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On July 14, Box Elder Fire Department responded to a structure fire with mutual aid provided by several neighboring fire departments. See additional photo and information inside this issue.



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Attic Fire Suppression: Work the Eave, Not Just the Gable



By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

Attic fires can present a significant challenge for engine companies. Access is often limited, visibility is poor, and the structural components of the roof can prevent an exterior hose stream from reaching the burning materials. When crews are unable to quickly access the attic from the interior, an exterior eave sweep may provide an effective way to slow fire growth and improve interior conditions.

A common instinct is to direct a straight or solid stream through a gable vent. While this may appear to provide direct access to the attic, roof trusses and other structural components can block the stream. Water may strike the trusses, fall to the attic floor, and cool only a small portion of the space.

A better option may be applying water through the eave.

Using a straight or solid stream, direct the water upward toward the underside of the roof decking. Start in one truss bay and work from one end of the attic to the other. As the water strikes the sheathing, it spreads throughout the bay, wets a larger portion of the burning surfaces, and cools more of the roof structure. Moving the stream from bay to bay allows crews to coat the majority of the attic while reducing the need to create large ventilation openings before suppression is underway.

This tactic is especially useful when attic access is delayed or interior conditions prevent crews

from immediately opening the ceiling. It is not intended to replace an interior attack or overhaul. Instead, it can serve as a rapid method of applying water to the involved space while crews prepare for interior access.

Crews can practice this technique with a simple training prop or an acquired structure. Begin with a charged 1¾-inch hoseline equipped with a combination or smoothbore nozzle. First, flow water through a simulated gable opening and observe how the structural members limit stream penetration. Then apply the stream beneath the eave, moving from truss bay to truss bay while directing water toward the roof decking.

Water is only effective when it reaches the burning surfaces. Understanding how attic construction affects stream movement allows us to choose tactics that cool the space more efficiently, slow fire growth, and create safer conditions for interior crews. I encourage everyone to learn more by completing FSRI's online course, *Residential Attic and Exterior Fires*, available here: <https://tinyurl.com/378frfry>

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.



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Structure fire reported in Box Elder

During the afternoon of July 14, a report of a structure fire was received. The fire was located at a commercial building near Box Elder Road West and Johnson Drive. Fire crews were able to successfully knock down the fire. We would like to thank the Box Elder Police Department and the Box Elder Volunteer Fire Department for their quick response and continued efforts throughout the incident. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the many agencies that assisted throughout the incident: Summerset Fire Department, Black Hawk Fire Department, Ellsworth Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department, Rapid Valley Fire Department, New Underwood Fire Department, North Haines Fire Department, Piedmont Fire Department, Whispering Pines Fire Department, South Dakota Highway Patrol and Pennington County Sheriff's Office. A special thank you to the owners of The Hangar Pub of Box Elder, SD for opening their doors as a cooling shelter for first responders and providing ice water during the incident. We also appreciate Midco for supplying Gatorade to crews working throughout the response. Thank you to our media partners for your support and for helping keep the public informed. Today's response demonstrated the strength of the Black Hills community. The coordination between fire, EMS, law enforcement, city staff, and community partners was instrumental in supporting an effective response. From the City of Box Elder Facebook page.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

- SEPT. 20, 2026:** MLFTU training, Brandon, SD.
- OCT. 17, 2026:** South East District Fall Fire School, North Sioux City, SD, North Sioux City Community Center, 205 Sodrac Drive, contact Jim Christenson, North Sioux City Fire Department, nscfd@nscfd.org, or call the station at 605.232.4286.
- DEC. 4-6, 2026:** SD Fire Chiefs Annual Leadership Conference featuring Tiger Schmittendorf, Deadwood, SD.
- JUNE 10-12, 2027:** South Dakota Firefighters Association State Fire School, Watertown, SD.



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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

The major was promoted to colonel and received a fancy new office. As he entered it for the first time, sitting in the nice new chair, a knock came at the door. He said, "Come in," then quickly picked up the telephone receiver as a corporal walked in. "Just a minute," the colonel said to the corporal. "I have to finish this telephone call." Then the colonel began speaking into the mouthpiece: "Sorry about the interruption, General. Yes, sir, I

will take care of that. Yes, I'll call the President after I finish talking with you, General." The colonel ceremoniously put the telephone down, turned to the corporal, and said, "What can I do for you?" The corporal replied, "Well, colonel, I just came in to connect your telephone." I chuckle about that story as it reminds me of a famous dictum from the Bible, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18). What that

newly minted colonel forgot was the concept of humble confidence. Keep in mind this is not my title, I once again "stole" this from another author, in this situation it was an article by that title, "Humble Confidence The Quiet Force That Leads the Way," written by James Cook in Firefighter Nation (By the way, Firefighter Nation is quickly becoming one of my favorite reads) What Cook wants to remind us of is that confidence is not found in

U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notification

CHARLES WOODARD, 38, Maban (TX) Fire Department, died on June 27. Fire Chief Charles "Charlie" Woodard was directing traffic outside the Mabank Rodeo grounds. As he stepped into the westbound lanes of U.S. Highway 175, Fire Chief Woodard was hit by a pickup truck. Fire Chief Woodard was treated at the scene and then transported to a local hospital where he was later pronounced deceased. Investigation into the incident continues.

KYLE YODER, 49, Holmes Fire District #1, Millersburg, OH, died on July 4. On July 4, 2026, at 6 a.m., Firefighter/Paramedic Kyle Yoder finished his shift during which he responded to seven emergency calls including a motor vehicle accident around 1 a.m. After his shift, Firefighter/Paramedic Yoder left the fire station. He then returned to the fire station around 9 a.m. A short time later, an ambulance crew returning to the fire station found Firefighter/Paramedic Yoder collapsed on the ground. The ambulance crew administered CPR and transported Firefighter/Paramedic Yoder to a local hospital where, despite all efforts, he was pronounced deceased.

SYDNEY K. WATSON, 27, U.S. Wildland Service-Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit, Rifle Interagency Helitack, Rifle, CO, died on June 27. Firefighters from the Rifle Interagency and Pittman Valley Helitack crews were involved in a turnover event while responding to initial attack fires in the Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit (UCR). Helitack crew member Sydney Watson, along with Helitack Squad Leader Emily Barker (U.S. Forest Service – UCR) and Helitack crew member Nicholas Hutcherson (U.S. Forest Service – Kaibab National Forest), did not survive the turnover.

NICHOLAS HUTCHERSON, 27, U.S. Forest Service, Kaibab National Forest, Williams Ranger District, Pittman Valley Helibase, Williams, AZ, died on June 27. Firefighters from the Rifle Interagency and Pittman Valley Helitack crews were involved in a turnover event while responding to initial attack fires in the Upper Colorado River Interagency Fire Management Unit (UCR). Helitack crew member Nicholas Hutcherson, along with Helitack Squad Leader Emily Barker (U.S. Forest Service – UCR) and Helitack crew member Sydney Watson (U.S. Wildland Fire Service – UCR), did not survive the turnover.

PATRICK TROUT, 47, Detroit Fire Department, died on Jan. 5. While on duty from January 4 through January 5, 2026, Senior Firefighter Patrick Trout responded with Squad 4 to multiple emergency incidents, including a working structure fire. While operating inside the structure during fire suppression activities under conditions of heavy smoke and limited visibility, debris struck Senior Firefighter Trout on the head. Despite the impact, he continued performing firefighting duties and completed the incident with his crew.

After completing his shift, Senior Firefighter Trout returned home where he began experiencing severe headaches and head pain. Later that evening, his condition deteriorated, and emergency services were summoned to his home after he became unresponsive. Despite resuscitative efforts by responding police and fire personnel, Senior Firefighter Trout was pronounced deceased at the scene. The cause of death was determined to be a subarachnoid hemorrhage.

ROBERT W. REIDER III, 23, Malaga (NJ) Volunteer Fire Company #1, died on July 10. On June 27, the Malaga Volunteer Fire Company #1 was dispatched for a motor vehicle accident. Probationary Firefighter Robert "Bobby" Reider III was responding in his personal vehicle from his house to the station to staff the apparatus. While responding to the station, Probationary Firefighter Reider's vehicle left the roadway and struck a fire hydrant and a utility pole. Probationary Firefighter Reider suffered traumatic injuries. The Malaga Volunteer Fire Company #1 units were diverted to this scene, extricated Probationary Firefighter Reider, and began life saving measures. Probationary Firefighter Reider was then airlifted to a trauma center where he remained in critical condition until his passing on July 10, 2026.

DONALD VAN DEURSEN, 78, Middlebush Volunteer Fire Department, Somerset, NJ, died on June 16. Fire Police Officer Donald "Butch" Van Deursen responded to two calls on June 15, 2026, the last being a fire alarm activation that came in at 11:43 a.m. to which he responded and stood by at the station. At approximately 7:50 a.m. on June 16, 2026, Fire Police Officer Van Deursen collapsed at his home and was pronounced deceased there a short time later. Fire Police Officer Van Deursen was the former fire chief of Middlebush Volunteer Fire Department.

DAN L. HERNANDEZ, JR., 71, Slocum Volunteer Fire Department, Elkhart, TX, died on July 11. On July 7, 2026, Fire Safety Chief Dan Hernandez Jr. responded to a brush fire. While at the scene of the fire, Fire Safety Chief Hernandez suffered a cardiovascular event. He was transported to a regional medical center where he was stabilized. He was then transferred to another hospital where, despite all efforts, he passed away on July 11, 2026.

