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MAY 2025 • VOL. 18 - NO. 3

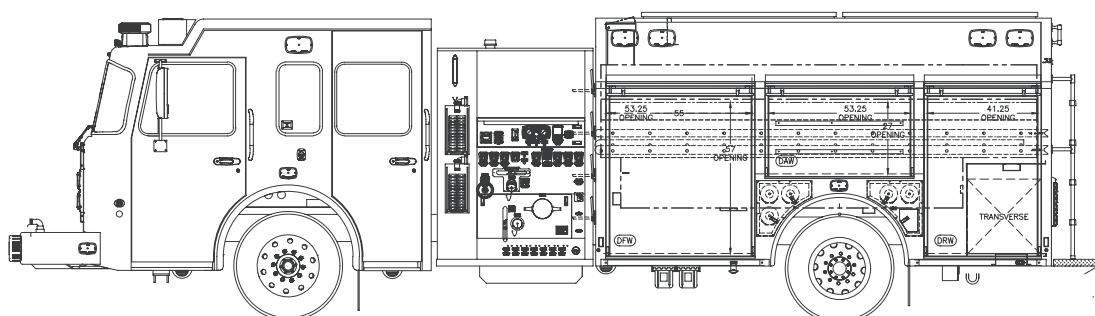
REACHING MORE THAN **6,900** SOUTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTERS EACH MONTH



Great turnout for the Central District Fire School in Woonsocket on Saturday, April 12. More than 60 first responders from 20 departments and two ambulance associations were in attendance.



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What started as a grass fire on March 30 spread and damaged or destroyed about 40 vehicles at Meyer's Auto northeast of Aberdeen.



Rochford service awards

At the Rochford Volunteer Fire Department Winter Social, the department and the Pennington County Fire Service recognized three firefighters who combined have a total of 95 years of service. Dan Harn, Fire Chief, retired on January 1 with 40 years of service. From left to right: Captain Ed Hague, 25 years; Fire Chief (Retired) Dan Harn, 40 years; and firefighter Dean Robertson, 30 years. Photo courtesy of the Pennington County Fire Service.

ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!
Please send them to jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com along with information to explain the photo.

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About 40 salvage lot vehicles damaged, destroyed by Sunday fire in dry conditions

By SHANNON MARVEL,
Aberdeen Insider

About 40 vehicles used for replacement parts were destroyed or damaged on Sunday, March 30 as the result of what started as a grass fire.

The fire was reported around 5 p.m. near the intersection of 128th Street and 390th Avenue. That's roughly a half-mile west and a mile north of the Prairiewood subdivision on the edge of Aberdeen.

Columbia Fire Chief Corey Mitchell said the fire was likely started by a discarded cigarette or sparks from a vehicle driving on the gravel road.

Flames eventually spread to Meyers Auto, where they damaged the vehicles, he said.

The Aberdeen Rural and Groton fire departments also responded. It didn't take long to knock down the flames, and, thanks to the quick response and mutual aid, firefighters were back to their stations within two hours, Mitchell said.

Meyers Auto allowed firefighters to tap the business' water supply to fight the fire.

That the fire even started is an indication of how dry conditions have been in Brown County, Mitchell said.

"I couldn't hardly believe we had a grass fire just after it snowed. It shows how little precipitation we've had," he said.

The Aberdeen area had 0.26 inch of moisture in the form of rain, sleet and snow, mostly the evening and night of Saturday, March 29 with some in the wee hours of Sunday, according to the National Weather Service in Aberdeen. The wind was blowing roughly 15 mph Sunday evening.

Mitchell said there have been fires reported every two or three days for the last month or so.

Recent moisture should help decrease the number of fires, at least for a while, as snow, sleet and rain started Tuesday, April 1 and continued into Wednesday, April 2.

Aberdeen received 3.1 inches of wet, slushy snow on Tuesday. That and the rain amounted to 0.56 inch of moisture. Another 0.11 inch of moisture had fallen as of 8:53 a.m. Wednesday, according to the National Weather Service office in Aberdeen, and snow was expected to continue much of the day.

There was a 40% chance of rain on Friday, April 4 as of the Wednesday morning NWS forecast.



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Wasta Volunteer Fire Department celebrates new station

By PER LUNDQUIST,
News Center One

The Wasta Volunteer Fire Department held its regular steak feed at chicken bingo as the grand opening of the new facility.

The Wasta Volunteer Fire Department celebrated the grand opening of its new fire station Sunday evening, marking a significant upgrade for the department and the community it serves.

The event coincided with one of the department's many steak feed and chicken bingo events, helping both fundraise for the department and give back to the community.

The project received widespread support, including a \$500,000 donation from the Pennington County Board of Commissioners, grants, and many donations from the surrounding communities.

"The whole department has just been incredible with the building committee coming up with the plan for this type of building," said Chief Kyle Schell of the Wasta Volunteer Fire Department.

"It's just amazing the volunteers that I have in this department that have helped make this thing a reality."

Among those attending the grand opening were deputies from

the Pennington County Sheriff's Office, including Sheriff Brian Muller and Firefighters from the Pennington County Fire Service.

The presence of these neighboring agencies showcases the support the Wasta Volunteer Fire Department has throughout the region.

Amelia Harvey, a daughter of a firefighter, emphasized the importance of the event for the community.

"This is a very important event here in Wasta," Harvey said, "You know, we're here to help the people. We're here to show people who are not very connected to the fire world what it means to be a part of it."

You can help them help you by coming to these events, donating if you can, just even speaking to these people might help them make their day."

The Wasta Volunteer Fire Department is responsible for covering a ten-mile stretch surrounding the town, extending from mile marker 90 to 103 on Interstate 90, and ten miles north and south on either side of the interstate.

With the new facility now operational, Chief Schell has said that he hopes it will attract more volunteers to the department, ensuring its continued service to the community.



North Marshall Fire Department Stays Busy

The North Marshall Fire Department has been active in recent weeks, responding to multiple fires due to dry and windy conditions. On March 11, firefighters spent three hours battling a tractor fire west of Britton that spread to nearby cornstalks. On March 12, a burn pit ember ignited tall grass east of the golf course, resulting in a small grass fire that took an hour to contain. Then, on March 14, a rapidly growing grass fire southeast of Britton kept crews on the scene for three hours, requiring them to cut down trees to prevent further spread.

Officials urge residents to be cautious on windy days and ensure all fires are fully extinguished. NMFD will also be hosting the Northeast District

Fire School on March 29. Look for a future story about that.

(*Marshall County Journal, Britton, Mar. 19, 2025*)

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

JUNE 8-10, 2025: 2025 South Dakota Highway Patrol Association Fishing Tournament, Headquarters - Izaak Walton League, 1200 Izaak Walton Road, Pierre. Contact Rob Mayer 770-1940 or Austin Schmitz 830-6682 for details.

JUNE 12-14, 2025: South Dakota State Fire School, Watertown.

SEPT. 22-24, 2025: NVFC Fall Conference and Meeting, Rapid City.

OCT. 10-12, 2025: South Dakota Firefighters Association Fall Conference, Spearfish Convention Center, Spearfish.

ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

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

U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notification

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

• **LORI A BOELKES**, 56, Warrens, WI, died Feb. 27, 2025. Lori A. Boelkes was a paid-on-call firefighter with the Warrens Area Fire District and had attained 11 years of service. Firefighter Lori Boelkes responded to a motor vehicle crash on Feb. 14, 2025, at 1:36 p.m. as the driver of Tender 1. Firefighter Boelkes cleared the scene at 1:47 p.m. and returned to the station. While driving home from the station, Firefighter Boelkes became ill. Her husband took her to Tomah Hospital where it was determined she had a stroke. Firefighter Boelkes was transferred to Marshfield Medical Center where she passed away on Feb. 27, 2025.

• **CHEVY GALL**, 16, Beaufort, MO, died Apr. 4, 2025. Chevy was a volunteer firefighter with less than one year of service with the Beaufort-Leslie Fire Protection District. On Apr. 4, 2025, Firefighter Chevy Gall was involved in a motor vehicle crash while responding to a reported water rescue in his personal vehicle. Firefighter Gall sustained critical injuries and was transported to Mercy Washington Hospital where he was pronounced deceased.

• **GARRY G. MOORE**, 68, Whitewater, MO, died Apr. 2, 2025. Garry G. Moore was a volunteer firefighter with 30 years of service with the Whitewater Fire Protection District and the current fire chief. On Apr. 2, 2025, Fire Chief Garry Moore responded to widespread tornado damage around Delta, MO. A short time later, Fire Chief Moore was found unconscious at the scene and later passed away.

• **JOHN ROBINSON**, 53, Lafayette, IN, died Apr. 14, 2025. John was a career firefighter with 29 years of service with the Lafayette Fire Department and had attained the rank of Sergeant. On Apr. 14, 2025, Sergeant John Robinson was found unresponsive while on duty at Lafayette Fire Department Station 9 and passed away. The cause of death has not yet been determined.

• **PAUL CHARLES MICKOLICK**, 43, West Salem, OH, died Apr. 19, 2025. Paul was a career firefighter with five years of service with the Town and Country Fire District and was currently ranked at lieutenant. Lieutenant Paul Mickolick responded to an emergency call of a vehicle accident. When he got to the scene, Lieutenant Mickolick discovered a pickup truck that was stuck in a ditch. After radioing other emergency responders to notify them what he found at the scene and slow their response, Lieutenant Mickolick began to assist the driver of the pickup truck.

