall once the firefighter clears the window.

This position allows the firefighter to "walk" down the wall during descent, reducing strain by transferring load to the legs. It also

provides improved control when negotiating exterior obstacles such as light fixtures, balconies, signage, or window hardware.

In the feet-down rappel position, the firefighter fully exits the window and free-hangs on the system with the front of the body facing the building. This position will be dictated by urgency or building features, such as overhangs, balconies, or full curtain-wall construction where foot placement is not possible.

The firefighter can transition from the feet-down position to the standard rappel position at any point during the descent. This transition is accomplished by pushing away from the wall with the arms while simultaneously tucking the knees upward. From this position, the firefighter rocks back into the standard rappel stance while gradually releasing the LEVR descender. While performing this maneuver, some firefighters find it beneficial to briefly tension the webbing with their tail-side hand to stabilize the knee-tuck during the transition.

## DESCENT CONTROL AND OPERATION OF THE LEVR

Once positioned, the firefighter initiates descent by rotating the LEVR descender to release the auto-lock. Under load, approximately six pounds of force is required to begin descent. The device may be operated with one hand on the control handle and one hand on the web tail, or by routing the web tail between the thumb and index finger of the control hand to create friction against the handle. Descent speed is controlled by the degree of lever rotation and the amount of friction applied to the web tail. To stop descent, the firefighter simply releases the LEVR, allowing the auto-lock to re-engage.

Effective use of the CMC LEVR, like any bailout system, is dependent on deliberate, repeated training. Emergency escape is a low-frequency, high-consequence skill with very little margin for error, and successful execution is driven by familiarity with the system, sound body positioning, and disciplined movement under stress. When training these techniques, a secondary belay system should always be used to provide an added layer of safety and prevent uncontrolled descent in the event of a mistake, equipment issue, or loss of control. A properly managed belay allows firefighters to train realistically while still protecting against the inherent risks of bailout training, ensuring repetitions can be performed confidently, consistently, and without unnecessary exposure to injury.

*Photos courtesy of CMC Pro.*

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



## ABERDEEN GARAGE FIRE DISRUPTS AFTERNOON TRAFFIC

Part of Melgaard Road was blocked the afternoon of Thursday, Feb. 5 while Aberdeen Fire & Rescue responded to a call at 1701 E. Melgaard Road.

The fire was reported at 2:45 p.m. A small fire was quickly located in the garage and extinguished, according to a news release from the fire department. No vehicles were in the garage at the time, and damage was confined to two garage stalls.

An attached apartment building was evacuated as a precaution, but the fire did not spread to any living spaces, according to the release, and no one was injured.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation.

The incident disrupted traffic as it was around the time classes were being dismissed at Central High School.

In addition to Aberdeen Fire & Rescue, responding agencies included the Aberdeen Police Department, Brown County Sheriff's Office, North-Western Energy and Brown County Emergency Management.

*(By Elisa Sand, Aberdeen Insider, Aberdeen, SD, February 12, 2026)*

# Fire breaks out near Custer

A fire that sparked last Sunday afternoon three miles south of Grey Rocks Road in Custer County is 100 percent contained, South Dakota State Wildland Fire has reported.

It was at 12:53 p.m. when the initial call for the fire was received by dispatch, and state, federal and local resources provided initial attack on the fire, which burned west of Grey Rocks Road.

The fire was originally estimated at 30 to 40 acres, and grew to 58 acres by the time it was 50 percent contained by Monday.

Custer County emergency management director Steve Esser said U.S. Forest Service firefighters were already in the area working on a prescribed burn that took place near Jewel Cave National Monument that day and were able to respond to the fire quickly and

keep it contained.