EUGENE CERVI, 60, Deep Creek Volunteer Fire Company, McHenry, MD, died on July 6. On July 5, 2026, at approximately 6:00 p.m., Chief Engineer Eugene Cervi drove the Deep Creek Volunteer Fire Company apparatus in response to a possible water rescue. Once on scene, he assisted with the deployment of the department's boat. The incident concluded around 8:00 p.m. At approximately 3:00 a.m. on July 6, 2026, Chief Engineer Cervi suffered a cardiovascular event and was taken to a hospital where he passed away later that day.

DAVID A. GAGNON, 58, Cottekill Volunteer Fire Company, died on July 3. Chief David Gagnon responded with the Cottekill Volunteer Fire Company to a call for a tree down across a roadway. While operating on scene and working to remove the tree from the roadway, Chief Gagnon was struck by a portion of the tree when it unexpectedly snapped. Fellow firefighters and other first responders immediately initiated life-saving measures. Chief Gagnon was then transported to a local hospital where, despite all efforts, he passed away.



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"if you are good at what you do, if you are an experienced firefighter there is no need to tell everyone, it is a matter of doing your best every time you answer the call."

strutting around the station reminding everyone of how great you are, it is in quietly doing the job.

By now you know, I hold too many academic degrees for my own good, but one of those programs taught me a lesson that has helped me understand human behavior in ways I never thought possible. To put it simply the person who has to remind you of how good they are is not operating from a position of confidence, but of fear. That person who has to remind you every time you meet about how many classes, they have attended, how many certifications they have earned, is not there to help you, but to remind you of how much they need you to affirm their worth and value, as they have very little self-worth. On the other side is the person who quietly goes about doing the work that is needed regardless of who sees or notices.

Let me tell you a story about myself. While I was in seminary, I was not independently wealthy, so I needed a job during the summer months. I heard of a company hiring people to paint houses. I was not afraid to work, so I signed on. Long story short, the company I hired with was not entirely honest. The skills of a painter were transferable, so I went to work for someone else. Since we were working in New England and most of our work was on older homes, they had a window design that dated back to colonial days and it involved, individual panes of glass separated by wood. They had various names depending on how many panes of glass were used, the most common being a 6 over 6. Meaning a double hung window would have 12 panes of glass, 6 on the top and six on the bottom. That meant 48 places where the wood met the glass. Homeowners would spend hours putting masking tape around this, but since we did not have that luxury, we learned how to "cut sash" using a smaller brush, meaning a 2 1/2 inch brush as opposed to a 4-inch brush. So, let me cut to the chase and say, I became skilled in painting sash, so much so I would confidently attack the most difficult windows and paint them faster than anyone else on my crew. Why do I tell you all this? One my last homes to paint was owned by the Dean of the School I had just graduated from. We were finishing the job and painting his garage when he came out to visit. I was painting siding with my 4-inch brush and I said, "Doc, I think I am a pretty good "sash-man" so I think I can paint that window with my 4-inch brush." Which I did and didn't have to scrape any paint off the window! At that point for the first time in my life, I said, "Doggone I am good!" Why did it take me nearly 24 years of living to think

I was good at something? Mainly because I had been told all my life, that I really did not measure up. Now, did I go around and paint windows with that big brush, no. But I knew I could do something right for once. That gave me confidence to go out and attempt even bigger things. But it wasn't until I was in my 50's and studying once again that I learned that this quiet confidence was rooted in a sense of worth that I had not known before. With that insight in mind, I learned humble confidence did not need a demonstration, only doing what I could do and not have to broadcast that to anyone.

The point in telling you all this is simply this, if you are good at what you do, if you are an experienced firefighter there is no need to tell everyone, it is a matter of doing your best every time you answer the call. You don't have to shout it from the roof tops "I am the greatest". I think Cook summed it up early in his article when he said: "Humble confidence doesn't come from passing a test, pinning on brass, or having a stack of certs in your file. It comes from showing up early, staying late, and getting it wrong enough times to know how to get it right when it matters."

At the end of the day whether it is prowess with a paint brush or confidence on the fire ground, you don't need to pretend like the newly promoted Colonel in my introductory story. Be the best you can be and let others recognize you for who you are, or you will learn well the reality of Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."

Blessings to you all.

CHAPLAIN RODNEY V

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DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

Charles "Chuck" Curry

1946-2026

Retired Rapid City Firefighter and South Dakota National Guard Fire Fighter, Charles "Chuck" Curry, age 79, of Rapid City, passed away peacefully on June 23, 2026.

Chuck was born on October 7, 1946, in Deadwood, South Dakota to Edith (Anderson) and James M. Curry. In 1964 Chuck graduated from Lead High School and attended Black Hills State University for Marine Biology.

Chuck was born of 2nd generation homesteaders of the Black Hills.

He enlisted with the National Guard at 17 years old and did basic training at Fort Leonard Wood. Chuck started in law enforcement in Lead, Deadwood, and then Spearfish.

He came to Rapid City with the police force to assist with the flood of 1972.

He started with the Rapid City Fire Department shortly after. Chuck served for 23 years with the Fire Department and married his loving wife Terry (Collins). He worked many side jobs, including logging, breaking tires, building sheds, fire sprinklers, as well as at Scheels and Cabela's. He retired from the Fire Department and the National Guard as the 1st NCO of the newly formed National Guard Fire Fighting Unit in Sturgis.

Chuck loved the Black Hills and spent his time hunting and fishing.



He was a gunsmith and enjoyed reloading. He made bows and had a passion for leatherwork and drawing. He competed with the Single Action Shooters Society and was with the Regulators Reenactment shooting. He was a member of 1st United Methodist Church, American Legion Post 22, Masonic Lodge, and the Order of the Eastern Star.

Charles is survived by his loving and proud wife of 48 years, Terry Curry; two children,

Christopher Curry and James Curry; four grandchildren, Penelope Curry, Link Curry, Finn Curry, and Ash Curry. Also left behind are his brother Jerry Curry and sister Mary Thomas.

He is preceded in death by his parents, James M. Curry and Edith Curry.

A funeral was held on June 30, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. at the Kirk Funeral Home in Rapid City, burial followed at 12:30 p.m. at Black Hills National Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial may be directed to American Legion Post 22 Scholarship Fund at 818 E St. Patrick Street in Rapid City, SD 57701.

<https://www.kirkfuneralhome.com/obituary/charles-curry>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/17pbNaJEFW/>

Jay Lee Bruinsma

1965-2026

Jay Lee Bruinsma, 60, went to his heavenly home Monday, June 29, 2026 at his home in Stickney. Memorial service were held Friday, July 3 at 10:30 am at Prairie's Edge Methodist Church in Stickney.

Jay Lee Bruinsma, one of six children born to Eldon and Clara (Van Noort) Bruinsma, was born September 24, 1965. He passed away at his home peacefully on June 29, 2026. He grew up on the family farm a couple miles south of Stickney and graduated from Stickney High School in 1983.

He went to work at the Stickney Coop Elevator shortly after graduation and remained there for 36 years. Jay's other employment after that included CHS in Corsica, Menards in Mitchell and most recently Legacy Lumber in Corsica.

Jay was united in marriage to Sherri McDonnell on September 21, 1996. To this union, three children, Landon, Lauren, and Lincoln, were born. Jay was a very proud parent of his children and an avid Jaguar fan, especially while they were growing up and playing various sports.



Jay was a member of Prairie's Edge Methodist Church in Stickney, SD for many years and served on several boards during that time.

Jay was a proud member of the Stickney Volunteer Fire Department for 31 years. He was also a member of the Stickney City Council for 25 years and served as President/Mayor for many of those years. Jay and Sherri also helped with the community youth group while their children were in high school.

In Jay's younger adult years, he threw darts and shot trap. Jay loved any chance he could get to go out to Compton Canyon Club cabin with family or hunting groups. He loved driving around that part of the Black Hills and looking at wildlife for hours and hours. Jay enjoyed many card and board games, especially SORRY.

To say that Jay's children were the light of his life is an understatement. He loved nothing more than putting on a Jaguar shirt and his photo button (for whichever kid was playing whichever sport) and heading out to a game. There were many winning teams, state tourna-

ments and memories made during those years. Jay became a grandpa in 2023 and again in 2025.

Although there were many struggles in Jay's life, he never hesitated to do something good for someone else. Anyone that truly knew Jay knew he was a good person with a bad disease. His last few years were spent attending AA where he formed many positive friendships.

Grateful for having shared his life are his wife, Sherri of Stickney; 3 children: Landon and November Bruinsma (Renley and Raelin) of Stickney; Lauren and Ryland DeVries of Mitchell; and Lincoln Bruinsma of Stickney; his mother, Clara; a brother, Dave and Teresa Bruinsma; and 2 sisters: Darlene and Dennis Koch and Connie and Pat Pollreis; many nieces, nephews and great nieces and nephews; and his in-laws: Mike and Betty McDonnell, Jodi and Earl Parsons and Joe and Heather McDonnell.

He was preceded in death by his father, Eldon, two sisters: Barb and Al Buchholz and Kathy Terwilliger, a great-niece, Destiny Karpinen; a great-nephew, Mason Karpinen; and both sets of his grandparents, Fred and Kate Bruinsma and Gerrit and Agnes Van Noort.

