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OCTOBER 2025 • VOL. 18 - NO. 8

REACHING MORE THAN 6,900 SOUTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTERS EACH MONTH

South Dakota Firefighters Association Fall Fire Conference 10-12 October 2025 Holiday Inn Hotel Conference Center Spearfish, SD



The SDFA Board invites everyone to learn from our guest speakers and sessions for the 2025 Fall Fire Conference. Including local stories from incidents across the state, with lessons and suggestions we can all take home.

Watch for details in the monthly newspaper and social media.

SDFA Membership updates and discussions on current state fire service issues.

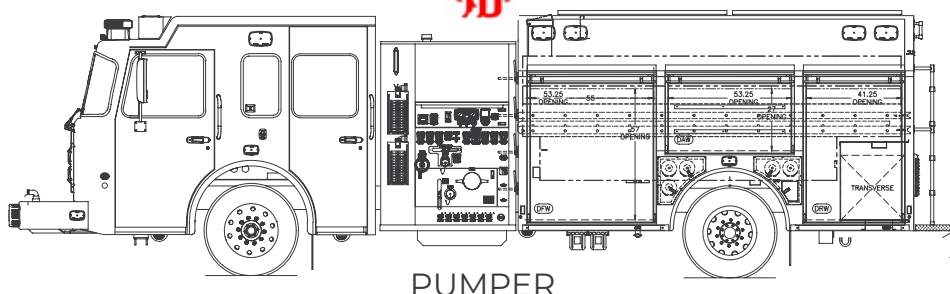
The open question, suggestion, and discussion session from the attendees was highly recommended and is being planned. Bring or send your topics!

Fallen Firefighter Memorial Service will be Saturday afternoon

And of course, the evening socials.

**Guest Speakers Tom Merrill
"The Professional Volunteer Fire Department."
Rodney Foster
"Rural Department Staging & Working Together"
South Dakota State University Research Team
"Helping make a Healthier Volunteer Fire Service"**

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Half a Century of Service: Worthing Honors Firefighter George Wallenstein

"Fifty years is a long time," is what firefighter George Wallenstein told visitors at his retirement party on September 6, 2025. "I'm not from here (Worthing), but I moved here in 1975 and I joined (the fire department) at 26," he said. Wallenstein explained that he was attending a street dance back in the summer of 1975 when it started to rain. He helped other people move chairs indoors into what used to be the old American Legion building. He shared that he happened to see a flyer that the fire department in Worthing needed more volunteers, so in September, he joined. A few years later, at age 30, George became Worthing's Fire Chief. A title he held for a total of 32

years. To celebrate George and his dedication to the Worthing community, the Worthing Community Fire Department hosted his retirement party. "I thank God to begin with," he started. "I thank my family for putting up with this for fifty years," George chuckled with the crowd. "Thank you to the past, present, and future firefighters," George finished, earning an applause from all in attendance. But little did Wallenstein know, a meal with family and fellow firefighters was not all Worthing had in store for him. Assistant Fire Chief Jeremy Jacobson had been planning something special to commemorate George's service for quite some time. "Grab your cameras and come out front, we have a

surprise," Jacobson shared with the group. With everyone assembled by the front door, Fire Chief Justin Appel and Assistant Chief Jeremy Jacobson unveiled a placard dedicating the Worthing Community Fire Hall to George Wallenstein. The placard reads, "This building is dedicated to George Wallenstein in gratitude for 50 years of exemplary service and commitment to the Worthing Community Fire Department. Thank you, George!" Wallenstein's name will forever be etched on the fire station he helped shape. True service leaves a lasting legacy—not just in the walls of a building, but in the hearts of a community.



George Wallenstein with his dedication placard on the side of the fire hall.



Past and present firefighters with George at his 50-year retirement party on September 6, 2025.



George and his wife, Sue Wallenstein, with Worthing Pumper 3.

Benefits of being a 100% Department Member

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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
- \$10K of Line of Duty Health and AD&D, fire related health incidents, i.e. heart attack, stroke, other.

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

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.

OCT. 1-2, 2025: International Association of Arson Investigators South Dakota Chapter's NFA F0756 Fire Investigation: Fire as a Weapon Course, Oct. 1 - 8 a.m. registration, class at 9 a.m., Oct. 2 - class at 9 a.m., 607 20th Ave., Brookings, SD.