A short time later, another vehicle drove off the right side of the roadway and into the ditch striking both Lieutenant Mickolick and the driver of the pickup truck. Other emergency responders got to the scene and initiated CPR. Lieutenant Mickolick was then transported to a local hospital where, despite all efforts, was pronounced deceased. The driver of the pickup truck was flown by helicopter to another hospital with serious injuries.

SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

There is little more upsetting term in the English vocabulary than the word suicide! Mention that in polite company, and you can almost hear the silence. Mention that to first responders and the silence is deafening. However, you know me, I am the kind of guy who rushes in where angels fear to tread, so this month, let's talk about the unmentionable, the suicide of first responders. Let me set the agenda for this month with this quote: "Suicide is death by just another name, but the implications and stigma that surround it's mystery and aftermath are strong enough to touch every facet of our lives and of society." (Wolfet, Understanding Your Suicide Grief.) That comes from a man who has written numerous books on grief and loss, and if this event rocks everyone, it has even a more powerful effect in the first responder world.

"The historic response by organizations after a suicide was to sweep it under the rug or ignore the elephant in the room...This is no surprise. Suicide is complex and misunderstood, and only in recent years has suicide research received appropriate funding to increase understanding. However, suicide is a leading cause of death and we must have the courage to be prepared to assist loved ones left behind while ensuring we communicate helpfully." (Dena Ali, Firefighter Nation, 12-12-24.) Dena, is a long term first responder who has moved to the "dark side" of mental health, in an effort to help other responders. Dena's recommendation, which will be condensed here is not to sweep suicide under the rug, rather it is time for responders to acknowledge this in ways that allow those who survive to not only develop healthy responses, but become more attuned to the needs and fears of those around us. When done right, "Postvention", talking about someone who suicided, becomes preventative, and



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"Get comfortable just sitting and being with people. You don't always have to do something or talk. Sometimes we just need to know there is someone there."

• Just show up. Some of the best helpers are the people who just show up. They didn't ask. They just came

helps survivors recognize more signs and symptoms in those around us.

The first step, after a suicide, is to verify the information. Whenever someone dies unexpectedly, rumors begin. You need to work to dispel that rumor "mill" and provide accurate, factual information, particularly to your department. The second step follows closely on the first and that is provide factual information. When giving this information, follow existing death notification procedures. "Avoid discussion on the method used and provide a written statement. The written statement should include factual information about the death and language that acknowledges it was a death by suicide. Express condolences to family and friends, detail plans to provide support, provide information about funeral arrangements, and share contact information for a media spokesperson." (Dena, Firefighter Nation).

I have to add use caution when talking with the media. It is well known (at least among those of us who study this kind of thing) that using sensational or romanticized description of suicide deaths can lead to a situation where one suicide leads to another, and so on. Follow the "Sargent Friday" approach, "Just the facts Mam, just the facts." This is why resource sharing and normalizing a path from struggle to hope are important after a suicide. If the media shares any information, it should overemphasize available resources.

One challenge for agency leadership is when the decedent's loved one asks that the death not be disclosed as a suicide. This common request stems from fear of the historical stigmatization of suicide. The challenge we face in small rural departments and communities is that the word is already out, and if the department then tries to hid that fact, it can have a negative impact, with the potential for discouraging other struggling members from seeking help. Let me take a minute to try and update you on current religious thinking on this. Keep in mind, I am not speaking for every group out there, but it is generally acknowledged today that suicide is the result of despair or depression and if the person were thinking clearly, they would not have chosen to die by suicide. My advice, and common words to survivors of when they ask: "Where is my

loved one, heaven or hell?" I commonly respond, "At times like this we have to depend on the grace of God, as I cannot say for sure." Am I dodging the question, not being honest? No, mainly because I am not God, and I cannot speak for the divine. What I am left with many times is more questions than I have answers, and in complete disclosure, this is not just a theological question for me, but one that is intensely personal.

While I have said you need to name the death as suicide, that does not mean you have to give graphic details, or attribute the death to PTSD, divorce, stress, or whatever. Doing that you can give others the idea that suicide is the only option. At the same time, ensure you assign a family liaison to work with the family. Talk among the department in formal and informal ways. If you don't know what to do for the family, don't be afraid to ask!

Finally, ensure the deceased is memorialized as you would for other causes of death. Make sure that the focus is on the firefighter's life, not their death. What is important is the life lived not how the person died.

Before I close, some quick do's and don'ts when dealing with death by suicide:

DON'T

• Tell people it is God's plan, or that everything happens for a reason.

• Try to assign blame.

• Spread rumors.

• Let politics influence the services. These conflicts only hurt those who are grieving.

• Forget all those impacted.

• Expect people to grieve like you do. Everyone experiences grieves differently.

DO

• Be careful assigning a friend as the family liaison. They might volunteer to help, but are also grieving and need care.

• Stop rumors as you hear them.

• Get comfortable just sitting and being with people. You don't always have to do something or talk. Sometimes we just need to know there is someone there.

• Just show up. Some of the best helpers are the people who just show up. They didn't ask. They just came by.

As always, there is more to be said, but I hope this opens the door to talking about what is often seen as unmentionable!

CHAPLAIN RODNEY

SAVE THE DATE!

2025 FIRE SCHOOL

June 12- 14 • Watertown

DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

Michial Brodkorb

1953-2025

Michial Brodkorb, age 51, of Wessington Springs, died Thursday, March 27, 2025, at his residence. Memorial services were held April 5, 2025, at the Wessington Springs School Gymnasium.

Michial Lynn Brodkorb was born on May 19, 1973, in Wessington Springs, SD, to Jim and Darleen Brodkorb. From the start, he kept his family on their toes by being the annoying little brother to Jimmy who loved pick fights and follow him around. Help shove Tammie into anything that looks like it could fit a sister. Or take on an adventure by making a raft with Darrick to try and win the river races. A brother and son who was always there for anything. He always made sure to have a drink and sit on the deck with his mom and dad to talk about their day.

A true jack-of-all-trades, Michial could do anything. If he didn't know how, he'd figure it out. He was the hardest-working man you'd ever meet, always willing to give the shirt off his back without expecting anything in return. He took immense pride in his work, especially in his recent years as the "Hunting Lodge Guy," building lodges

across the area. But his greatest achievement was being a dad to his two daughters, Sheyanne and Sierra. He was their biggest supporter—there for every game, every heartbreak, every move, and every home project. His love and pride for his girls were immeasurable.

Michial lived life to the fullest, never let a bad mood take over, and always grabbed life by the horns. He knew how to mix a good drink, cook a mean breakfast, and bring people together. His advice always came with a smart remark, a joke, or a well-timed laugh, and he had an uncanny ability to push just the right buttons before flashing a smile to make everything better.

Michial was always just a phone call away, no matter what he was doing—standing on a roof, moving snow, or fixing something for someone else. He never missed a chance to show his love and pride for those

around him, always proving it in the end—sometimes with just the right words, sometimes with an extra comma or two.

Michial spent this last year happy, enjoying life with Tiffany Knipfer and Fuzzy Britches, Shakira.

He is survived by his parents, Jim and Darleen Brodkorb; his

daughters, Sheyanne (Miles) Brodkorb-Johnson and Sierra Brodkorb; and his grandson, Tyson Johnson. He also leaves behind his brothers, Jimmy (Julie) Brodkorb and Darrick (Gretchen) Brodkorb; his sister, Tammie (Matt) Tibbs; and his beloved nieces and nephews: Shelby, Jenna, Miranda (Byron), Tasia, Kaitlynn, Rayne, Thad, Logan, Jerad (Stephne), and Troy.

He is preceded in death by his grandmother, Jessie Brodkorb; grandfathers, Werner and Rudolph "Bus" Brodkorb; Uncle Dale Brodkorb, as well as his loyal dog, Dally.



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Groton firefighter honored for service

Dale Ringgenberg was honored for 50 years of service to the Groton Fire Department.

Fire School Lights Up Britton

Around 100 First Responders Take Part In Trainings

The North Marshall Fire Department hosted a large gathering of first responders this past weekend as part of the annual Northeast District Fire School, organized by the Northeast District Firefighters Association. The event provided essential training for firefighters and emergency personnel from across the region.

A total of 93 firefighters and first responders from approximately 20 departments participated, with attendees traveling from as far as Pierre, Burke, and Colton. Training sessions were conducted at various locations throughout Britton, including Dakota Concrete, John Deere, and BDM.

North Marshall Fire Chief Nate Dinger said the department volunteered to host the event, which will be held in Redfield next year. He emphasized the importance of on-going training and noted that even after years of experience, he always learns something valuable at such events.

The fire school featured several hands-on training sessions designed to enhance skills across all levels of fire-fighting. The Heavy Rescue Operations session covered stabilization,

extrication, and tow truck operations, led by instructors Warren Moe, Andy Wicks, and others. The Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) training focused on rescuing fellow firefighters in emergency situations, while the Live Fire Training session allowed participants to practice fire attack techniques in a two-story Mobile Live Fire Training Unit.