Amy Jo Moeller

June 15, 1971-June 27, 2026

Funeral services for Amy (Smizer) Moeller, age 55, of Witten, SD, who passed away peacefully on June 27, 2026, were held on Thursday, July 2, 2026 at Clausen Funeral Home in Burke, SD. Burial was in the Herrick Cemetery, Herrick, SD.

Amy lived a life filled with compassion, strength and devotion to family and friends. She will be remembered for a kind heart, unwavering love and many lives she touched through generosity and grace. She was born on June



15, 1971 in Gregory, South Dakota. She cherished time spent with family & friends, also enjoyed traveling, especially with her mom to Las Vegas, visiting her sister in Arizona and going to the stock shows. She was actively serving as a volunteer, on the Witten Fire Department for many years. She could always find on a fire truck for the July 3 fireworks. They also found time to celebrate birthdays in Pierre, Chamberlain or a drive for supper. She went one year to the Her-

rick school, then was transferred to Burke School, where she graduated High School in 1989. Over the years Amy worked at Mr. G's for

11 years, Casey's in Winner for five and McDonald's for over 20 years. Todd and Amy started dating when Todd's mother was in the Gregory Hospital and Amy was working at Mr. G's. Amy married Todd Moeller on February 3, 2001 in Rapid City, South Dakota. Amy and Todd moved to Witten, South Dakota

and lived there her entire marriage prior to her death. Amy Jo survived by her husband, Todd Moeller, her mother, Donna (Shope) Smizer, and her sister Angie (John) Wortman and a host of other relatives and friends. She was preceded in death by her father, Duane Robert Smizer.

Though Amy Joe Moeller is no longer with us, the love wisdom and kindness she shared will never be forgotten. May she rest in eternal peace.

Levi Gene Griffin

1983-2026

Levi Gene Griffin, age 43, of Badger, SD, passed away Sunday, June 21, 2026.

Funeral service was held on Monday, June 29, 2026, at Trinity Lutheran Church in Arlington, SD, with Pastor Brian Ricke officiating. Burial was at the Arlington City Cemetery in Arlington, SD.

Memorials in Levi's name can be sent to his wife, Ashley, at PO Box 21 205 East South Street in Badger, SD, 57214 or to the account the family has set up in Levi's name at Citizen's State Bank.

Levi G. Griffin, loving husband, devoted father, and cherished friend of many passed away leaving behind a legacy of hard work, true love, and devotion to his family.

Born on January 23, 1983, in Portland, OR, to Nancy and Tony, Levi grew up in Waverly, SD. From a young age work was something he never shied

away from. He worked at a dairy to buy a dirtbike which was always a passion of Levi's. In high school, he won many state track

championships and graduated in 2002. In high school, he also found a way of dealing with problems by telling stories- mostly crazy stories- which helped shape him into the caring man that he will be remembered as. After high school, he worked for Bunker Construction for over twenty years.

Levi was a loving, hardworking, faithful father and husband. Levi married Ashley Josephsen at Trinity Lutheran Church in Arlington on June 11, 2011, and moved to Arlington where they had their first child, Wyatt, followed by Isabelle, Bonnie, and later Harley. The couple and their growing family then decided Badger, SD, would be where home is. He renovated the outside and inside and added a garage and day-



care to make both their dreams come true: a simple life full of love. He wanted to help others, and it came naturally to him. Levi was a member of the Arlington Fire Department, the Badger Fire Department, and Sons of Legion. He received the firefighter of the year award from the SAL Post 42. His laugh and smile lit up a room. The legacy he leaves behind will be carried out by his friend, family, and the memories you hold close to your heart. Help others and be kind.

Levi is survived by his wife, Ashley; son, Wyatt; daughters, Isabelle, Bonnie, and Harley; his dogs, Sassy Jo and Bess Bess; mother, Nancy; father, Tony; brothers, Luke and Jeremy; sisters, Jessica and Crystal; their families; father-in-law, Jon; mother-in-law, Jahne; sister-in-law Katie; brother-in-law, Nate; and grandmother-in-law, Doris Swanson.

Levi was preceded in death by his grandparents; grandparents-in-law: Leon Josephsen, Odessa Josephsen, and Donald Swanson.

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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



Charlie Kludt, President

"I present a course on aviation incidents. How often do you have an airplane crash in your area? But some of you have military aircraft flying over you on a regular basis. Do you know what to do? Or even more important, what not to do? I'll be at Badlands District to talk about it and look at some aircraft."

Summertime Busy

Did you submit your State Fire Grant application by August 1st? Summertime can be a fun time. A time for picnics and reunions, vacations and camping, fishing and swimming, lightning bugs and ball games, and soaking up the

summer sun. Then there is storm watch, tornadoes & winds, flash flooding, lighting fires, wildland fires, baler fires, tractor fires, car fires and many other incident types that will require us to get geared up in the blistering heat.

Let's face it. When a town or anyone needs help, the fire de-

partment is usually the first that is called upon.

Every small town has a local event of some sort that draws in the locals and surrounding areas, family and school reunions, parades, food, fun, with all the lemonade and Fresca you can drink. But we have some busy times coming up all over the state. County Fairs, Sturgis Rally, final vacations before school starts and before you know it, the State Fair and Labor Day is here. Not to mention all the school activities and school classes starting.

Now, and anytime, is a good time for a review of your procedures for large event incidents. Have you practiced all the steps it would take if you had a bus or multiple vehicle accident? Even a multi-casualty incident at your community weekend festival could be a real challenge on your

resources and man power. A little pre-planning could help.

Practice for common and probable items first. Sure, anything could happen, but how likely is?

I present a course on aviation incidents. How often do you have an airplane crash in your area? But some of you have military aircraft flying over you on a regular basis. Do you know what to do? Or even more important, what not to do? I'll be at Badlands District to talk about it and look at some aircraft.

There will be a District Fire Schools coming up in a couple regions around the state. Check the SDFA websites or Fire Marshal notices for dates and places.

I hope you have a safe rest of the summer.

CHARLIE KLUDT
SDFA President

Thoughts From the Tailboard

As I finish this month's ramblings, the outside temp is and has been for several days in excess of 100. Holy crud. Of course it's supposed to cool off this weekend, down to 99, boy guess I'll have to break out the overcoat to stay warm. Oh well, what do you expect in South Dakota in mid-July. Just wait till August!!!!

Great Lakes Energy donated more than \$370,000 to local fire departments for grain bin rescue equipment, breathing gear, water storage tanks, rescue tools, and PPE. It is great to see local companies helping those who help them. Thank you GLE.

Lots of photos from Fire School. If you were in one or more of those photos, way to go. Congratulations and thank you for coming to fire school. If you decided not to go to fire school this year, see what you missed. I see nothing but smiles, looks of determination and wow, what a class.

Governor Larry Rhoden was

at fire school. Any time we can get elected leaders to attend our functions and see what we do, it's well worth it. You can look at the various photos in the July issue of *South Dakota Firefighter* paper and see he was at many different classes and met with many individuals. Thank you Governor for coming to fire school.

The annual Fall conference will be held on October 2, 3, & 4th. This year the conference will be at the Pete Lien Shooting Complex. I know the address says Piedmont, but it is 10 miles north of Exit 61 on I-90. The road going north is Elk Vale Rd and is black top except for the last ½ mile. The address is 14514 Bill Janklow Rd, Piedmont. Phone is 605-566-5961. It is a public shooting range, and some portions are free of charge, other portions require a small membership fee. There are many motels at Exit 61. Call the shooting range and ask for further details if you would like to come and shoot. It is a great facility.

Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service will be Sunday, September 27 at 1:00 PM CDT. The Me-



Denny Gorton, Retired Treasurer/Past President

"A few weeks ago, at our monthly Saturday morning training one of our new members asked me how he could become a better firefighter?... I wasn't prepared to give him an answer right away. We plan on sitting down soon and talk about it. So, let me ask you, if a new motivated firefighter asked you the same question, what would be your answer? I'll let you know next month what my answer was."

memorial Service will be outside this year as the Capital is being worked on. Plan for the weather. We will be adding the name of Nick Van Dam to the Memorial. Rest in Peace Nick.

A few weeks ago, at our monthly Saturday morning training one of our new members asked me how he could become a better firefighter? How could he contribute more to the department? He's completed Firefighter I and II, Wildland basic, etc. What made me think was how do I answer him? What do I say to this very motivated firefighter who has their feet on the ground? I wasn't prepared to give him an an-

swer right away. We plan on sitting down soon and talk about it. So, let me ask you, if a new motivated firefighter asked you the same question, what would be your answer? I'll let you know next month what my answer was.

Well, this is enough for one month, besides with the heat outside I think my computer is starting to overheat. Oh, wait maybe is just me.

Stay safe, before engaging in any fire suppression look around first.

DENNY

Summer is in full swing and mother nature has not been kind to the central district and the state overall. When these natural disasters happen, your department will be stretched thin as everyone is looking to you for solutions. Talking to people that have been part of one of these incidents I hear some common issues. These problems include communications, accountability, acquiring resources and spectators. Of course, these items will change from region to region but those listed seem to be brought up frequently, regardless of the event.