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

APR. 24-26, 2026: Rushmore Fire Conference.

JUNE 11-13, 2026: 140th State Fire School, Watertown.

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South Dakota
FIREFIGHTER

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We welcome your views, opinions, news tips and questions. Letters to the editor must be accompanied by a name and daytime telephone number, and may be edited for space.

Vehicle collides with building

Driver OK following incident between Brookings, Aurora

A driver from Brookings is safe after their 2014 Chevrolet Cruze went off U.S. Highway 14 and collided with a building 2 miles east of Brookings on Saturday.

Nahom Gaga, 24, was helped from the vehicle by a first responder and subsequently cleared by personnel from Brookings Ambulance.

It was determined that a medical condition was a contributing factor in the incident, which caused an estimated \$50,000 in damage to the building at 6025 U.S. Highway 14 between Brookings and Aurora.

"Statements from witnesses and the driver indicated that the vehicle was travelling east on (U.S.14) when it veered into westbound lane, entered the north ditch, travelled approximately 200 yards before it struck the outbuilding on the property," Brookings County Assistant Sheriff David Biteler wrote in a Monday news release.

"The vehicle struck three supporting posts before coming to rest under and against the rear axle of a 2025 Chrome semi tanker parked in the shed."

The damage estimate for the semi tanker was unavailable, since it needs to be removed from the building and inspected. The property is owned by Rodney Thooft of Aurora.

Other responding agencies were the Aurora Fire Department and the South Dakota Highway Patrol. The latter is continuing its investigation of the incident, Biteler wrote.

(By Mondell Keck, The Brookings Register, Brookings, SD, Sept. 9, 2025.)



Rockerville Firefighters Contain Garage Blaze

On Sept. 16, the Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department responded to a report of a structure fire, in the 23000 block of Pine Grove Rd, unincorporated Pennington County South Dakota. Upon arrival firefighters found an active fire in a detached garage with heavy fire and smoke conditions with fire extending into the ceiling and roof assembly. Rapid attack by firefighters contained the fire to the structure of origin, stopping the spread of the flames to nearby natural vegetation, infrastructure and other improvements. No injuries to firefighters, civilians, domestic animals or livestock were reported. Agencies responding: Pennington County 911, Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department, Hill City Volunteer Fire Department, Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department and Ambulance Service, Battle Creek Fire Department and Pennington County Sheriff's Office. Photo courtesy of the Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department.

IF YOU'RE FIRST TO RESPOND,

BE FIRST TO REPORT NATURAL GAS LEAKS.



REPORT MAKE THE RIGHT CALL FAST

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- For additional questions and information on emergency coordination, contact MidAmerican Energy at publicawareness@midamerican.com.

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If you encounter blowing gas from a pipeline:

- Approach from upwind
- Keep all ignition sources away from the gas
- Set up a perimeter to keep people at a safe distance

When responding to a gas leak inside a building:

- Evacuate the building immediately
- Move people to a safe distance
- Eliminate all ignition sources
- Check all nearby buildings for a gas presence

If you need to shut off gas:

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U.S. Fire Administration Firefighter Fatality Notification

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

ED MARGAVICH, 80, Bristol, PA, died on August 15. On August 8, Fire Police Captain Ed Margavich responded with the Third District Volunteer Fire Company to a vehicle fire that spread to a house. After directing traffic at the scene for a while, Fire Police Captain Margavich was walking to a nearby fire station to get additional equipment when he fell and broke his femur. He was transported to a trauma center and underwent emergency surgery. Due to complications related to the injury, however, Fire Police Captain Margavich passed away on August 15.

CHRISTOPHER "BROWNIE" E. BROWN, 42, Northwood, NH, died on August 19. On the evening of August 18, Captain Christopher Brown participated in forcible entry training with Northwood Fire Rescue. At 3:12 p.m. on August 19, Captain Brown called the fire station to report that he was in severe back pain and requested an ambulance. Captain Brown was transported to a local hospital where his condition worsened rapidly. Although CPR and other lifesaving measures were initiated, Captain Brown was pronounced deceased. The cause of death has yet to be determined.