Additional classes included Pump Operations, which guided firefighters through pump operation scenarios, and Fire Reporting, which provided updates on the new reporting system and emphasized the importance of accurate fire reporting.

Another key session, led by South Dakota Deputy State Fire Marshal Kyle Moser, addressed commanding large wildland fires and natural disasters. The discussion included recent major incidents, such as the Castlewood and Burke tornadoes and a large grass fire in Marshall County two weeks ago.

Dinger expressed gratitude to the community for its support in hosting the event and providing hospitality to visiting firefighters and emergency personnel. He said the day of training was a success and reinforced the importance of continued education in fire and rescue operations.

(*Marshall County Journal, Britton, Apr. 2, 2025*)

Crews Battle Two Wind-Driven Fires

Dry and windy conditions kept area fire departments and emergency personnel busy late last week, with multiple fires breaking out Thursday. The second blaze proved to be particularly challenging.

The North Marshall Fire Department (NMFD) was first called to a field fire north of Britton Thursday afternoon. Within 40 minutes, crews were dispatched again—this time to a much larger fire west of town at around 2:20 p.m., near Highway 10 and 412th Avenue, where several acres of grass were burning.

NMFD Chief Nate Dinger said the fire started when a tree pile that had burned days earlier reignited. Strong winds, with gusts exceeding 25 mph, made containment efforts difficult. Mutual aid was called in from multiple departments, including Hecla, Claremont, and Columbia fire departments, as well as Marshall County Emergency Management, Sunset Colony, Sand Lake Refuge, and the Marshall County Sheriff's Office. Farmers and producers also assisted, using tractors and equipment to help contain the fire. Those who provided assistance included Haden Malpert, Cortney Dinger, Ryan Hastings, Mike Beck, and Ehern Grupe.

In total, nearly 30 pieces

of equipment—including fire engines, water trucks, Rangers, pickups, tractors, and discs—were used to battle the flames. Crews remained on scene for more than six hours.

To prevent further flareups, firefighters conducted controlled burns on nearby CRP land and trees that night. Personnel continued monitoring the area for several days to extinguish hotspots.

Preliminary mapping indicates approximately 1,215 acres burned, primarily grass and cattails. State fire officials plan to conduct a flyover to confirm the final number, Dinger said.

Despite the fire's size, no structures were damaged, and no injuries were reported. Dinger expressed gratitude to all who assisted, including Keith and Patty Niesen, who allowed six fire departments to stage operations from their property. He also thanked those who provided food and beverages to firefighters.

Dinger urged residents to remain cautious, noting that fire conditions remain a concern. He advised checking previously burned piles, even those ignited weeks ago, to ensure they are fully extinguished.

(*Marshall County Journal, Britton, Mar. 26, 2025*)

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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



Charlie Kludt, President

"State Fire School is 12-14 June in Watertown. Take a look at the courses. There is something for every level of experience. We had to wait a little bit longer to open registration because some of our courses were in Federal funding limbo. So, if the registration button was closed last time you checked, check again."

Updates coming

The April showers came in various types of precipitation and seemed to have gale-force winds to go with them.

There were several District fire schools held over the last few weeks around the state. I hope you were able to make it to one of them, whether for something new or review.

State Fire School is 12-14 June in Watertown. Take a look at the courses. There is something for every level of experience. We had to wait a little bit longer to open registration because some of our courses were in Federal funding limbo. So, if the registration button was closed last time you checked, check again. We will send out an email blast and social

media when it is open.

Firefighting isn't just about fire, hoses, and nozzles. Scene size-up, incident command, and documenting and preserving what happened are equally important. Even if you're new to the fire service, understanding what you do while fighting fire has a direct correlation on what takes place after the fire is out.

Could you write down everything you did, saw, and performed during an incident and feel confident enough to compare it to a video of what you actually did? Whether a fire, car accident, EMS, training exercise, or something spoken. See how you compare. Because in today's world, there was probably a cell phone, traffic camera, security camera, car mirror camera, or

doorbell camera that may have evidence to help us out.

Cameras can help show what we did right, did or didn't do, and what we can learn from it.

Jeremy Walla and I will be at the NVFC Spring Conference in Washington DC the first week in May. We will be visiting with our congressional teams about fire service related issues. Especially the FEMA and Homeland Security grant programs that have been paused.

The NFPA Standards to OSHA regulation proposal status will be a continued topic of several committees. We will have a full report in the June newsletter.

We will also be presenting the official invitation to everyone for the 2025 NVFC Fall Conference that will be hosted by the SDFA in Rapid City on 21-24 September.

The roll out of the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS) for submitting your incident reports will be starting across the country in May. The system will be stepped out at different times according to FEMA Regions. The region for South Dakota is slated for November. Each department will need to register for their department account.

The new NERIS system will be replacing the system currently used by the state. However, if

you have a software program you are using, contact your software company or they may send a download patch to sync with the new system.

Remember, in order to be eligible for State or Federal funds, your department is required to file incident reports.

Chief Deputy Fire Marshal Doug Hinkle has been part of the testing of the NERIS program and will discuss it in his course at State Fire School. There are plans to have training sessions at various district fire schools and the fall conference. Go to the NERIS website for an introduction.

I would like to congratulate Chief Pete Bolzer of Brookings Fire Department on his retirement with over 45 years of various fire service to his retirement resume. A wonderful public servant.

Congratulations, also, to Chief Ron Hines on his retirement from the Huron Fire Department. He still plans to remain on the Cavour volunteer fire department because they will let him drive a fire truck. If he gets there in time.

And to all the parents and seniors on their upcoming graduations. Best wished to all of you.

Until next time. Stay safe,

CHARLIE KLUDT,
President

Hello South Dakota Firefighters, as I write this it is getting close to mid-April and tax day here in the USA. I hope all of your taxes are completed and you didn't have to pay in too much.

Here in western South Dakota, we have not received our yearly spring snow storm and we had a pretty open winter with several Red Flag days. I am not wishing for the heavy wet snow but we could sure use the moisture from a good cycle of rain.

State Fire School is about 6 weeks away and registration will be open when you receive this piece of communication. At this point it looks like we will not be able to have any National Fire

Academy (NFA) classes due to FEMA cancelling all in person classes while a review of agency programs is happening. If that changes, we will do everything we can to keep you updated on what is happening.

While we may not be able to host an NFA class this year, we will still have a great line-up of classes/instructors that will add to your knowledge to pass on to others in the fire service. If you have never been to fire school, we encourage you to look over the classes offered and join us in Watertown June 13 & 14, 2025 for training and networking. As always there will be vendors there with the newest tools



Don Ward, Vice President

"While we may not be able to host an NFA class this year, we will still have a great line-up of classes/instructors that will add to your knowledge to pass on to others in the fire service. If you have never been to fire school, we encourage you to look over the classes offered and join us in Watertown June 13 & 14, 2025 for training and networking."

and gear. Be sure you get raffle tickets from the State Auxiliary and possibly win a great prize.

The city of Watertown and the businesses there also have events planned for your entertainment,

including water fights that you can get a team together and test your skills.

DON WARD,
Vice President

How can it be May already? Membership dues have slowed down a bit, as of April 15th there are 11 department only not paid and 18 100% department memberships not paid. Please

reach out to me if you have questions regarding membership dues or updating your department roster. I would be more than happy to assist anyone that has questions or wants to get set up to be able to pay dues or update their roster in our growth zone system. With that being said State Fire School registration should be open so make sure to take a look and get signed up for some classes. I will also be available during fire school to answer questions regarding navigating the growth zone system, it is very simple to use once you get the hang of it.

If you are not receiving a copy of the paper via email, please let me know and we will make sure we have the correct email on file. The paper goes out via email to the individuals that are on a 100% paid department, and we have a valid email on file for that person. Also check the spam or junk mail settings within your email account it seems like when mass emails go out, they get

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"Please reach out to me if you have questions regarding membership dues or updating your department roster. I would be more than happy to assist anyone that has questions or wants to get set up to be able to pay dues or update their roster in our growth zone system."

labeled by your email provider as junk or spam mail.

I have received a few emails regarding membership cards, currently they are not being printed. The association is working on a template to send out to the departments to be able to print their own cards once dues are paid.

In the meantime, if you are needing validation that you are on a 100% paid department, we can provide a certificate with the names of the firefighters

that we have on the roster. I would also encourage your department to reach out to your local emergency management and inquire about getting the hard plastic credentialing cards that would have your department name on them. Again, if you have in questions, please reach out to me. Take care and see everyone in Watertown at State Fire School!!

SAMARA ERICKSON,
Secretary

SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

Thoughts From the Treasurer

Looking back over the years, I believe the very first paper was January 2006. That means I have written nearly 300 articles. The downside to that is some of you have read nearly 300 articles. Sorry.

Our hearts, thoughts, and prayers went out to the families of Michial Brodkorb and Tiffany Knipfer, the firefighters and community of Wessington Springs last month. The tragic loss of Michial and Tiffany leaves all of us wondering why? We may wonder how are we going to carry on? Why did this happen to such good people? If you feel like you are becoming overloaded

with life things, then reach out to someone. Rod from Custer is always available to listen and offer some help. Provident and Workers Compensation Insurance have help lines too. Remember it's not a weakness to ask, but a sign of strength. Think of it as mutual aid. If your department has an incident bigger than it can handle, what do you do? You call for mutual aid, come help us. Think of that phone call as mutual aid. Nobody has to go alone.