So, where do departments go for training to prepare for one of these high impact, low frequency events? Possibly the best teacher is experience. Talking to those that

have been through an experience like this is priceless. So here is my goal for the future. I will be seeking out individuals who have been part of a natural disaster and are willing to discuss your experience. What worked, what didn't work, what would you do differently. No judgement, just real-world conversations from people that have been in the hot seat. Lessons learned should be lessons shared. We need people from all different size communities as our state varies and challenges will be different depending on area. So, if you have never been asked to share your experiences consider this your invitation. You do not need to be a certified state instructor, just someone willing to talk in a casual setting. You have experience that no book



Rick George, Central District Director

"I will be seeking out individuals who have been part of a natural disaster and are willing to discuss your experience. What worked, what didn't work, what would you do differently. No judgement, just real-world conversations from people that have been in the hot seat."

or power point can replace. By sharing it you will help your brothers and sisters across the state better prepare for future events.

If anyone is interested in taking part in this project let me know. We can do something at a district school or make it a stand-alone event regionally. I'm always open

to ideas and suggestions to make this work. Let's have the conversation. Here's my contact information. rebelfire@santel.net or 605-461-9190.

RICK GEORGE

SDFA AUXILIARY REPORT

One never knows when your last call could be your last. Remembering to maintain your family status information and your final desires through your department files. This noted information is just as important as your training documents on a yearly basis. Your department should have forms to fill out and be filled with your personal file at your department. Be safe out there.

HOLLY BAUER
State Auxiliary Vice President

COMMUNITY RALLIES TO SUPPORT INJURED JACKSON CO. FIREFIGHTER

The community is coming through in a big way to support an injured South Dakota firefighter. John Jensen of the Interior Volunteer Fire Department suffered a serious accident while fighting the South Fork Fire near Crawford, Nebraska on June 14th. The injury was severe enough that his family was told he may lose the leg entirely. He was Kown to Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and later transferred to Loveland, Colorado for treatment.
(KOTA-TV ABC 7 Rapid City, SD, June 26, 2026)

MULTIPLE STRUCTURES DAMAGED IN BLACK HAWK FIRE

A manufactured home was fully engulfed in flames when Black Hawk Firefighters arrived at the scene of a structure fire on JB Road in Black Hawk at about 6:19 p.m., Tuesday. The fire was rapidly spreading to neighboring structures, according to first responders.
Due to the absence of fire hydrants, fire personnel requested additional support to fight the fire. Water tenders and personnel were dispatched from Piedmont, North Haines, Rapid City, Box Elder, Whispering Pines, Rapid Valley, Doty, Johnson Siding, and Ellsworth Air Force Base.
Crews focused initially on exposure protection — tactics to prevent the fire from spreading further. In total, 7 nearby structures were either damaged or ignited “as a result of the primary fire,” according to the Black Hawk Fire Department. Three homes sustained “significant or moderate damage.”

The fire is under investigation by the S.D. Fire Marshall’s Office. Details are preliminary, and limited until the investigation concludes.
(Black Hills Pioneer, June 20, 2026)

Designation of Beneficiaries Form
For
U.S. Department of Justice Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Program

WHO RECEIVES PSOB BENEFITS IF THE CLAIM IS APPROVED?

Benefits are paid to survivors according to the following criteria:

- 1. If there is a spouse and no child* or children, all to the spouse.
- 2. If there is a spouse and child or children, one-half to the spouse and one-half to the child or children in equal shares.
- 3. If no spouse, and children only, all to the child or children in equal shares.
- 4. If no spouse or children, then to the individual(s) designated by the officer as PSOB beneficiary on file with the officer’s agency, or if no designation then to the individual designated as the beneficiary on the most recently executed life insurance policy on file with the officer’s agency.
- 5. If none of the above, to the officer’s parents in equal shares.

**“Child” is defined as any natural, illegitimate, adopted, or posthumous child or stepchild of a deceased public safety officer who, at the time of the officer’s death, is 18 years old or under; 19-22 and a full-time student; or 19 and older, and incapable of self-support due to a physical or mental disability.*

This form is for use in declaring a beneficiary for any PSOB benefits that your survivors may be eligible for in the event of your death. The circumstances in which the beneficiaries identified here might be eligible for the PSOB benefit are identified in Step 4 above and would not apply if there is an eligible spouse or children. Should you wish to complete this form, it must be retained with official departmental records.

I, _____ (print full name), as a member
of _____ (print agency name), hereby

designate the following beneficiary(s) for any PSOB benefits that may be paid in the event of my death:

Name	Address	Relationship	Percent (must total 100)
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Officer signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____

Witness signature: _____ Date: ____/____/____



Edgemont to the rescue

On July 1 around 15:00 Edgemont Volunteer Fire Department members and town folk investigated a strange howling sound in the 400 block between 2nd Avenue and 1st Avenue. A small dog “Rooster” was found in a hole that required rescue. A plan was made to bring E31 and a ladder was deployed into hole. Fireman Cortney descended ladder and recovered “Rooster”. “Rooster” was sent home with a friend of the owner and appeared unharmed. Edgemont 31 returned to station. Thanks to the town folk and Edgemont public works crew for the assistance! From the Edgemont Fire Department Facebook page.

Reflections

(The early days)

Every city in the state had a fire department, and each department relied on the same basic equipment. The pumper was the main rig, and everything revolved around it. Hundreds of feet of two-and-a-half-inch supply hose were packed into the hose bed so it could be pulled quickly when needed. During a fire call, someone had to decide whether to lay hose from the hydrant to the fire, where the pumper would operate, or drop the hose and equipment at the fire and take the pumper to the hydrant. Depending on where the pumper worked, this was called a forward lay or reverse lay. Departments practiced the drill at least once a year, and more often when new members needed experience. As more apparatus arrived during a fire, the process was repeated as needed. If mutual aid came in, another line might be laid from a different hydrant. At a major downtown fire, the streets could quickly fill with fire hose and trucks. Firefighting tools were basic and familiar: ladders, pike poles, axes, and pry bars. One-and-a-half-inch attack lines were connected either to a pumper or to a wye off a charged 2.5-inch line. Nozzles ranged from straight full-bore tips to fog nozzles. Later, most departments adopted the new adjustable combination nozzles—a wonderful invention of the late 1950s. Firefighter gear was limited and often shared. A department with 20 members might have only eight to ten sets of gear, each consisting of a helmet, coat, and boots. Old fire photos often show gear being used, but rarely in complete sets. One fireman might wear a coat, another boots, and another a helmet—most likely the nozzle man. Every department had members who seemed born for certain roles. The axe man was always ready, axe

in hand, waiting for the command to cut a hole, knock down a door, or tear something apart. When he went to work, wood chips flew, and no piece of wood was safe. The ladder man was easy to find too: if a ladder leaned against a building, he was probably near the top, waiting to help the axe man. Then there was the nozzle man—the smoke-eating, dragon-killing combat leader screaming for more pressure. He was easy to spot in the after-fire photos, soaked clothing, soot-blackened face, and scorched hair. Last, but not least was the pump operator: calm, cool, and dry, often smoking a cigarette or pipe, with a cup of coffee nearby. He was the heart of the operation, and he knew his job well. That was the reality of those decades, and often the best communities could provide. Progress was slow, shaped by war years and limited funding at both the local and national levels. Equipment had to be maintained carefully and sometimes used far beyond its expected service life. Receiving a new pumper during one’s years of service was a remarkable, unforgettable event. Yet every department—large or small, volunteer or paid—shared the same essential strength: its members. Few organizations can match the consistency, morale, and dependability of firefighters. They are dedicated, unselfish people from all walks of life, helping others in need while asking nothing in return. These men helped build today’s fire service. Their tools and methods may have been crude by modern standards, but they worked with what they had and did the job well, responding to every call without question or hesitation. In short, their strong commitment helped bring us to where we are today.

TARZ MULLINIX,
lifetime member of SDFA
(tarzm@aol.com)

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.

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

Officer's Name: _____ Office: _____

Confronting Extreme Heat Dynamics on the Great Plains

By DAN GARLAND

HEAT STRESS MITIGATION

With rising temperatures, fire and EMS leadership must adhere to strict hydration protocols to combat heat stress injuries during high-temperature operations. Department policies should mandate specific timelines and precise fluid ratios for all crews. Unlike career personnel who often undergo scheduled heat acclimatization, volunteer firefighters frequently transition instantly from climate-controlled environments into extreme heat zones.

CASE AND POINT

A few years ago, a veteran firefighter was operating a vertical ventilation saw on the roof of a residential structure during a 94-degree afternoon. After 45 minutes of heavy labor in full turnout gear, he began descending the extension ladder when severe heat stress took hold. His vision tunneled, his coordination vanished, and his legs became unresponsive, leaving him frozen on the rungs. He was safely guided down by his crew before collapsing and being treated for severe dehydration and heat exhaustion. In this gear, failure often occurs before the individual even realizes they are struggling. Mandatory hydration rules could have prevented this incident.

IN-INCIDENT ELECTROLYTE BALANCING

For all active incidents lasting longer than one hour, incident commanders should enforce a 1:1 intake ratio of plain water to electrolyte-replenishing sports drinks. This protocol will help maintain plasma sodium concentrations and prevent hyponatremia, a life-threatening condition



caused by low sodium levels.