EDWARD "CHIP" CHIDESTER, 55, Harford, PA, died on April 27. Assistant Chief Edward "Chip" Chidester passed away on April 27, 2025, due to complications of surgeries for an injury he sustained fighting a brushfire on March 11, 2025.

BRIAN HATT, 51, Raywick, KY, died on August 25. On August 22, 2025, Lieutenant Brian Hatt was driving a fire department pumper as he was responding to a mutual aid call. During the response, the vehicle veered out of control, hit an embankment, and overturned. Lieutenant Hatt was ejected from the vehicle as it rolled. Lieutenant Hatt was flown by helicopter from the scene and transported to a hospital where he passed away on August 25, 2025, from the injuries sustained in the accident. Another firefighter who was a passenger in the vehicle was also flown by helicopter to a hospital with serious but non-life-threatening injuries.

MACK G. MAYS JR., 47, Madison Heights, VA, died on July 10. On July 9, Assistant Chief Mack G. Mays Jr. responded to a false alarm at a commercial building. After returning home, he began experiencing chest pain and was found collapsed inside his house the following day, within 24 hours of responding to the alarm. Assistant Chief Mays was pronounced deceased due to a cardiovascular event.

STEVEN D. GRIFFITH, 66, Danville, WV, died on March 3. On March 1, Firefighter Steven Griffith responded with the Danville Volunteer Fire Department to assist EMS with forcible entry into a residence. Within 24 hours of this response, Firefighter Griffith suffered a cardiac event and was transported to a local hospital. He was later transferred to a medical center where he passed away on March 3.

J. HANK HESTER, 70, Southwest Area Incident Management Team 3, died on Sept. 8 near the Grand Canyon in Arizona. On the afternoon of September 8, 2025, Firefighter/Equipment Operator J. Hank Hester collapsed while performing suppression repair at the Dragon Bravo Fire near the Grand Canyon North Rim in Arizona. Line paramedics performed CPR at the scene, but Firefighter/Equipment Operator Hester could not be resuscitated. The suspected cause of death is a cardiovascular emergency.

DOUGLAS WILLIAM THOMPSON, 65, Warren Township Volunteer Fire Department, Marietta, OH, died on Sept. 5. On September 4, 2025, Firefighter Douglas Thompson participated in fire department training from 7 to 9 p.m. Within 24 hours of the training, Firefighter Thompson suffered a cardiac event at home and passed away.

PRESTON FANT, 53, Tucker, GA, died on Sept. 8. At approximately 1:30 p.m. on September 8, 2025, Master Firefighter Preston Fant along with other units from DeKalb County Fire Rescue responded to a warehouse fire in Lithonia, Georgia. Master Firefighter Fant was injured approximately 15 minutes into the interior attack. Rescue operations and lifesaving efforts began immediately on scene. Master Firefighter Fant was transported to the hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

LUCAS A. GELHAUSEN, 41, died on Sept. 7. Celestine Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to a structure fire at approximately 7:15 p.m. on September 7. While responding in his personal vehicle, firefighter Luke Gehlhausen was involved in a single vehicle crash. Firefighter Gehlhausen was fatally injured in the motor vehicle accident and pronounced dead at the scene.

STEPHEN SCOTT, 62, Houston, TX, died on Sept. 17. On September 14, 2025, Firefighter/Paramedic Stephen Scott suffered a medical emergency while transporting a patient to a local hospital. Firefighter/Paramedic Scott was admitted to the same hospital and subsequently transported by Life Flight to a medical center where, despite surgery and continued treatment, he passed away on September 17. The cause of death has yet to be determined.

SDFA OFFICER REPORTS

I hope you will allow me a little liberty this month as I want to share a quote from one of the best authors I have read: "To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket -- safe, dark, motionless, airless -- it will change. It will not be broken... it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy is damnation. The only place outside heaven where you will be perfectly safe from all dangers and perturbations of love is hell." (C. S. Lewis). You might say Chaplain I have been in hell once too often, I am not sure that is right. But I want you to think a minute, why did you experience hell on earth, except your love for helping others? You see there is a high hidden cost of being a firefighter that no one told us about when we signed on. We got enamored with the lights and sirens ("Lights and Sirens" is my new nickname by the way). We were seduced by the engines and captured by the thought of saving lives. No one told us that along with the glamor came the cost of seeing broken bodies, of not saving the accident victim, or hearing the cries for help we could not answer.... There is a hidden cost, however that does not have to be the end of the story.