State fire school is next month, which means just weeks away. Registration is open and ready. Discounts for those early bird registration and departments that are 100% Members are there for your use. Take advantage of them. It's some of the benefits we

are able to offer.

The recent passing of Bill Gustin, was a contributor to Fire Engineering magazine, and nationally known instructor. I never met Mr. Gustin, but illustrator Paul Combs did. Paul Combs noted Bill Gustin once said, "Never Stop Being a Student, Learn and Share Something Every Single Day." Have you ever told yourself, I don't know why I'm here, I know this stuff? Have I told myself that? Yep, sure have, but I'll try to remember these words. Go to fire school next month and learn something each day and share something.

I'm not making a political comment here, but ... With all the recent budget slashing, firings, closing offices and/or



Denny Gorton,
Treasurer/Past President

"State fire school is next month, which means just weeks away. Registration is open and ready. Discounts for those early bird registration and departments that are 100% Members are there for your use. Take advantage of them. It's some of the benefits we are able to offer."

entire agencies, the fire service is not exempt. The National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland is closed. No classes. Nothing. FEMA's future is totally uncertain. The Assistance to Firefighters Grants, VFA and SAFER grants who knows if they will survive. That's a shame. None of us like to hear about fraud and waste. But the NFA, AFG and SAFER are neither of these. You do it in your personal

life, decide what's important, what can we do without? Closing or cancelling these programs is a step back 30 years for the fire service.

With all this, I'll close for this month, bored you long enough. Hope to see you in Watertown and be safe each and every day.

DENNY GORTON

The Power of Defensible Space

This Black Hills home shows the power of creating defensible space around your house to help protect it in the event of a wildfire. During a January wildfire in the Black Hills, this home was surrounded by burned black ground, but the home itself was untouched. They landscaped with rock and gravel and didn't have thickly packed trees to catch fire and blow sparks at the

house.

Thinning dense stands of trees and removing ladder fuels can help reduce the intensity and rate of fire spread if your home were in the path of a wildfire.

SDWF has information and programs to help reduce future wildfire risks to your home. Learn more at <https://wildlandfire.sd.gov/fuelsmit.../fuelsmitigation.aspx>.



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Wildland Urban Interface: A Growing Concern

By JARED TRENT

The Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) is a well-known term in the wildland firefighting community as well as in areas where wildfires are common occurrences; however, many communities and fire departments around the nation still do not understand what WUI is nor mitigation strategies to preserve life and property if a wildfire becomes established in their area.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines WUI as the zone of transition between unoccupied land and human development. It is the line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels. At the time of this writing, the Palisades Fire, a 15,000 acre fire on the outskirts of greater Los Angeles, has destroyed roughly 5,000 structures and has claimed the lives of at least five people.

Unfortunately, this story is all too common; the U.S. National Science Foundation National Center for Atmospheric Research (NSF NCAR) has calculated that global fires occurring in WUI areas has increased by 23% from 2005 to 2020. In the United States, WUI area has grown by 31% from 1990-2020.

WUI fires are not relegated only to western states such as California or Montana; the Jones Creek Fire, a 3,770 acre wildfire

that started on July 13 2023 around the Loess Hills State Forest in Iowa, destroyed out-buildings on a private residence as well as structures within the park itself. A 2022 wildfire in Lancaster County, NE burned over 9,000 acres, destroying five structures, and injuring three firefighters with one firefighter being severely burned. With residential and commercial expansion into natural areas, wildfires within the WUI are becoming much more frequent, forcing both structure and wildland firefighters to create new strategies to mitigate loss and be proactive in creating fire resilient communities in these areas.

Strategies for mitigating both structure and life loss within these areas has been the adoption of fire-adapted communities and structure triage. The National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG), the group that establishes national interagency wildland fire operations standards, has created actionable steps that communities can achieve to reduce the risk of loss from wildfires. The plan outlines risk reduction by two main categories: ignition resistant structures and zone-delineated landscapes. Within the plan, the NWCG breaks down residential structures to individual components (i.e. roof material and design, gutters, eaves, vents, siding, decks, fencing, etc.) and gives best practices on making these areas as ignition resistant



as possible. The NWCG also outlines three distinct ignition landscape zones from 0-100 ft of the structure for reduction in fuel load, arrangement, and continuity. These actionable steps can greatly reduce loss from wildfire within WUI.

Unfortunately, creating fire-adapted communities and using ground and aerial resources to combat wildfires does not seem to be enough. Firefighters are also tasked with structure triage

in areas where the wildfire is most likely to go due to wind, terrain, and fuel drivers. During extreme wildfire conditions, saving every structure may not be possible; to help firefighters communicate to command a list of structures that are able to be defensible, many agencies have developed structure triage and defense guides.

The triage guide is broken down into three categories: Not Threatened, Threatened Defensible, and Threatened Non-Defensible. A non-threatened structure is one that has a safety zone nearby or on site, composed of bare soil, where all resources can gather in the event that fire behavior becomes too dangerous to engage. A non-threatened structure is also typically made of materials that are unlikely to ignite and is surrounded by maintained landscaping with a very low fuel load. A threatened but defensible structure is one that also has a safety zone nearby or on site but is made of construction features or landscaping that requires firefighters to implement structure defense tactics. A threatened and non-defensible structure is one where there are no safety zones nearby, the structure has material and/or landscaping issues that make fire defense tactics unsafe, and fire activity in the area make it dangerous for firefighters to implement structure defense tactics. Once triage is completed, this information will be relayed to command/division supervisor via radio and virtual mapping; physical confirmation (paint, flagging, etc.) will also be placed at the end of the driveway to let other resources know to move on to the next structure.

Once you identify structures that are defensible you then have to create a plan to defend

the structure. Your plan may be one in which you “prep-and-go” or “stay-and-play.” This plan may include establishing fold-a-tanks, portable water pumps, installing sprinklers on roofs and fence lines, and structure wrap. It is best practice to back in equipment to allow quick escape, close all doors and windows, turn off gas lines, turn on interior and exterior lighting, check and mark hazardous materials, coil and charge all lines and sprinklers connected to portable pump, remove grass, shrubs, and other combustible materials from the property, place owner’s ladder on corner of structure facing away from flaming front, know your primary and alternate escape routes, be sure to leave reserve water for emergencies, and develop trigger points to aid in decision to withdrawal to your safety zone.

TRAINING HOMEWORK:

Drive to a wildland urban interface structure in your area. Give you and your crew a time limit to develop a structure triage and defense plan that includes all equipment and tools that you would need to be able to defend the structure and surrounding property. How many ft of varying sized hoselays do you need? How many rolls of structure wrap and accompanying tools do you need? What type and how many reducers, gated wyes, nozzles, sprinklers, portable water pumps, fold-a-tanks would be necessary? Would you need to remove receptive fuels on the property? Are the gutters clear of combustible debris? All of these questions and more should be written down and a plan developed in a relatively short amount of time (roughly 30 minutes).

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Rapid City Fire Department trains future firefighters in cadet program

By MADISON WILLIS,
Rapid City Journal

Five figures in vibrant yellow and tan, a blur of coordinated motion, hammered against splintering doors and disappeared into the dark maw of the training tower Thursday afternoon.

With surprising speed and efficiency, they navigated the simulated chaos, securing the area for phantom victims before unleashing a torrent from the fire hose, extinguishing the pretend blaze with a professionalism that belied their youth.

For a fleeting moment, one might have mistaken them for Rapid City's new fire recruits, but these were the dedicated faces of the Rapid City Fire Department Cadet Program — five talented high schoolers showcasing a promising future in fire service.

"Fire and Emergency Services are critical to the safety and well-being of our communities," RCFD Firefighter and Cadet Instructor Jim Bussell said. "The vision of the Rapid City Fire Department is to remain ever vigilant in the delivery of public safety to our community."

We believe that development of the workforce, both now and into the future, is one of the best ways that we can realize that vision."

Bussell said, "Until the development of the cadet program, we lacked a truly effective way to develop that future workforce. Only time will tell how successful this program will be but, so far, we have seen positive results."

The cadet program was developed during the summer of 2023 and launched during the 2023-24 academic year. Bussell said the purpose was to give high school students with an interest in a career in fire and emergency services the opportunity to gain

practical experience and hands-on insight into the career field.

The program is open to high school students enrolled in public, private or recognized homeschool programs that are in their junior or senior year.

Rapid City Stevens, Rapid City Central, Douglas, New Underwood and Rapid City Christian are just some of the schools with students who've entered the program since its launch. With nearly all of the schools offering school credit for the program.

Students meet three times per month for classroom and hands-on training and ride-alongs. Bussell said last year there were seven participants and this year they have 10, which is the max the program can support within a year.

To participate in ride-alongs, the cadets first certify in CPR and Stop the Bleed, and receive training about privacy, protected health information and social media.

Throughout the program, they learn about structural, wildland and aircraft firefighting, technical rescue, EMS, hazardous materials and prevention and public education.

Notably, Bussell said two cadets last year became certified wildland firefighters, securing those positions after graduation. Another two cadets are finalizing their National Registry EMT certification.

Directing each cadet through the basics, a smile is brought to Bussell's face as he watches them work.