Among the resources that responded to the fire were South Dakota Wildland Fire, the U.S. Forest Service from both the Nebraska National Forest and Black Hills National Forest, Custer Volunteer Fire Department, Fairburn Volunteer Fire Department, Pringle Volunteer Fire Department, Argyle Volunteer Fire Department, Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department,

Custer County Search and Rescue (SAR), the Custer County Sheriff's Office and Custer Ambulance Service.

The fire started on private land and burned onto public land, including Forest Service land. The cause of the fire is under investigation. There were no evacuations ordered and no structure fires reported. While roads remained open, SAR was on site to keep un-

necessary traffic out of the area.

Esser said it's likely after the fire near Rapid City and this fire that additional resources will be staged in the area in case another fire breaks out. Esser said even permitted burning, such as in a burn barrel, is illegal when there is a Red Flag warning, as there was earlier this week. Esser said because of the dry and unseasonably warm weather, energy release components for fire fuels is at record highs for this time of year.

Esser is hoping for precipitation, and there is a chance for snow later this week.

"It hasn't worked out so far," Esser said of precipitation in the forecast. "I'm not going to hold my breath."

*(By Jason Ferguson, Custer County Chronicle, Custer, SD, February 18, 2026)*

## Platte Fire Department Called Thursday

The Platte Volunteer Fire Department responded to a call last Thursday morning right around 5:30 a.m. for an unattached garage/shed fire at the Dylan Knoll residence two miles east, five miles north and 1/2 east of Platte.

The shed and everything inside was deemed a total loss. Crews returned to the shed around 7 a.m.

*(Platte Enterprise, Platte, SD, February 11, 2026)*

## HOUSE FIRE UNDER INVESTIGATION IN WHEATON

On Jan. 28, 2026, at approximately 3:55 a.m., the Traverse County Law Enforcement Center received a 911 call reporting a house fire.

The Wheaton Fire Department and the Traverse County Sheriff's Office were dispatched to 1307 Broadway Avenue in Wheaton, Minn. Upon arrival, first responders located the homeowner, Kevin Kruize, age 63, inside the residence. Lifesaving measures were attempted at the scene and while in route to Sanford Wheaton. Mr. Kruize was pronounced deceased at Sanford Wheaton.

The cause of the fire remains under investigation. The Minnesota State Fire Marshal's Office and the Traverse County Sheriff's Office are jointly investigating the incident.

Additional information will be released as it becomes available.

*(Rosholt Review, Rosholt, SD, February 4, 2026)*



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23-0405

## Ice rescue training

On Jan. 18, Arlington Fire Department hosted a joint training with 34 firefighters from the Volga, Arlington, Lake Preston, Oldham and Desmet fire departments collaborating and practicing ice rescue skills.



## Brookings fire crews douse small blaze at PAC

When it comes to fire calls, it's better to be safe than sorry, and that's exactly what the Brookings Fire Department did when responding to what turned out to be a small fire at the Oscar Larson Performing Arts Center on the campus of South Dakota State University Feb. 4.

BFD Chief Troy Hughes told *The Brookings Register* that the incident originated in a paper air duct intake filter in the center's fabrication shop.

"Some metal cutting was done in the area of the filter just prior to the

filter catching fire," he said. "Nothing beyond the filter was damaged, and the metal cutting operations were stopped and will be moved to another location in the shop away from the air intake duct."

Hughes noted that SDSU maintenance crews cleaned the duct and replaced the damaged filter to bring the building back to full operation.

Fire crews arrived at 4:50 p.m. and cleared the scene by 5:33 p.m., he said, adding that four trucks and approximately 17 firefighters responded. Furthermore, it helped

that one of the trucks was nearby when the fire call came in.

"(The) Ladder 2 crew was first on scene due to them being across the street displaying the flag for the SDSU basketball game at the time of the alarm," Hughes explained.

In closing, he said the BFD teamed up with the University Police Department and center representatives to locate the issue and render the PAC safe to occupy.