Rather than bore you with statistics, let me bluntly state that by choosing to be a firefighter you are three times more likely to develop post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than the general population. (Now aren't you glad to do what we do???) Now if you have been around the fire service for any amount of time, you know we are reactive to traumatic events. Have a bad call summon the critical incident team for a debriefing. Having flashbacks, call a therapist. However, even through CISM and counseling are in my "wheelhouse" I think there is a better way. Lea Sullivan, writing for Firefighter Nation, puts it this way: "While therapy and crisis support are essential, fewer firefighters would need them if more effort was put into resilience-building before disaster strikes. True strength isn't just about pushing through—it's about being prepared for what's coming. Developing mental resilience needs to be a priority, just like physical fitness and operational readiness."

Nice stuff, but what does it mean to develop mental resilience? Glad you asked, once again Sullivan notes, "Contrary to fire culture, resilience is not about suppressing emotions—it's about understanding them. One of the most effective ways to build resilience is through emotional awareness. Knowing how you process stress, fear, and trauma is the first step toward



Rodney Veldhuizen, Chaplain

"Greg Louganis, (for you who don't recognize the name, Greg was one of the most successful Olympic divers the USA has ever seen) was asked how he coped with the stress of international diving competition. He said that he climbs to the board, takes a deep breath, and thinks, "Even if I blow this dive, my mother will still love me."

managing it. By strengthening emotional awareness, firefighters gain a clearer understanding of their needs, fears, and internal struggles, allowing them to communicate and cope more effectively." You might object, chaplain you are talking about feelings again and you know we don't do that! I am not talking about feelings, I am talking about an emotion response, which normally in fire service evokes another "F" word. Why, because we react to those fears and trauma rather than developing tools to manage them.

What about dark humor? You know the bad jokes that abound after a bad call, or help us talk about things we wish we had never seen or touched? This has a place, however, keep in mind if this is our sole defense tool, it will cover up the need to deal with that emotion we are attempting to hide. Even more troubling, dark humor will give the impression that real struggles can be laughed off and not addressed.

What does this resilience stuff look like? First of all, there is no "secret sauce", no need for hours of therapy, just a consistent sense that you are a person of worth and value! When it comes to this, I like this story. "Greg Louganis, (for you who don't recognize the name, Greg was one of the most successful Olympic divers the USA has ever seen) was asked how he coped with the stress of international diving competition. He said that he climbs to the board, takes a deep breath, and thinks, "Even if I blow this dive, my mother will still love me." Think about that a moment, who do you count on to let you know you are loved no matter what? That is what self-worth is based on. It is not some macho ideal that I am the greatest. It is not thinking the department is lucky to have you, it is a sense that I am important to someone, and I am a person of worth and value. Then add to that, people with positive self-worth also seem to be develop better positive social interactions and those two elements combine to help manage stress. One major study "suggests that emotional regulation is a significant predictor of resilience, reinforcing its critical role in firefighter mental wellness. Establishing this foundation is essential—it provides a reference point for tracking and strengthening resilience over time." (Sullivan)

As I learned a long time ago when I first started writing sermons there is always the "So What Moment". So, what does this mean to me today. #1, The

constant exposure to trauma, loss, and high-pressure situations makes resilience a necessity, not an option. #2 While PTSD treatment is critical, real progress starts with proactive mental conditioning. By strengthening emotional awareness, fostering positive emotional regulation, and using humor in a healthy way, firefighters can equip themselves to handle the psychological demands of the job.

#3 The fire service must prioritize mental wellness with the same intensity as physical safety. Encouraging open discussions about mental health, promoting peer-support networks, and integrating resilience training into standard firefighter education will create a culture that values both strength and vulnerability.

At the end of the day, keep training to keep yourselves safe and to do the job, but don't neglect to work on the tools to build resilience. I would also invite you to remember the best treatment is prevention, this applies to mental health as well as to fire prevention.