"I love to coach and I love to teach," Bussell said. "We have had 14 exceptional young men and women participate in the RCFD Cadet Program since it was launched in the fall of 2023. I am proud of what we have helped them accomplish and I

am especially excited to see what their future holds."

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A FIREFIGHTER

For 17-year-old homeschooler RJ Cole, the roar of a fire engine isn't just a siren's wail — it's an echo of his great uncle and grandfather's legacy with the Rapid City Fire Department.

Fueled by tales of bravery and service passed down through generations, Cole is now charting his own course into the flames, inspired by the heroic footsteps that once walked the very streets he calls home.

"My grandpa and my great uncle were both part of the fire department. Following in their footsteps is an honor and a privilege that I am thankful to have," Cole said.

Cole has been a part of the cadet program for two years and in his time there he was given the opportunity to work on prescription burns and participate in both structure fire and EMS training.

"Through this program I have joined a volunteer fire department and learned more about the community I live in. I have learned how to be a leader and maintain my composure under high stress circumstances," Cole said.

Because of his experience in the program, Cole said he also recently joined the South Dakota National Guard as a combat medic. After basic training, Cole



Henry Wasson practices using the firehose on the simulated burning structure as Instructor Jim Bussell guides him on Thursday, April 10.

plans to attend Black Hills State University and continue a career in fire service down the road.

Unlike Cole's ancestral connection, for Henry Wasson, an 18-year-old senior at Stevens High School, this program was offered by a familiar voice — his mother's.

Having learned of the RCFD Cadet Program through her and Bussell, Wasson recognized an immediate calling.

"I do not have any family members in the fire department," Wasson said. "My passion for this career is knowing I can help

people."

While learning the ins and outs of fire and EMS, Wasson said he's made lasting friendships within the program and is looking into a position with South Dakota Wildland Fire.

After going through EMT school, Wasson said he'll eventually return to his roots and join the Rapid City Fire Department.

Each of the cadets will be able to show off their hard work in front of friends and family at the Cadet's Showcase on May 9, 2025.

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COLLABORATION PRODUCES RESULTS

By JERRY KNAPP and
KEVIN KROGH

Specific Purpose:
to show how
collaboration benefits
everyone.

The advantages of collaboration where highlighted in a brilliant Fire Engineering editorial “A Seat At The Table Keeps You Off The Menu” (Nov 2024) by Chief Dave Rhodes.

In part he writes, “*So much of the fire service culture revolves around the kitchen table and the meal. Away from our stations and homes are the great tables where discussions are held and, decisions are made, policy is developed, and a host of other things happen that effect our day to day life and work.*

Having a seat at the table where this takes place is an essential part of progress and success. Not being at that the table means that your perspective, experiences and knowledge are not intertwined in the discussion and are potentially left of out consideration on any decision that impact your ability to perform your work.”

At the station, you don’t need to be invited for a seat at the kitchen table, it is open to members: open, continuous collaboration whether you asked for it, want it or not it is there. But collaboration outside the fire house takes effort because the invite is not always open to you.

The purpose of this article is to show how collaborating with others especially outside our fire service can lead to great accomplishments and also assist your professional development and advancing your career. A note...what is important in this article is how you can use these successful examples, failures and experiences. With a little effort, you may be surprised to find yourself working with others resulting in wonderful and unforeseen positive consequences for yourself and your organization and maybe our entire American Fire Service.

Collaborating outside the Fire service takes personal drive and an aggressive personality equally mixed with positive and respectful behavior. It is personally and professionally very rewarding, sometimes risky and or frustrating (you may fail or hit road blocks) and takes significant effort both mental and physical.

Chief Rhodes continues “This is not the sexy part of the job. There is only metaphorical smoke. The fire may surface as a heated debate. And frankly, your average firefighter type wants no part of it.”

The purpose of this article is to examine a real tactical fireground experience that led to very successful collaborations. Benefits were reaped by many and with long term benefits with some benefits that are still developing years later. Reaching outside your normal professional

boundaries can provide you numerous rewards.

FIREGROUND

The explosion sent us each about 35’ across the yard, Captain Patterson in one direction me in another. In a micro second, I am on hands and knees, burned, blood drips from my face, pooling on the street and very confused. Am I dead? Where is my Captain? How could this happen to me? I thought I knew all I needed about natural gas emergencies. We survived, due only to the grace of God.

For months after, my rational brain was mad. My emotional brain was a mess. How could this happen to me? I was very well trained, Chief of my county hazmat team, I fully understood the hazards of explosive gases, it is not even toxic, I knew my 4 gas meter as well as anyone and I had been to hundreds of gas leaks, nothing ever happened. What did I do wrong? Collaboration helped me figure it out. The bottom line: most FF including myself have a huge training gap regarding tactical response to explosive gas emergencies. It took collaboration to fix it.

COLLABORATION BEGINS

Counseling (my first collaboration) fixed the emotional trauma, teaching me to control it, saving my marriage and very probably my life. Kenny similarly recovered and returned to duty. The journey was dangerous, could have been disastrous but turned out ok thanks to this collaboration called counseling.

Start your collaboration for any problem or issue with discussions with friends and co-workers. Collaboration does not need to be aimed at resolving near death experiences, strategic or tactical errors. It can simply be to resolve any issue you may have, a new policy you want to develop, new tools, etc.

Dan Moran, our hazardous materials Deputy Rockland County NY Fire Coordinator, a good friend and better listener and I talked about the incident, a lot. Collaboration #2, Dan has a very open mind, he was a research chemist and open to creative thought, very creative, very beneficial attitude for productive collaboration. Simply, Dan helped me figure out this very complex incident. We found out that there were several very important factors about gas leaks I did not know. How could I not know these things?

Like many other FF across the US, this specific area of my training was weak. Pls see previous FE articles for details. During a phone conversation with Bobby Halton, I explained my obsession with finding how this could have happened to me. Without skipping a beat and his usual quick wit, he suggested this was good and a positive effect of *post traumatic growth*. Hummm....post traumatic growth, I would never had known about this without this conversation that had untold



Deputy Chief Buckheit (second from right) and his staff preview the Tactical Response to Natural Gas Emergencies training and facilities at the Rockland County NY Fire Training Center.

positive results. Good things can happen from bad experiences if you journey thru the process positively. Though thoroughly unplanned, collaboration #2 with Chief Halton yielded critical progress though the destination was still not clear. Not sure where this will end but progress. An important lesson learned: Trust your gut feelings and if it feels good just keep driving on. Also important to note, you may not know where or when the trip will end.

By this point I was firmly convinced I (and our FS) needed better training on strategy, tactics, air monitoring and action levels during responses to explosive gasses. I was also lacking a thorough understanding of the gas distribution system, underground migration, high pressure transmission lines, gas industry best practices and maybe most importantly our explosive gas detectors.

COLLABORATION OUTSIDE THE FIRE SERVICE

Armed with the new found knowledge that my training was inadequate the next logical step was to try to fix it. Who can provide better training on gas emergencies to firefighters? Well, the gas utilities of course! Well let’s say the local utility were just not cooperative or responsive to my proposals, requests and recommendations. They provide awareness training which is all that is legally required in NY. Collaboration (#3) with the utility; not so successful or productive, first dead end. Lesson learned, not all your collaborations will result in progress toward your goal. Ignore those that do not help you and move on.

CHOOSING COLLABORATORS

So who has the power to improve training? How and can I collaborate with them? In this example, all states have regulating agencies for utilities,



One side of Leak St at the Rockland County NY Fire Training Center, simulating a residential street with numerous natural gas and propane leak scenarios built with settlement funds from a near double LODD incident. Using our design, Leak Streets will be funded by PSC for every training site in NY State as a result of our collaboration.

gas, water, electric, cable tv, etc. In NY, it is the Public Service Commission, Dept of Public Service. Collaboration #4 coming up. I made a few phone calls, explaining my situation, what Dan and I learned about the training gap, and suggesting more and better quality training is required to prevent bad outcomes like mine. Suddenly we had a date to meet the wizard! The wizard that had the power to help solve the problem as we saw it. Critical point here: be prepared to provide solutions to the problems you present. Without solutions you be viewed as a whiner and complainer, not a problem solver. Have your recommendations in a row, in concise brief-able format.... BEFORE you see the wizard.

MEET THE WIZARD

You never know what type of reception you might get while reaching outside or even inside the fs. This reception was hugely positive! The PSC was concerned about some other responses by NY firefighters in the past several years to utility

emergencies that were less than successful, some resulting in disasters. Thus our connection was now on common ground and both us and the PSC were poised to make progress. The psc however were very honest and said they were not sure what to do about it. Perfect.... “I may have a solution for you.”

Dan and I had prepared a very professional briefing. So there we were, literally in the ivory tower on the 19th floor briefing the suits, engineers, safety officials, attorneys from the agency that regulates all NY utilizes and has strong influences over them. Far out of our Fire Service sphere of influence. We were collaborating with the authorities that had the power to make positive changes! Still, not sure where this is going, but it feels good. We provided a possible solution for all of us to consider and develop: build a full scale training site at my training center.