POST -INCIDENT RECOVERY PROTOCOLS

Department medical directors should instruct crews to monitor post-shift vitals and weight. Personnel should rehydrate with 16 to 24 ounces of fluid for every pound of water lost during exertion. Safety officers should verify compliance with these guidelines on all active scenes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dan Garland is a resident of the Pierre and Fort Pierre area, where he serves his community through three distinct roles focused on safety, readiness, and public service. He works professionally as a State Electrician, maintaining critical power infrastructure. Additionally, he serves as a volunteer firefighter with Engine One Company on the Pierre Volunteer Fire Department and as Secretary for the Fort Pierre Volunteer Fire Department. He is also enlisted in the National Guard, maintaining constant readiness for state emergencies and national defense.

Please note that the image with the firefighters is AI generated.



2026 SOUTH EAST DISTRICT FALL FIRE SCHOOL

October 17, 2026 | North Sioux City, SD

MORNING CLASSES:

Buttons, Bells, and Valves: Understanding Firefighter Systems – 3 HR

This interactive introductory course gives firefighters a practical, hands-on understanding of fire alarm systems, fire sprinkler components, and Phase I/Phase II elevator controls. Students will learn how these systems function on the fireground and will actively operate alarm panels, manipulate sprinkler system valves and components, and place an elevator into both Phase I recall and Phase II firefighter service. Designed for all experience levels, this engaging class strengthens foundational knowledge, improves situational awareness, and builds confidence in managing critical building systems during emergency operations

Chief Anthony Gaul, Sargent Bluff Fire Department

Lead the way for personal, Professional & Organizational change/ Training for failure 3 HR

Chief Doug Koopman, South Sioux Fire Department

Low water supply and Drafting Operations

Chief John Hoggard, North Sioux City Fire Department

AFTERNOON CLASSES:

Knock, Knock... We're coming In

Three hours, one mission stay safe!

Three hours of practical, hands-on training covering everything from selecting the right tools to controlling the door after entry- with a take-home door chock you make yourself.

Skills: Tools of the trade; Conventional Forcible Entry; Through-the-lock techniques; Door Control; Pulling ceilings

Build your own Door Chock to Take Home

Firefighter Rehab and Paramedic Madi North North Sioux City Fire Department

SCHEDULE

7:30 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

Registration North Sioux City Community Center
-- 205 Sodrac Drive, North Sioux City, SD

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

Opening Statements

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Classes

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Lunch and Vendors at Community Center

12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Business Meeting

1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Classes

There is no cost for registration. Meal tickets will be available at the registration desk.

Contact Person: Jim Christenson- North Sioux City Fire Department

nscfd@nscfd.org 605-232-4286 Station

Southeast District Board Members:

President: Paul Scherschligt – Lesterville, 605-661-4289

Vice President: Jayme Adrian – Harrisburg 605-759-4238

Treasure: Bob Mier – Dell Rapids, 605-370-3563

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Director: Brian Schmidt – Tea, 605-941-3430

Director: Aaron Mullinix– Beresford, 605-595-4230

SE State Director: Dave Jorgenson – Colton, 605-351-5051

Rapid City nonprofit receives \$25,000 grant to support veterans and first responders

A Rapid City nonprofit that provides service dogs to veterans and first responders has received a major funding boost. South Dakota Service Dogs was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the First Interstate BancSystem Foundation through its 7th annual Believe in Local grant campaign.

Founded in 2021, South Dakota Service Dogs provides specially trained service dogs at no cost to veterans and first responders living with posttraumatic stress disorder, trauma and operational stress. The organization also offers training, mentorship and ongoing support to each service dog team.

The organization was nominated for the award by Bailey Konst,

an associate commercial relationship manager at First Interstate Bank.

First Interstate launched the Believe in Local campaign in 2022 to support nonprofit organizations across the communities it serves. Each year, the foundation awards \$25,000 grants to 40 nonprofits throughout its 10-state service area, providing a total of \$1 million in annual charitable giving.

According to the bank, South Dakota Service Dogs was selected from more than 640 nominations because of its impact and alignment with the foundation's philanthropic priorities.

(KOTA-TV, ABC 7, Rapid City, SD, July 14, 2026)

U.S. Wildland Fire Service Takes Immediate Action to Reduce Wildfire Smoke Exposure for Wildland Firefighters

The U.S. Wildland Fire Service today announced immediate measures to reduce wildland firefighter exposure to smoke and other harmful contaminants. Developed by the [Federal Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program](#) – a joint effort between the Interior and Agriculture Departments – these protective measures include expanded use of N95 respirators for

the fireline and standardized decontamination practices. “Wildland firefighters defend our communities and landscapes. They deserve every protection we can provide them,” said U.S. Wildland Fire Service Chief Brian Fennesy. “These interim measures reflect our commitment to reducing occupational health risks through every available means while we

continue advancing longer-term solutions.” Wildland firefighters operate in extreme conditions with prolonged exposure to smoke, ash, and airborne particulates. While no respirator currently exists that is fully certified for wildland firefighting conditions, the U.S. Wildland Fire Service is implementing practical, science-informed protections that

can reduce exposure risks today. For the first time, federal wildland firefighters are authorized to use N95 respirators on the fireline following completion of formal training on their proper use in the wildland fire environment. Expanded use of N95s provides an immediate tool to reduce inhalation of airborne particulates that may contribute to adverse long-term health outcomes.

Exposure on the fireline is not limited to inhalation hazards. Contaminants can also remain on skin, clothing, and equipment after operational exposure. To address this, the U.S. Wildland Fire Service is integrating decontamination practices into daily operations and paying firefighters for time spent on decontamination. Standardized protocols include expanded access to showers, routine gear cleaning, and clean-air recovery periods as part of fire assignments to help reduce cumulative exposure over time.

These actions are informed by exposure data collected directly from wildland firefighters and reflect a broader federal effort to strengthen firefighter health and wellbeing. They represent an interim step toward reducing health risks while longer-term solutions continue to be developed, including a comprehensive respiratory protection program aligned with Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements.

Federal wildland firefighters protect millions of acres of public and tribal lands and safeguard communities. Protecting firefighter health through every available tool and science-informed process is operationally essential. Firefighters who are healthy, informed, and supported are better positioned to perform their duties effectively and safely. The U.S. Wildland Fire Service remains committed to advancing improved health protection measures across the wildland fire system.

https://www.doi.gov/wildland-fireservice/us-wildland-fire-service-takes-immediate-action-reduce-wildfire-smoke-exposure?fbclid=IwY2xjawSghnBleHRuA-2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFLZkhsV-VBUWmo1dVRlaUJDc3J0Y-wZhcHBfaWQQMjIyMDM-5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABH-jYp-sQYIsDMM-YmmzyN-FUz-31Nn4zBFiccsSwTAFm-j2SGz4waJsJFhAOBUc_aem_JYOSgHHCcrx8rOQisG9Z8A

Wildland firefighters spend long hours working in smoke, ash, dust and other contaminants while protecting our communities and public lands.

Today, the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, in coordination with the U.S. Forest Service, is expanding measures to help reduce those exposures.

For the first time, federal wildland firefighters are authorized to use N95 respirators on the fireline after completing training and decontamination practices are being integrated into daily operations.

These actions are part of a broader effort and long-term commitment to support firefighter health and wellbeing while full respiratory protection solutions continue to be developed.

At USWFS, the health and wellbeing of our wildland fire workforce is our top priority.

Learn more: <https://www.doi.gov/.../us-wildland-fire-service-takes...>



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Built on the proven “wireframe” SCBA backframe and pneumatics platform, the 3M™ Scott™ Air-Pak™ XD SCBA focuses on today’s firefighter who requires an extreme duty SCBA, while maintaining cleanability, comfort, and connectivity.

- ✓ **Integrated Drag Rescue Loop** provides a horizontal pull strength of 1,000 lbs. to assist with rescuing a downed firefighter.
- ✓ **Low-profile SCBA** designed to help minimize snag points when working in tight spaces.
- ✓ **Redundant Safety Features** including the dual-redundant pressure reducer are designed to help the SCBA perform, while also providing firefighter peace of mind.
- ✓ **“Buddy” Lights** help enable a 360° view of the firefighter’s air pressure and PASS status.



Contact Feld Fire for a demo of the new 3M Scott Air-Pak XD!

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Tactical Agility for Solar Panel Fire Suppression

By JERRY KNAPP

You are dispatched to a working house fire. As you approach the scene you see the column of black smoke. Life safety is our job so you are thinking about search and rescue as a priority. Getting that first line in operation quickly is always, always a priority to protect searchers and give trapped occupants the best chance of survival. You think back to all the drills you did stretching then repacking making sure you and your crew can do this efficiently with a simple hose load that will deliver decisive amounts of water to the seat of the fire.

As you arrive on scene what surprises you is that the house and contents is not burning but the solar panels on the roof are burning furiously. You stretch your attack line and realize, ummm....a solid bore nozzle and 600 volts of direct current are something you don't want to mix. But....If you don't do something soon the attic will be on fire. If it gets in the attic, what the attic fire does not damage the water damage you will do will be very expensive for the homeowner.

We know solar panels aka photo voltaic systems are in wide-

spread use. Residential systems can be up to 600volts DC, clearly enough to kill us. We also know DC current causes our muscles to contract so if we contact the high voltage causing the current to continue to flow thru us. Wires running from the roof panels to the storage system or cut over panels are energized as long as there is light on the panels.