*(By Mondell Keck, The Brookings Register, Brookings, SD, February 10, 2026)*

# CONGRATULATIONS!!

As of 02/10/2026 the listed departments have paid membership dues.  
If you do not see your department on the list reach out to [sec@sdfirefighters.org](mailto:sec@sdfirefighters.org) and Samara can assist you.

- Aberdeen Fire & Rescue • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Aberdeen Rural Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Academy Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Agar Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Akaska Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Alcester Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Alexandria Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Alpena Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Andover Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Angostura Rural Volunteer Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Ardmore Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Armour Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Ashton Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Aurora Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
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 Blunt Rural Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
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 Box Elder Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Bradley Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Brandon Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Brandt Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Brentford Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Bristol Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Brookings Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Camp Crook Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Canistota Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Canova Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
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 Castlewood Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Centerville Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Chamberlain Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Chester Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Claremont Area Fire Protection District • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Clark Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Clear Lake Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
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 Elkton Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
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 Fairview Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Faith Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Faulkton Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Flandreau Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Fort Pierre Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Frederick Area Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Freeman Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Garden City Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Garretson Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Gary Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Geddes Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Gettysburg Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Glad Valley Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Glenham Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Grand River Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Gregory Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
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 Kyle Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Lake Preston Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
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 Lennox Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Leola Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Lesterville Fire & Rescue Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Letcher Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Long Lake Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Lyons Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Madison Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Marion Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Martin Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Mc Intosh Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Mc Laughlin Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Midland Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Milbank Fire & Rescue • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Miller Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Minnekahta Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Mission Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Mitchell Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Montrose Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership

# CONGRATULATIONS!!

As of 02/10/2026 the listed departments have paid membership dues.  
If you do not see your department on the list reach out to sec@sdfirefighters.org and Samara can assist you.

Mound City Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Mount Vernon Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Mud Butte Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Murdo Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Nemo Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 New Effington Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 New Elm Springs Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 New Underwood Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Newell Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Nisland Arpan Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 North Marshall Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 North Sioux City Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Northville Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Oldham Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Onaka Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Onida Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Orient Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Parker Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Pennington County Fire Administration • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Philip Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Piedmont Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Pierre Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Platte Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Platte Rural Fire Protection District • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Prairie City Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Pringle Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Pukwana Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Quinn Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Ramona Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Rapid City Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Ree Heights Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Renner Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Rochford Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Rockerville Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Roscoe Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Rosebud Sioux Tribe Volunteer Fire & Rescue • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Rosholt Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Salem Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Scotland Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Selby Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Seneca Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Silver City Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership

Sioux Falls Fire Rescue • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Sisseton Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Spearfish Canyon Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Spencer Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Split Rock Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Springfield Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Stickney Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Stockholm Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Stratford Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Summit Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Tabor Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Tea Fire & Rescue • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Toronto Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Town & Country Fire Dept - Woonsocket • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Trent Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Tripp Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Tyndall Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Vale Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Veblen Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Vermillion Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Vetal Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Viborg Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Volga Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Volin Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Wagner Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Wall Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Warner Fire Department • SDFA Department Only Membership  
 Wasta Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Watertown Fire Rescue • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Waubay Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Webster Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Wessington Springs Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Whispering Pines Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 White River Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Whitewood Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Wilmot Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Winner Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Witten Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Wood Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Worthing Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership  
 Yankton Fire Department • SDFA 100% Department Membership

## YOU SHOULD HAVE YOUR DEPARTMENT FEATURED!



Just fill out the attached form and send it back with a group photo and we'll feature your department in an upcoming issue of the South Dakota Firefighter Newspaper.

Submitter's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Submitter's Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Number of Members: \_\_\_\_\_

# Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ # Paid \_\_\_\_\_ Year Department Established: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Names in picture: (on separate form please)

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

Officer's Name:

Office:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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

# S.E.S.D. District Fire Fighters Association

## 139TH SCHOOL - HELD AT YANKTON FIRE STATION #2 SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Board members present Paul Scherschligt, Bob Mier, Brian Schmidt, Aaron Mullinix, Bruce Cramer, Dave Jourgenson, Jayme Adrian and Kevin Frangenberg.