This first look behind the Wizard’s curtain was very

SEE COLLABORATION,
PAGE 11

Collaboration

FROM PAGE 10

successful, great discussion that looked positive. They asked us back in 2 weeks for another meeting to brainstorm solutions giving us time to refine our proposals. While sipping coffee waiting for the second meeting to start, a chief in full class A dress asks if I am Jerry Knapp? John Buckheit, a Deputy Chief from FDNY, stated he had read several articles on tactical response to explosive gases I had written in FE and wanted to talk to me. Holy cow, I would never have seen this coming but a great coincidence based on collaboration with Fire Engineering magazine!

DC Buckheit was tasked to re-write FDNY's gas response SOP. He attended our meetings and provided great support to our basic premise that training needed to improve for firefighters especially for natural gas emergencies. The FDNY perspective definitely influenced the PSC leaders in many, very positive ways leading to better results! Lesson learned: bring expert and respected supporters with you to meetings.

We developed a positive relationship and John invited us to work with his Research and Development division at FDNY which we eagerly embraced. From these meetings we learned about new natural gas detectors that used laser technology that FDNY was experimenting with and doing testing to select one for their use by field units. In the following months, I introduced these same units to the 26 FDs that the Rockland County NY Fire Training center supports. Now, most FDs in Rockland County and our Hazmat Team use these to provide, quicker, safer size up for natural gas emergencies. Collaboration with DC Buckheit led to vast improvements in many department's daily responses to releases of explosive gasses (natural gas and propane). A success I never even imagined.

It was at this second meeting with the PSC (utility regulators) we learned the utility was fined \$150,000 for violating their response procedures resulting in our injuries and near double LODD. In NY this is called a negotiated settlement and the money was going back to the utility so they could make a training video. PSC has no way to spend the fines they levy.

We all know that ff need hands on training to develop brain and tactical muscle memory.... "so what do you propose Chief Knapp?" asks the wizard? "We need to build Leak St...a full scale training site where ff can practice what they learned in the class room to improve their response to releases of explosive gas" was my answer. To be honest, during my discussions with other utility trainers across the nation (collaboration #4) revealed they have similar large scale training aids to train their gas technicians...so why not for the FDs? If that is the way gas technicians are trained, why should FF training be any different? Same mission: life safety, same explosive gas, same scene, etc. We have some unused space at our fire training center

that was perfect for Leak St.

FDIC COLLABORATION

FE and FDIC have always been great places to get world class training and I was fortunate enough to be a repeat instructor for both hands on and classroom training. Next collaboration: To present my Tactical Response to Natural Gas Emergencies at FDIC. Selected as a 90 min. classroom presentation I did this for 2 years with a third in the "big room" something I never expected, but much more to come.

After my FDIC talk, two very professional gentlemen, clearly not firefighters, ask if they could speak to me. Of course, I thought I was on the verge of being, sued, hung or tortured. We met in a quiet corner of the convention center with a very congenial, professional and pleasant conversation. Mr. Tom Lochner, owner of the firm that has exclusive rights to distribute gas detection instruments (Firecraft. Safety Products and Mr. Scott Klepe, president of Sensit Technologies, the company that manufactures both the laser based detector, metal oxide based explosive gas detectors and others used by utilities and fire departments nationwide.

They asked if I would work for them doing this exact class. My response was sure, but how do we proceed? They respectfully asked for a proposal which they quickly approved for training nationwide. Base on this collaboration I have had the wonderful opportunity to help FDs across our country to improve their explosive gas response procedures and provide it at no cost to them at their station! Win for me, win for the FS and for Firecraft and Sensit. Another spin off benefit for the entire Fire Service of this collaboration is Firecraft has an excellent test program so after I conduct training for a fd, they can get a gas detector they choose for a 30 day free trial.

Hesitant to turn into a salesman, I sought advice from Bobby Halton. He explained that FE provides world class training because of its collaboration with businesses that make products for our fs and advertise in FE. Bobby explained How else could FE be of such great benefit to our FS? Collaboration!

To date I have shared my lessons learned at FDIC since 2022, at my county training center, several national and state conferences, in 10 states trained I have trained approximately 52 FDs a total of 1,800 fire officers and firefighters.

FORCE MULTIPLIER

Force multiplier is a term our military uses to describe tactical actions, equipment or strategies that can increase the impact a unit can have on the enemy without increases in manpower or equipment. Collaboration can be a force multiplier resulting in increased success of your own efforts.

The NY Public Service Commission applied some, let's call it motivation to gas utilities after numerous less than adequate



Albany NY FD members being trained in explosive gas response by National Grid trainers.

responses, strategic and tactically deficient response by utilities and FDs in NY and in fact across the nation. One utility, National Grid responded by creating a training branch to improve training for first responders. Their mission statement summarizes the goal: "National Grid is dedicated to the safety of our first responders and the communities we serve through education and utility training".

NG built into a rate increase to customers a small amount to fund this effort. First step was to select a manager that had a thorough understanding of both the fire and utility sides. Kevin Krogh, Manager of Technical Training Division, developed an excellent gas emergencies training program for fds with the help of his team. Kevin has 39 years experience with both National Grid and 39 years as a Volunteer FF with Ballston Spa FD, serving as 18 years in the Fire Chief ranks and was a perfect choice.

Kevin then selected his training team carefully chosen with backgrounds like his own with expertise in both emergency services (FD, PD) and the gas industry. Training covers: understanding natural gas, flammable range, gas distribution system and of course response procedures.

To encourage FDs to take this training, NG provides a laser based METHANE gas detector free of charge after FDs take the class. These laser based units have a 100' range to detect natural gas at a distance keeping firefighters safe during size up and vastly improving speed and efficiency or responses to explosive gas emergencies.

TRAINING SUCCESS

To date, this team has trained over 7,500 first responders to include FF'S and Law Enforcement and have trained almost 400 FD's in the Upstate New York region. Result of this collaboration, stimulated by previous efforts.... better trained and equipped firefighters.

The Albany NY FD has reaped the benefits of this collaborative training. Chief of Department Joseph W. Gregory explains:



The mobile electrical training prop under development by National Grid.

"Over the past several years, National Grid has led our Firefighters through hundreds of hours of classroom and hands-on tactical training related to gas and electric emergencies. This type of training is critical on numerous levels. The preparedness that our members achieve through these sessions can change and make the ultimate difference in preventing a situation from quickly turning deadly. In closing, I cannot understate the value of the training that the Albany Fire Department has received from National Grid related to gas and electric utility emergencies. We plan to continue utilizing their essential training opportunities, and I would undoubtedly recommend this training program to any Fire Department looking to take their situational preparedness training tactics to a higher level.

Based on the success of this program, National Grid is expanding the training to include electrical emergencies. Training teams bring realistic examples of gas and electric distribution systems to local fire stations.

SUMMARY

We have shared how collaboration was successful in this one example of our craft and how it benefits the fire service both locally and nationally. Additionally, thru FDIC and Fire Engineering I have made

so many fire service friends with vast amounts of experience and expertise I can call on for other issues, tactical, strategic and yes, sometimes personal advice.

The success of your collaboration depends on your willingness to get outside your familiar circles, seek out and meet the wizard and benefit from it. Not all the contact you make will be positive, simply ignore those. Reach back out to those that are cooperative and develop not only fire service friends but life long professional contacts that benefit everyone. Often your path will not be a straight line or one you may have envisioned. Often, by collaboration, you will have unimaginable success.

Jerry Knapp is the Chief of the Rockland County, NY Hazmat Team, and is a 49 year veteran Firefighter/EMT with the West Haverstraw NY Fire Department. He served on the technical panel for the UL residential fire attack study. Knapp is the co-author of two books: House Fires and Tactical Response to Explosive Gas Emergencies published by Fire Engineering He is the owner of Suburban Tactical Inc specializing in fire officer and firefighter training.



Fire crews from Aberdeen Rural Fire Department and Columbia Area Fire District were called out to a structure fire on April 1 around 8:30 p.m. The home was fully involved at the time of dispatch and was a total loss before crews even arrived. No injuries were reported but some family dogs were lost in the fire. Also assisting were Brown County Emergency Management, Brown County Sheriff's Office and the South Dakota Highway Patrol.

Tuesday night fire destroys rural Brown County home

By SCOTT WALTMAN,
Aberdeen Insider

A rural Brown County home was destroyed by fire the night of Tuesday, April 1, according to a Facebook post by the Brown County Department of Emergency Management.

The fire was reported around 8:30 p.m. near the intersection of U.S. Highway 281 and 126th Street. That's about 5 and a half miles north of Aberdeen.

Nobody was hurt, but some dogs died in the fire. The home was fully engulfed in flames by the time responders arrived, according to the social media post.

Mark Stoks, chief of the Aberdeen Rural Fire Department,

said the fire was shooting through the roof of the house when firefighters arrived. An attached garage was also destroyed, and a nearby shed was damaged, he said.

Somebody passing by on the highway called in the fire about the same time as the owner was getting home, he said.

The fire started inside and appears to be accidental, but the cause is still under investigation, Stoks said.

He said it sounds like the residents had a place to stay.

Rain, sleet and snow made visibility difficult at times, Stoks said, but the moisture likely prevented the flames from spreading as there were trees, a slough and grass nearby. The moisture should help decrease the number of grass fires for a while, he said.

Aberdeen Rural responded to 54 calls in all of 2024, and there have already been 19 calls this year, he said. Because of the dry conditions, several of them have been for grass fires, he said.