Many solar systems have battery storage systems in the garage or basement which if they get damaged can go into thermal runaway. But right now your priority is the fire on the roof.

I was faced with this situation and for a few moments, well many moments really, I was without a good tactic. Standing in the driveway with a solid charged 1 3/4" line with a 15/16th smooth bore, looking up at the roof I saw the burning panels looked much worse than it really was. The panels were raised off the roof by a few inches and despite the heavy black smoke and widespread flames, there is not much mass to burn on a solar panel. The roof shingles were not showing signs of being pyrolyzed by the heat, not melting and seemed to be a decent fire barrier and the fire was all above it.

Reports from inside indicated no extension into the attic and the chief had ordered the system isolated using the breaker and cut over panels. What to do....Think Tactical agility.

It seemed on this bright sunny day if it rained it would extinguish the fire for us. I considered a rain dance but did not know the steps and needed to extinguish the fire sooner rather than later. So I made it rain. Pointing the nozzle up and toward the roof and burning panels I discharged water in short bursts so it rained down. Short bursts broke up the solid stream to insure I did not make a continuous path for electricity to follow back to me and ruin my day. After a couple of bursts the limited amount of fuel in the panels was extinguished. The large drops of water that came down on the flat panels spread out quickly extinguishing the fire. 180 gpm nozzle flows 3 gallons a second so a few 3 second bursts (9 gallons/burst) knocked the fire down quickly and permanently.

New technology provides new challenges. We must use our tactical agility to overcome today and tomorrow's fire suppression needs.



Benefits of being a 100% Department Member

When you pay your department dues, there are many advantages for your firefighters. Below is just one of the many.

INSURANCE

100% Membership provides the following:

- Basic \$10,000 of Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) insurance — 24 hrs/day
- Purchase up to \$250,000 additional AD&D
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Castlewood training

On July 15, the Castlewood Fire Department conducted water supply operations in town practicing multi-tank jet siphoning, coordination between hydrant and fire ground operations, floating pump operations and calculating flow rates at their pumper truck. This all goes into maintaining a ready fire department for structure related fires as well as goes into sustaining a proficient ISO rating for the city.

Ricochet and NVFC to Award EMS, Wildland, and Technical Rescue PPE to Volunteer Fire Departments

Ricochet is partnering with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) to donate high-quality personal protective equipment (PPE) to volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue departments across the U.S. through the Ricochet PPE Award Program.

Having the right PPE for the right response is critical to the safety and effectiveness of emergency responders. Yet many volunteer departments struggle to find funding for EMS, wildland, and techni-

cal rescue gear. Ricochet and the NVFC are working to address this need by providing departments with gear packages designed for these specific responses.

The program includes three distinct application periods in August, September, and October. Five departments will be awarded five sets of gear (jacket and pants) after each application period, for a total of 15 departments and 75 sets of gear provided. The gear pack-

ages and application periods are as follows:

- **AUGUST 3 TO AUGUST 31** at noon ET – Ricochet Out Front™ Technical Rescue Gear
- **SEPTEMBER 1 TO SEPTEMBER 30** at noon ET – Ricochet Wildland Gear
- **OCTOBER 1 TO OCTOBER 30** at noon ET – Ricochet Wildland + Technical Rescue Dual-Cert Gear

To be eligible, departments must annually respond to the type of calls corresponding to the gear they are applying for, have at least one NVFC member, be over 50 percent volunteer, serve a population of 25,000 or less, be located in the U.S. and legally organized under state law, and demonstrate a need for the gear. Departments can apply for any or all of the gear packages based on their operational needs; applying for one does not make you ineligible to apply for another.

“Too many volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue departments send their responders on calls wearing the wrong type of gear due to limited budgets and resources,” said NVFC Chair Steve Hirsch. “The Ricochet PPE Award Program will equip more volunteer responders with the right gear for the call, improving safety, effectiveness, and readiness. We thank Ricochet for their support of the volunteer emergency services and for helping our nation’s departments be ready for all types of calls.”

“Volunteer departments don’t have the luxury of wasted gear, wasted time, or wasted budget – and we don’t take that lightly,” said Laura Miller, Director of Marketing and Customer Service at Ricochet. “We’re proud to build systems based on real firefighter input – gear designed for how the job actually gets done today, not how it used to be. The result is purpose-built protection that helps limit unnecessary exposure, improve mobility, extend the life of your turnout gear, and stretch every dollar further.”

Learn more about the program and the gear specifications at www.nvfc.org/ricochet. The first application period starts on August 3. Find tips for submitting a strong grant application in this video. Learn more about the importance

of having the right gear for the right response in this NVFC webinar sponsored by Ricochet.

ABOUT RICOCHET

At Ricochet, we know what volunteer firefighters face – tough calls, tight budgets, and the constant pressure to protect their communities. That’s why every set of gear we build is designed with real firefighter input – so it performs when lives depend on it, without unnecessary cost or complexity. From structural and wildland to technical rescue and EMS, our NFPA-compliant PPE is crafted with pride in Philadelphia and built to last. Making the switch to non-PFAS gear? We make it easy – same protection, durability, and comfort, plus clear guidance and grant-friendly options – because your health matters as much as your safety. Volunteers choose Ricochet for trusted protection, budget-smart solutions, and gear that stands up to years of service. Because making it home matters most. Learn more or contact us at RicochetGear.com or call 215-849-1971.

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.

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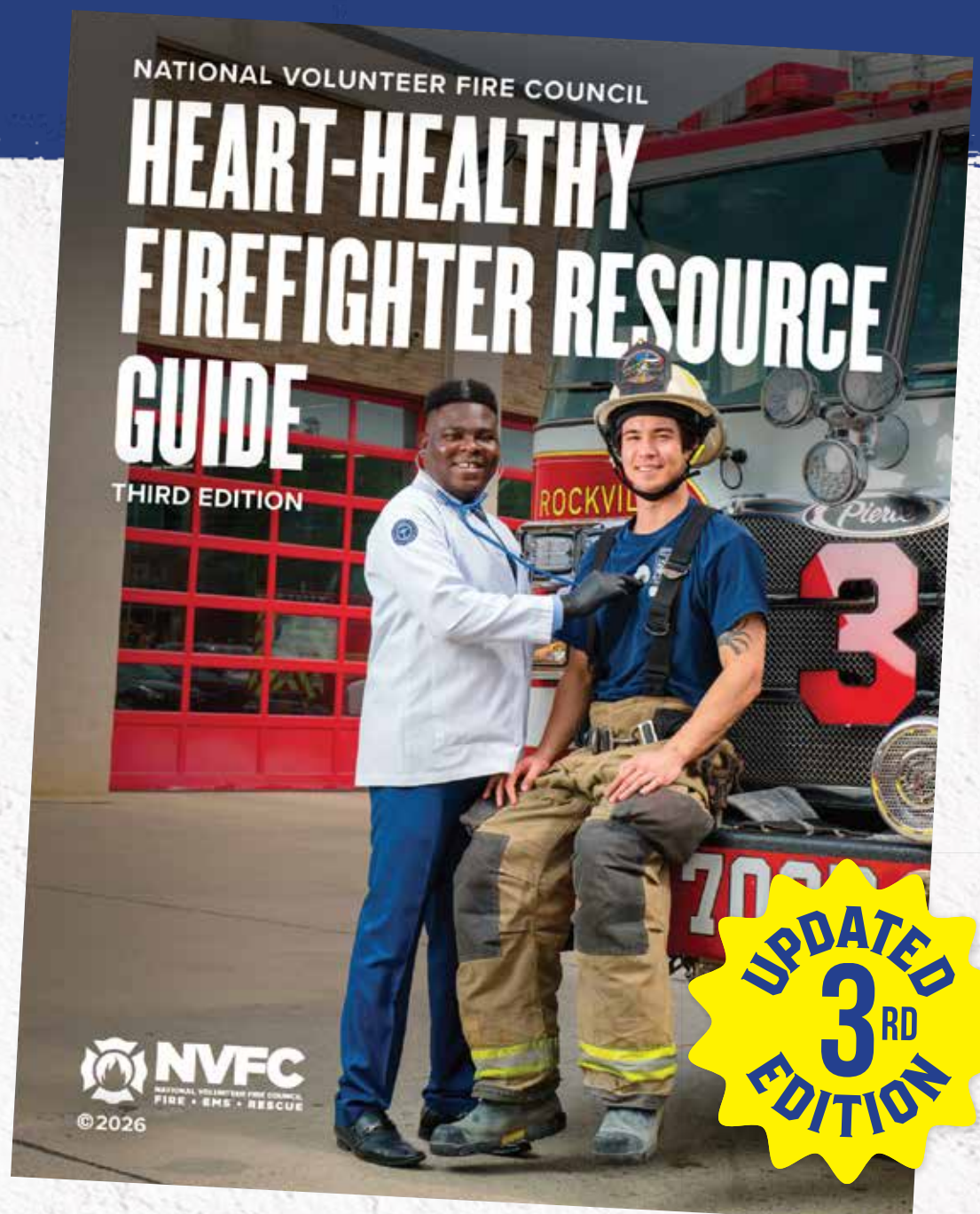
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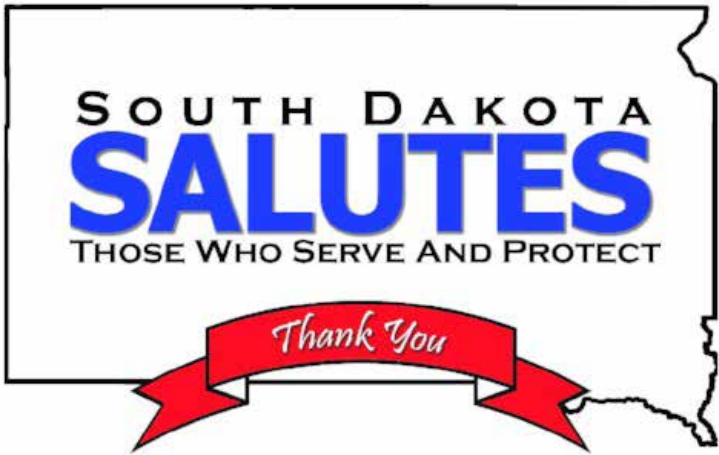
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Ladies and Gentlemen of SD Salutes,

As volunteer organizations, we truly understand the necessity of prioritizing time, efforts, and finances.