8:30am Opening remarks  
The pledge of allegiance.  
Classes  
EV class here  
Pumps class will be at Paddle Wheel point  
Search will be East of the tank  
Vendors here today McQueen & Heiman  
Spring School is in Volga  
Fall School 2026 is open.  
Haywarden Fire is selling raffle

tickets for a Fire Helmet for \$20 per ticket max 300 tickets sold drawing in October.

Pump Operations - Lieutenant Chris Nolder, Watertown Fire Rescue

Lithium-Ion Battery Fires – Lieutenant Webster Marshall, Jackson Trail Fire Department  
Residential Search & Victim Removal – Zach Wisenburger & Pat Kaffar, Pheasant Country FOOLS

Lunch will be at the Fire Station provided by Yankton Fire Dept. Auxiliary. Cost is \$10.00  
Adjourned at 8:35am

### BUSINESS MEETING

Paul called the meeting to order at 12:40

We thanked Yankton Fire Department for the School.

Secretary's report was read by Kevin Frangenberg. Motion to approve by Leroy Fedora Fire. Seconded by Jayme Harrisburg Fire. Motion carried.

Treasurer's report was read by Bob Mier. Motion to approve by Leroy Fedora Fire. Seconded by Dave Gayville Fire. Motion carried.

Charlie Kludt President SDF-FA reported on NVFC meeting next week in Rapid City hot topic is OSHA regulations and NFPA guidelines at the present time it does not affect volunteer departments. More to come on this debate. State Fire School is in Watertown June 11-13, 2026, Fall Conference is in Spearfish, Rick

George SDSU grant program Health & Wellness program. Last is SDFFA President position is up in June at Watertown.

Dave reported on State Fire School. They are looking for 5-8 groups for a study. Statistics show an 8% attendance at Fire School which is down from other states.

Mike from the State Fire Marshall's office, there are a lot of changes going on in the office Paul Meriman, Paul Coon & Glenda are all retiring in October. A new coverage map will be drawn up on who has the new defined areas. Updated certification will include a TIMS class, and a section on Haz-Mat. It is in the Jones & Bartels book, IFST 7 edition and it is available in Action Training.

Volga will be hosting Spring

School April 25th, 2026 North Sioux City Fire has asked for Fall School 2026.

There will be a survey out in the Fire newspaper from Survey Monkey to give the Board input on District Schools.

McQueen rep spoke on Fire Chief's Assoc. will have the annual meeting (Back to the Basics) at Cadillac Jacks in Deadwood; all are welcome.

Dave has 8 caps to giveaway. Leroy Fedora Fire made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Moser Yankton Fire. Motion carried.

**KEVIN FRANGENBERG,**  
Secretary  
Southeast District  
Fire Fighters Association

# South East District Fire School

## Saturday April 25th 2026 @ Volga Fire Department

### Southeast District Spring Fire School's classes are built by firefighters, for firefighters! Classes include:

Wildland Fire Tactical Considerations

Structural Collapse Awareness

Firefighter Vehicle Extrication Class

Confined Space Operations

Trench Collapse Awareness

Patient Handling: Farming Accidents, Medical & Traumatic Emergencies



## scan for more info or to register

### STEP UP. LEVEL UP. GEAR UP.



# NOW OPEN!

## ADVANCED CLEANING ADVANCED INSPECTIONS REPAIRS & ALTERATIONS NAME PLATE REQUESTS

- PRELIMINARY INSPECTION
- INITIAL DECON SOAKING
- EXTRACTION WASH & DRY
- MOISTURE BARRIER TESTING
- OUTER SHELL INSPECTION
- RESTORATION & ASSEMBLY
- HARDWARE & CLOSURE REPAIRS
- LUMIPHI PARTICULATE HOOD INSPECTION



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