There was still a truck on the scene as of 9 a.m. Tuesday, April 2, Stoks said, but he believed the response was wrapping up.

Aberdeen Rural, the Columbia Area Fire Department, Brown County Emergency Management, the Brown County Sheriff's Office and the South Dakota Highway Patrol responded to the fire. Aberdeen Fire & Rescue helped provide water, and the Brown County Communications Center was also helpful, Stoks said.

He said the highway patrol helped control traffic on 281 so trucks could back into the driveway.

Fire School Evolution Teams

By RICK CRONIN

Fire school is racing towards us, and this is a reminder to those that would like to participate in the evolutions. There is a separate team entry form in the paper with more details as well. Any 3-person team(s) that would like to participate, note the date; insurance requirements; entry fee; etc noted on the entry form. It's the typical normal stuff, unless you are new to participating, then take a look at what is required.

This activity is very good friendly rivalry amongst departments, but is also a good team building activity. Teamwork; coordination; hose lays; hose streams; focusing on topic, and more are beneficial to all teams, plus its very fun! Hope to see you there. Give Larry Nickles or myself an email or call if you have any questions. We will also be happy to help new teams with set up and tips the night of the evolutions. Hope to see you there!!

2025 South Dakota State Fire School – Watertown SD

Evolution Registrations Form

Please Print

Fire Department: _____

Address: _____ Email: _____

Contact Person: _____ Phone #: _____

Evolution Team: _____ 3 Person _____ Auxiliary

TEAM CAPTAIN: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Team Member: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Team Member: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Team Member: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Team Member: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Team Member: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Team Member: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Team Member: _____ Age: _____ Yrs of Service: _____

Evolution Insurance Policy: To participate in any evolution event at State Fire School, the participating department or person ***MUST*** submit proof of insurance. This insurance may be workmans compensation; declaration page; personal insurance card, or other that will provide coverage for the participant(s) in the event of an injury to the participant. NO ONE will be allowed to compete in the evolutions until this proof of insurance is provided. Proof of insurance and team entry form: Just bring the entry form & entry fee with you when you enter. Also, please give a courtesy email to the below email addresses so that we have an idea you are entering & for corresponding with. *****Teams may enter up until the Team Captains meeting prior to the evolutions, as long as last minute teams can provide proof of insurance and pay all entry fees. ALL new and existing teams are welcome!!***

Any competing department and team member shall be on a South Dakota fire department/auxiliary & be members of the SDFA (or state auxiliary); be a member or retired member of a South Dakota fire department, and must pay a team entry fee. ***Entry fee is \$50 per team.*** (If your department has more than one team, a separate entry fee must be included to each team, and members cannot be on both teams.) Only South Dakota departments may participate in the evolutions. Please make checks for Evolutions to SDFA and bring to the Team Captains meeting prior to evolutions. ABSOLUTELY NO REFUNDS!! All team members must be at least 18 yrs of age and be a member of a department; auxiliary or a retired member of a SD department. ***Any new team that hasn't participated in the evolutions in the past will have their entry fee waived.*** ***Evolution date is Friday, June 13th after classes get out – TBD. Location: TBD***

Evolutions will be run as illustrated in the current evolutions rule book. A copy can be emailed to your team if you let us know – Rick Cronin of Fort Pierre Fire – cell: 605-280-3185 or email: fpieman1@hotmail.com or Larry Nickles – Retired Yankton FD – cell: 605-661-2785 or email: merc.harley@yahoo.com.

At LEAST 2 members from each team are required to help set up & tear down. ***Team Captains Meeting will be TBD. Start time: TBD – sometime after classes Friday evening. Location: TBD.***

2025 South Dakota Highway Patrol Association Fishing Tournament

JUNE 8 - 10, 2025
QUESTIONS? CALL...
ROB MAYER - 770-1940
AUSTIN SCHMITZ - 830-6682

WELCOME

This event is for fun, fellowship, and bragging rights. We hope you have a great time! Sunday, June 8, there will be a social, meal, and final registration from 4-6 p.m. at the Izaak Walton League, in Pierre. There will be a, mandatory, rules meeting at 6 p.m. Participants must be at the rules meeting. This tournament is extremely popular and will be limited to the first 50 teams paid in full. Registration must be no later than two weeks before the event, for us to obtain a correct count for meals.

ELIGIBILITY

The event is open to retired and active law enforcement officers and those working in related fields—judges, court services, state's attorneys, jailers, motor carrier, homeland security, ambulance, fire, etc.—and their appropriate guests.

LOCATION

The tournament headquarters will be at the Izaak Walton League, 1200 Izaak Walton Road, Pierre SD. The Izaak Walton League will have full bar service available on site. Tournament check-in times will be discussed at the Sunday rules meeting and after Monday's supper. Boundaries are South Dakota waters connecting with Lake Oahe and Lake Sharpe. Teams must be present and checked in at the tournament headquarters for weigh-in, by the specified time for each day. No exceptions!

FISH

Only walleye and sauger will be counted in the tournament. All GFP rules must be followed. Only eight fish will be weighed per team. The minimum size is 15 inches with two fish allowed over 20 inches. Only one team allowed per boat. Teams may fish up to four people per boat. Teams may catch a full limit, with exception to the four-man teams who are only allowed to catch a three-man limit. Only eight fish may be brought to the weigh table on ice. No exceptions! No fishing is allowed after the rules meeting until the tournament.

ENTRY FEE

Cost is \$75 per person which includes tournament entry fee and two free meals. Only tournament entrants are entitled to the free meals.

OPTION POTS

There will be biggest walleye and biggest other fish option pots. Also, all registered teams have the option to buy themselves in three different option pots- \$25, \$50, and \$100.

The option pots are 90%

payout. Shortly after the rules meeting concludes, teams will have the opportunity to buy other teams who did not purchase themselves in the option pots. If you have questions on how the option pots work, contact one of us or ask at the rules meeting Sunday night.

SOCIAL

There will be a raffle drawing following the meal on Monday night. If you know of a sponsor who would like to donate a prize,

food, or money, please let us know. We also encourage you to stick around for the awards ceremony immediately following the weigh-ins on Tuesday.

LODGING

There are several options for camping and cabins a short distance from the tournament headquarters. You can contact them for availability. Farm Island and Oahe Downstream Rec areas are nearby. Reservations can be made 90 days in advance at South

Dakota State Park reservations (1-800-710-2267). There are various hotels available in the Pierre-Ft. Pierre area as well. Please make your own reservations, as soon as possible, at the lodging of your choice. List Team Captain's Phone and E-mail

Checks can be made payable to: SDHP Fishing Tournament

Mail entry forms to: South Dakota Highway Patrol, Attn: Robert Mayer, 5316 W. 60th ST N., Sioux Falls, SD 57107



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Rapid City Fire Department Station 1 set to reopen in July 2025 after extensive renovation and expansion project

By MADISON WILLIS,
Rapid City Journal

After nearly half a century of service, Rapid City Fire Department's Station 1 is on the cusp of a significant transformation, with its extensive renovation and expansion project

making substantial progress.

RCFD Chief Jason Culberson said the ambitious undertaking, which commenced in February 2023, is predicted to be done the first week of July, when the station will reopen its doors. This marks a new era for the downtown firehouse.

"We're nearing the tail end, and we're excited to show off this building to the community. It's something that they should be proud of, and we're extremely thankful to the community for helping provide this absolutely stunning building," Culberson said.

The two-year project will more than double the station's footprint, growing it from 19,000 square feet to 41,000 square feet. The project aimed to add new office spaces, dorm rooms, a workout area and clean zones designed to be free of carcinogens, addressing both the health and operational needs of the department.

Culberson said the original allocation for the project was \$15.1 million, however only \$14.8 million has been spent so far. Culberson predicted they will stay under budget so long as there are no unexpected emergencies from the older building.

The original completion date was at the end of April. However, due to weather the date has been pushed to this summer.

The downtown fire station, which houses the department's administrative offices and 24-hour fire/EMS services, was built in 1975 and is the oldest station still in operation in Rapid City. Due to the age of the building and the increased demand for its services, which has seen a 32% rise in call volume since 2020, Culberson said the facility was not up to par to the modern-day fire station.

With the expanded workload and limited space, Culberson said the old station was unable to house all 40 administrative employees plus 20 firefighters. To still be operational, many entities were moved to other

stations, such as Station 2 on North Maple Avenue.