I have no doubt, this was a difficult decision to make.

The intent of showing the appreciation and gratitude to the fire, ambulance, law enforcement, and military personnel for their service to our communities and country was absolutely heartwarming.

Like many adaptations to emergency services, it takes a tragedy to bring about motivation and change. Salutes was one of those positive evolutions.

The Loss of Life and Special Needs funds have proven to be

valuable and very useful programs.

Assisting the small departments with gear and equipment purchases will likely help someone else at an incident.

It has been proven on several occasions, presenting an immediate financial gift to the families after a loss of life helps relieve some of the immediate burden to the unfortunate circumstance.

The generosity of the sponsors and donations to provide for the opportunities often goes unseen by the recipients. I hope those benefactors who have been gracious donors have seen the valuable use and emotional need by others from their support of SD Salutes.

On behalf of the South Dakota



Firefighters Association, Thank You for what you have done, and will continue to do, especially for the volunteer agencies, in our wonderful state.

Respectfully,

CHARLIE KLUDT
President
South Dakota
Firefighters Association
Viborg Volunteer
Fire Department



Spearfish crews called to rescue hiker

On July 14 at approximately 1:45 p.m., Spearfish Fire was requested to assist Spearfish Ambulance service with transporting a patient down the 11th Hour Gulch trail in Spearfish Canyon. The patient was experiencing medical issues. Crews packaged the patient in a stokes basket and carried them back to the roadway to be evaluated by EMS. Though these trails provide incredible experiences and amazing views, they can be challenging to even experienced hikers. Use caution when hiking and be prepared with extra water and supplies, especially during the times of elevated temperatures. From the Spearfish Fire Department Facebook page.

**ACTION
FIRE
PHOTOS
NEEDED!**

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

Rescue in Custer State Park.

Custer County Search and Rescue was paged at 12:09 p.m. on July 17, from a 911 text message originating near Sylvan Lake in Custer State Park. The brief message came in for a person having breathing difficulty with a possible stroke, on the Sunday Gulch Trail behind the lake. Not long afterward other 911 calls came in stating someone had fainted on the trail, and that someone was having dehydration issues on the trail. It wasn't clear if there was just one or perhaps more people in distress.

Responders arriving on scene interviewed other hikers and soon found the one patient (there were no others as it turned out) about 1/2 mile down the steepest section of the Sunday Gulch Trail. Paramedics treated them and packaged them into our litter basket. We deployed the wheel under the litter and began the arduous task of moving them to the ambulance. We decided to continue down to the lower end of Sunday Gulch loop (where there is an exit from the trail to an ambulance-accessible Forest Service road — we've done this before) rather than taking the patient back up the steeper trail to the lake. We still had challenges ahead but at least it would be mostly downhill to the ambulance.

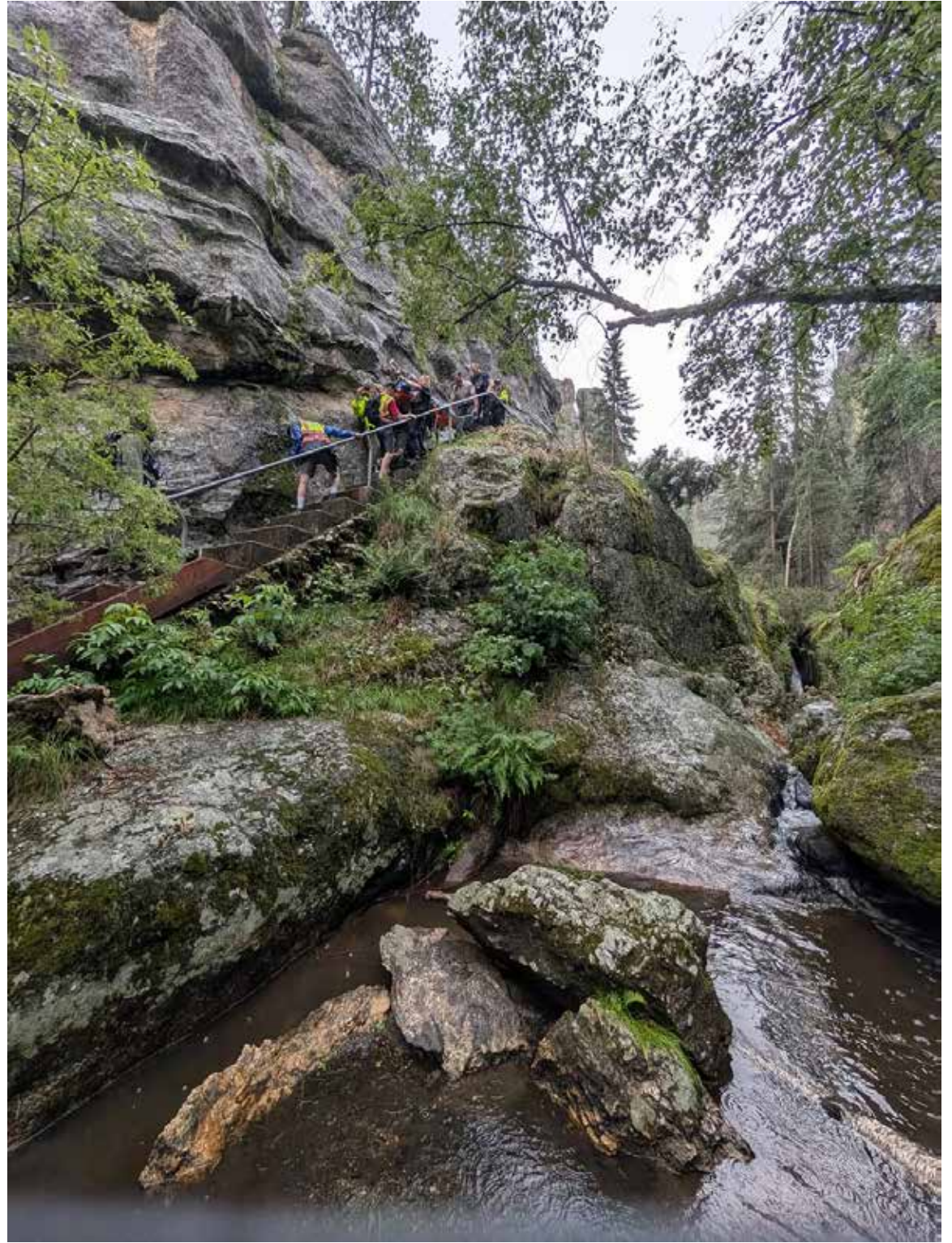
A thunderstorm rolled in about the time we started moving the patient. We kept the patient dry in a "cocoon" we typically use to keep patients warm during transport. Those who had rain gear put it on, those who did not got a cooling shower on the way out of Sunday Gulch (around 1/2 inch rain in the area today, yay!)

Pools of water, slippery wet boulders, tree roots and the generally rough trail made us grateful we had a lot of help with this carry out. In addition to our crew and Custer Ambulance Service, we had help from the Custer County Sheriff and Custer State Park conservation officers. We were further reinforced by several of our friends from Custer Volunteer Fire Department. Having more than a dozen people available, we could rotate carrying duty to relieve fatigue and let some responders move ahead to scout the trail and prepare for the larger obstacles.

We all reached the ambulance safely and the patient was transported to the hospital in Custer. We had also encountered a family with youngsters on the trail who we gave a ride back to Sylvan Lake to save them from a long hike in the rain.

It appears that dehydration and possible underlying issues were the cause of this call. No judgment from here, but its another good time to remind everyone if you're hiking and temperatures are hitting the 90s every day, it's not a bad idea to carry twice as much fluid/snacks as you think you'll need, for every member of your group. Then use them, whether you're heading for the summit of Black Elk Peak or the depths of Sunday Gulch.

We also want to especially thank the staff at Custer County Communications Dispatch. The dispatchers you speak to when you call 911 then talk with us via radio when that's possible (Sunday Gulch has notoriously poor "comms" due to obstacles). With grace and understanding they always handle our scratchy, noisy communications and our requests for information or additional resources. From the Custer County Search and Rescue Facebook page.