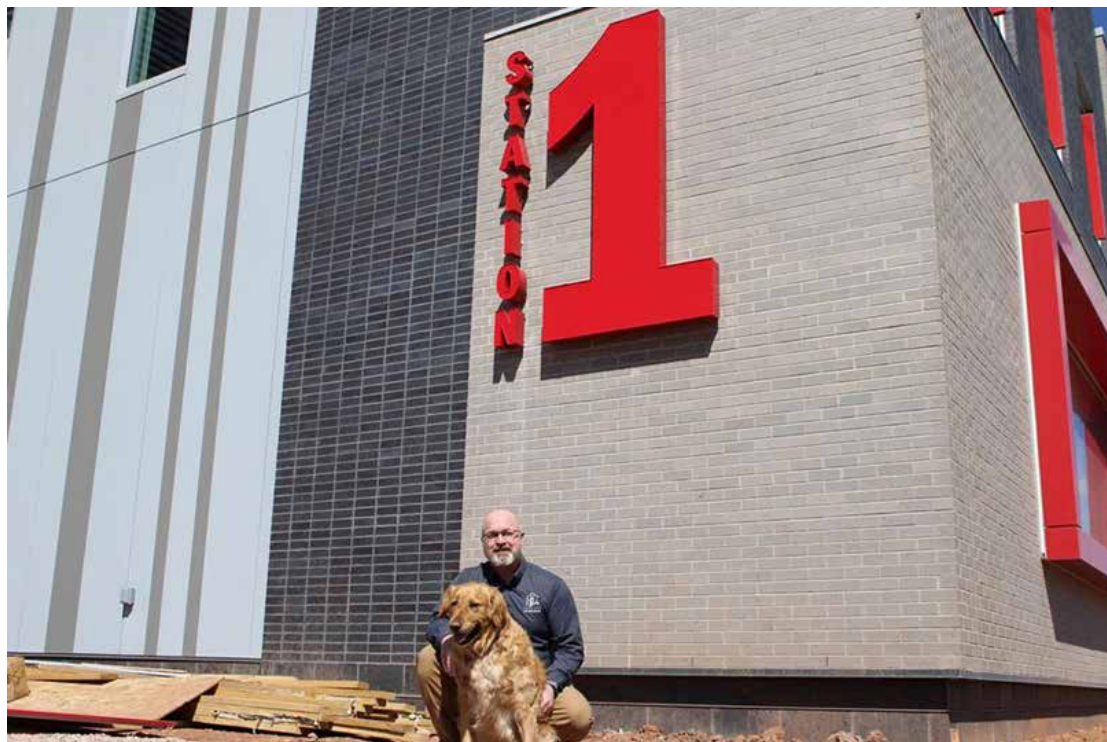
"The old station wasn't ADA compliant. In 1975, (fire service) is a very male-dominated field. So that building was built basically for one gender," Culberson said while listing some of the negatives of the older building. "We had added walls to make space for our female employees, but that was another need for us to expand."

Funds were allocated to expand the station by creating a new building, but also renovating the existing warehouse into an apparatus maintenance facility, training space and storage area for the department, Pennington County Fire Services and other entities.

Culberson said this expansion gave the department the opportunity to centralize all administrative and fire services in one location.

As personnel move into the new building as reconstruction of the warehouse happens, Culberson said they are quickly utilizing the space to not only better protect the city but also care for their employees.

"For the ones that are on call for 24 hours a day, this is their home and so to give them some of those amenities like home makes it more comfortable," Culberson said. "We have tough, tough job and for them to be able to have a place to come back to is nice."



Rapid City Fire Chief Jason Culberson, pictured here with Dexter, said the ambitious undertaking, which commenced in February 2023, is predicted to reach completion and reopen its doors in the first week of July 2025.



Woonsocket Hosts Central District Fire School

Great turnout for the district fire school in Woonsocket on Saturday, April 12. More than 60 first responders from 20 departments and two ambulance associations were in attendance. Classes offered included Ag Rescue, Rural Water Supply, Firefighter Rehab, Pump Operations and Wildland Fire Assessment Program. Those who attended also raised funds, which were donated to Wessington Springs Fire Department in memory of Assistant Chief Michial Brodkorb. See you next year in Wessington Springs!



Keystone area Wildland Urban Interface Fire Escalates to Multiple Alarms

The Battle Creek Fire Department responded to the intersection of Highway 40 and South Rockerville Rd, Unincorporated Pennington County, for a report of a Wildland Fire on Mar. 22, 2025 at 2:43 p.m.

Upon arrival firefighters observed a fire burning in cured grass and brush, with flame lengths between three to five feet in length and immediately struck a second alarm, eventually the fire went to multiple alarms.

The fire did threaten structures, infrastructure and transportation routes, causing limited residential evacuations.

Firefighters, hampered by drought stressed vegetation, winds upwards of 35 MPH, low relative humidities, limited access and steep inaccessible terrain, contained the rapidly moving fire at 39 acres.

No injuries to civilians, firefighters or domestic animals were reported.

Agencies responding included Pennington County 911, Battle Creek Fire Department, Town of Keystone, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Pennington County Emergency Management, Pennington County Highway Department, Pennington County Fire Service, South Dakota Highway Patrol, Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hills Electrical Cooperative, Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department, Box Elder Fire Department, North Haines Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hawk Fire Department, Piedmont Fire Department, Doty Volunteer Fire Department, United States Forest Service-Black Hills National Forest, South Dakota Wildland Fire, local friends and neighbors.



SDFA General Membership Meeting Minutes - June 2024

SDFA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING AGENDA

- Lake Area Technical College, Watertown, SD
- 7:30 a.m. 14 June 2024
- 4:30 p.m. 15 June 2024
- Call to order @ 0730am CT – Friday, 14 June 2024
- Posting of Colors
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Moment of Silence for Fallen Firefighters
- Invocation
- Parliamentarian
- Introduce SDFA Board Members and Auxiliary
- Welcome Comments from Guests
- Welcome Comments from Guests
- First Gentleman Bryon Noem / DPS Secretary Robert Perry
- City Administrator Amanda Mack
- Chief Don Rowland
- Approval of agenda (motion to approve)
- Motion to approve agenda by Dennis Gorton (North Haines VFD), 2nd by Rick Cronin (Fort Pierre VFD) Motion Passed
- Minutes of 2023 Annual General Membership Meeting minutes – as printed in SDFA paper (motion to approve) Motion by Monte Koopman (Colton) to approve 2023 Annual

General Membership Meeting Minutes, 2nd by Curt Rawstern (Selby). Motion Passed.

Treasurer's Report – Gorton – as printed in SDFA paper (motion to approve after audit)

-Audit committee – PJ Sloan, Aaron Fink, Kevin Schuelke

BUSINESS

Charlie gave an overview of membership, and numbers, Insurance overview, SDSU Firefighter research overview, survey please fill out. Work comp overview

Nomination Committee, VP Don Ward letter of intent to run for VP, Don unanimous vote motion Denny Gorton (North Haines), 2nd Rodney Veldhuizen (Custer)

Recess @8:14 am

Reconvene on Saturday @

Reconvene SATURDAY, 15 June 2024, 430pm - Membership Meeting and Closing Ceremonies

1. Newly Certified Firefighters to State Fire School, please stand
2. Comments and Questions from General Membership- No Comments
3. Nomination Committee – SDFA Vice-President Nomination Committee, VP Don Ward letter of intent to run for VP, Don unanimous vote motion Denny Gorton (North Haines),

2nd Rodney Veldhuizen (Custer)

Don Ward, Belle Fourche ran unopposed and will be the Vice President of the SDFA Association

4.Legislative Report – Steve Willard

Legislation update.

Continuing insurance bill, marijuana bill/SDFA has been contacted.

Steve Willard- With many new faces rebuilding relationships with legislation

Retired FF license plate passed will be available March 2025

Cancer Bill meeting in July, The board has been called on to testify, if any bills would come up.

5. NVFC - Spring meeting report; President Kludt gave update on talking to our congressional representatives, they are aware of the issues with foam issues. No answers on how to get rid of the foam properly; more to come on that. Federal grants VFA, last year grants got cut by 10%, hoping and trying to boost this back up. Working with the department of agriculture on wildland fire issues. NVFC has a program to asses' properties and gives some suggestions to help. Have your department get ahold of the NVFC.

OSHA Regulation /NFPA

changing NVFC website has some good information.

FEMA grant requirements review process for submission and writing, opportunities to learn how to write grants.

Anyone can join, similar benefits, free training opportunities.

Grant opportunities to attend 2025 NVFC hosting fall meetings in Rapid City, more information to come. Forty Seven of the Fifty states are represented in NFVC.

6. Updating growth zone information for departments SDFA Secretary will be working with departments the upcoming year to update rosters and create accounts to pay memberships online.

7. Future SDFA Events

Fall conference Fort Pierre 27,28,29 September LG Gist from Kansas, Mascot from the KC Chiefs

Future fire schools Watertown, Asst. Chief Scott Jongbloed thanked members for coming to Watertown.

8. Newspaper - Questions or comments for publisher – Jeff Gargano

Options to have an electronic paper.

More articles for training opportunities, photos.

9. SDFA Updates and

Happenings

10. Audit Committee Report – (motion to approve audit)

Dennis Gorton read audit report, financial records in order

Damon Hartmann-Doty Motion to approve financial reports as printed and Audit Committee report- 2nd by Scott Jongbloed Watertown; Motion Passed

11. Election Results

Don Ward, Belle Fourche ran unopposed and will be the Vice President of the SDFA Association.

Thank to Ron Hines for serving as the SDFA Vice President.

Recognitions:

Thank to Ron Hines for serving as the SDFA Vice President.

Scholarships awarded 16 applicants Aiden Cole- Hudson VFD, and Rachel Erk-Castle Rock VFD

Lifetime membership was awarded to Harvey Jongeling Chancellor VFD

12. Final Comments & Benediction- No further comments.

Motion to Adjourn 2024 State Fire School General Membership meeting by Harvey Jongeling (Chancellor), 2nd by Ron Hines (Huron). Motion Carried

Respectfully Submitted

SAMARA ERICKSON,
SDFA Secretary

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