Crews called to Deadwood structure fire

On Saturday, July 18, at approximately 6:23 a.m. Deadwood Fire Rescue was paged to an address just outside of Deadwood on US Hwy 14A. First arriving units found a fully involved structure fire with grass surrounding the structure also on fire. Officers immediately requested the assistance of Lead Fire Dept and Spearfish Fire Department and requested assistance from South Dakota Wildland Fire due to the proximity of a significant hay field, approximately 15 feet away. Crews fought the fire for about two hours and returned to quarters. At approximately 10:16 a.m. Deadwood Fire Rescue was again paged to the same address for a rekindled fire that was again fully involved. First arriving units found a fully involved structure fire. Deadwood Hawk 1 initiated an attack with the bumper mounted turret, until Engine 1 arrived on scene. Due to water supply issues, Lead Fire's assistance was again requested for a tender and manpower. Firefighters again entered the structure and fought the fire for an additional two hours pulling walls and ceiling to expose any fire. This fire was particularly tough to fight due to sawdust being used in the interior walls as insulation. There were no injuries to civilians, animals, or firefighters. Responding agencies: Lead Fire Department, Spearfish Fire Department, SD Wildland Fire - Lead Office, Lawrence County Sheriff's Office, Lead Deadwood Ambulance, Lawrence County Emergency Management and Black Hills Energy.



Tea training night

Last month's training was a fun one! It consisted of hose deployment and repacking of hose deployments. With special focus on first arrival to a scene and how hoses should be deployed. The arrival time onto a scene is a very important time. There are lots of things that need to be done when arriving onto a scene. From the initial size up, to figuring out how water will be supplied and how the fire will be fought. This training is one that we are always happy to practice! Pictured are Tea Volunteer Fire Department members along with Tea Fire Cadets.



Watertown Fire Rescue responds to vehicle fire

On Tuesday, July 7, at approximately 10:50 p.m., Watertown Fire Rescue responded to a report of a vehicle fire threatening a nearby detached garage in the 300 block of 4th Street NW. Upon arrival, crews found a late-model Ford pickup fully engulfed in flames, with heavy fire showing from both the passenger compartment and engine compartment. The vehicle was parked approximately eight feet from a four-stall detached garage, creating an immediate exposure hazard. Firefighters initiated an aggressive fire attack and were able to bring the fire under control and extinguish it within approximately three minutes of arrival. Crews then checked the nearby garage for fire extension and determined that damage was minimal, limited to some warped weather stripping around the garage door. The cause of the fire remains under investigation.



Fire called into Hot Springs District

A structure fire was reported to the Fall River County dispatch at 8:42 a.m. on July 6. Original report of fire to dispatch was made by several 9-1-1 callers in cars passing by on US Highway 18. The fire was located at Jalapeños Grill, 1648 US Highway 18. This is in the Hot Springs Fire District. The structure was a restaurant. The fire began before business hours. Upon arrival the Hot Springs Fire Department found heavy smoke showing from the eaves of the building. The Hot Springs Police Department was evacuating the two individuals who were in the building. The Hot Springs Fire Department had requested mutual aid from the VA Fire Department while in route and upon arrival requested additional mutual aid from the Custer Fire Department. Later crews from Edgemont and Cascade Volunteer Fire Departments were also paged and came to assist. Around 10:30 a.m. US Highway 18 in the vicinity to Jalapeño's Grill was closed due to traffic congestion. Traffic was redirected through town to University Avenue. Fire crews were fighting the fire inside the building when a sag in the exterior roof line was noticed. Crews were evacuated from the interior of the building. No one was in the building when the roof collapsed. Crews continued to fight the fire from the exterior of the building. This included fighting several hot spots in the kitchen through the hole in the roof using the ladder truck. There were no injuries reported. The owners of the property are listed as Phil and Vicky Wetzel. Firefighters from the VA, Custer Fire Department, Edgemont Fire Department and Cascade Fire Department assisted in the fire suppression. Officers from the Hot Springs Police Department, Fall River County Sheriff's Office, and State Highway Patrol assisted in traffic control. The State Fire Marshal's office was on scene. Fire investigation is ongoing.



Multiple crews called to Piedmont fire

Around 2:30 p.m. on July 15 Piedmont Fire Department was dispatched to possible structure fire on the 8000 Block of Stagestop Road in Summerset, SD. First arriving units found fire free burning in the enclosed canopy of the single-story commercial structure. With the size of the building and the current heat of reaching 100 degrees, a second alarm was requested early in the incident for manpower. The fire was confined to the original structure and there was fire extension into attic space of a few of the office spaces. With great mutual aid support, we were able to keep the building salvageable for the businesses to save property items within but the building itself, due to the fire damage and firefighting operations to suppress the fire, the building is unoccupiable for the residing businesses for an undisclosed amount of time. All occupants within the building during the incident, safely exited and no civilian injuries were reported. Two firefighters were treated and released on site for heat related injuries. Currently, the cause is under investigation by the South Dakota State Fire Marshall's Office. Response from assisting agencies: Piedmont Emergency Medical Services, Black Hawk Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department, North Haines Fire Department, Sturgis Fire Department, Box Elder Fire Department, Rapid Valley Fire Department, Ellsworth Air Force Fire Department, Whispering Pines Fire Department, Doty Fire Department, Johnson Siding Fire Department, South Dakota State Fire Marshall's Office, Pennington County Fire Coordinator, Meade County Sheriff's Office, Summerset Police Department and Black Hills Power and Light. Photos courtesy of Piedmont EMS personnel. From the Piedmont Fire Department Facebook page.



Custer firefighters respond to two lightning related building incidents after storm

The Custer Volunteer Fire Department said it responded to two lightning-related incidents after a storm moved through the area earlier this week, causing damage to two buildings about three blocks apart.

Crews were sent out within min-

utes of each other after reports of smoke inside buildings and activated fire alarms. At one location, firefighters found significant interior damage but no visible exterior damage. At the second, they found exterior damage and minor damage inside. Both incidents in-

involved bathroom vent fans, and both buildings had nearby trees.

Firefighters used thermal imaging cameras to check for hidden hot spots, noting that lightning strikes can require walls and ceilings to be opened to ensure no fire is smoldering inside.

Two residents were displaced, and the department's fire chaplain helped arrange a hotel room for the night.

The department also thanked the Custer County Sheriff's Office, Custer Ambulance Service, and the Hot Springs, Pringle and Hill

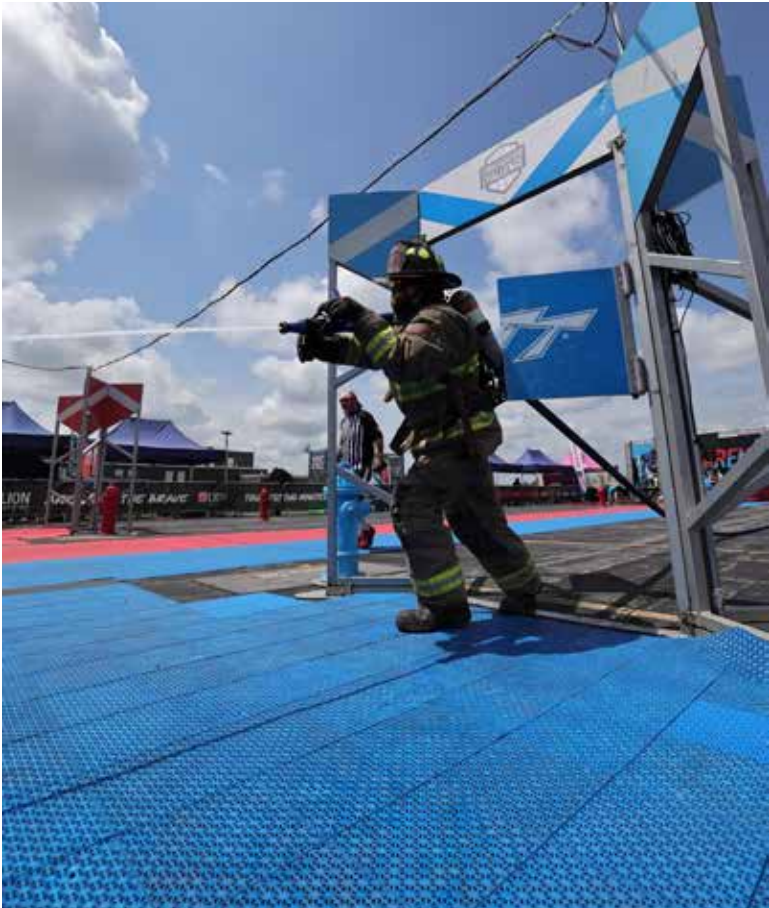
City volunteer fire departments for their mutual aid during the response. Officials are reminding residents to stay weather aware as summer storms continue.

(By Tamara Chibe, KOTA, Rapid City, SD, July 10, 2026)



Hudson Fire Department members compete in Firefighter Combat Challenge

On July 10, 2026, Hudson Fire Department Members: Mat Frazier, Brenden Lounsbery, and Mike Lounsbery travelled to Valparaiso, IN and competed in the 2026 Firefighter Combat Challenge Championship Series in the Midwest Region Classic. These three individuals competed in the Relay Division, where they competed against 7 other teams. They learned about themselves, especially when they felt like quitting, they kept pushing themselves and each other to not quit and finished both races they ran in. They also met other firefighters around the US. While these individuals were out there they also did sightseeing and visited Task Force Tips in Valparaiso, IN. And quoting Mary Lou Retton "A trophy carries dust. Memories last forever." There three individuals made memories that will last a lifetime.



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