CHAPLAIN RODNEY

Spearfish man arrested

The Lawrence County Sheriff's Office arrested a man for arson and assault following an incident Monday in Lead.

Authorities say they responded to a residence south of Lead off of Highway 385, for the report of an intentional fire set on the outside of a house and a bullet hole in a glass window.

When deputies arrived, they determined a subject had damaged vehicles and property around the residence and shot what appeared to be a rifle towards the house by reviewing security video.

They also found that the side of the home had been intentionally set on fire with a propane torch.

The occupants of the residence were awakened by a phone call and then smelled the fire and called 9-1-1.

During the course of the investigation, 19-year-old Jaxson Burleson of Spearfish, was arrested on charges including, but not limited to, arson, aggravated assault, stalking and intentional damage to property.

DEPARTED FIREFIGHTERS

Charles "Chuck" Weber

June 23, 1950 – September 5, 2025

Charles "Chuck" Weber, 75 of Marion, passed away on September 5, 2025. Mass of Christian Burial was held September 10, 2025 at St. Christina's Catholic Church, Parker, with burial at St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Marion. Memorials may be directed to the Marion Fire Department or St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery Fund.

Charles "Chuck" Loren Weber was born June 23rd, 1950 to Magnus and Beverly (Whitlock) Weber in Sioux Falls, SD. He was the oldest of four children. Chuck attended school in Bridgewater, graduating in 1969. After graduation, Chuck attended National College of Business in Rapid City, SD. He then enlisted in the National Guard 169th battalion and was with that unit for 8 years. He was at summer guard camp in Rapid City during the flood in 1972.

Chuck was united in marriage to Cynthia (Cyndy) Ackerman on December 2nd, 1972. To this union, two children were born, Kyle and Keith.

Throughout his life, Chuck had held various jobs including working for Rapp Chevrolet, hauling fuel, and owning and operating The Gas Stop in Marion.

He retired on May 29th, 2020 after almost 28 years at Central Farmers Co-Op. After retirement, Chuck kept busy working, helping local farmers with various jobs. A job he didn't call work was helping Keith with his custom harvesting where he ran the rake for him. Many hours were spent in the field as a family.

Chuck enjoyed working. When he did have free time (not working) he enjoyed camping, hunting and fishing. He loved the time they spent with the card club for over 30 years. One of the biggest joys of Chuck's life were his grandkids. Thanks to today's technology, he rarely ever missed one of the grandkids games, whether in person or streaming online.

Chuck contributed so much time to the Marion community. He was an active member of the Ambulance Service, Jaycees, Marion Catholic Church, as well as serving over 50 years on the Marion Fire Department. In 2020, Chuck was diagnosed with cancer the next 5 years. He fought some tough battles, but he never let it get him down.

Chuck is survived by his wife of 52 years Cyndy; two sons



Kyle (Gretchen) of Twin Brooks, SD, and Keith (fiancé Catie) of Marion, SD; grandchildren Cody (Mariah) McMahon, Alivia Weber, Karter Weber, Cali Weber, Caleb Kirkholm, and Alayna Kirkholm; great-grandchild Hudson Brandenburger; brother Craig (Marie) Weber of Mission, Tx; sisters Kristine (Mike) Olson of White, SD, Carolyn (Mike) Peterson of West Richmond, WA; sister-in-law Shirley Ackerman of Jordan, MN and host of nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents Magnus and Beverly Weber and his brother-in-law Roger Ackerman.

CLASSIFIEDS

CLASSIFIED ADS FOR THE SOUTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTER NEWSPAPER

Classified ads run \$10 for the first 10 words, and 25 cents a word after that. A photo is \$10 additional. Rates are the same in each state (Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas). Email the ad to jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com to place your personal or departmental ads.



FOR SALE: 2006 Ford F450 4x4, turnkey furnished type 6 engine, 80,319 miles (New Ford complete crate engine with head studs, mileage on new motor 2,685 miles), Darley 160 gpm pump, 300-gallon poly tank, 20-gallon foam cell. Asking \$100,000 OBO. **Contact Chief Robert Puhlman, Piedmont Fire, (605) 787-5121, or Assistant Chief Pat Gerdes at (402) 217-7628.**

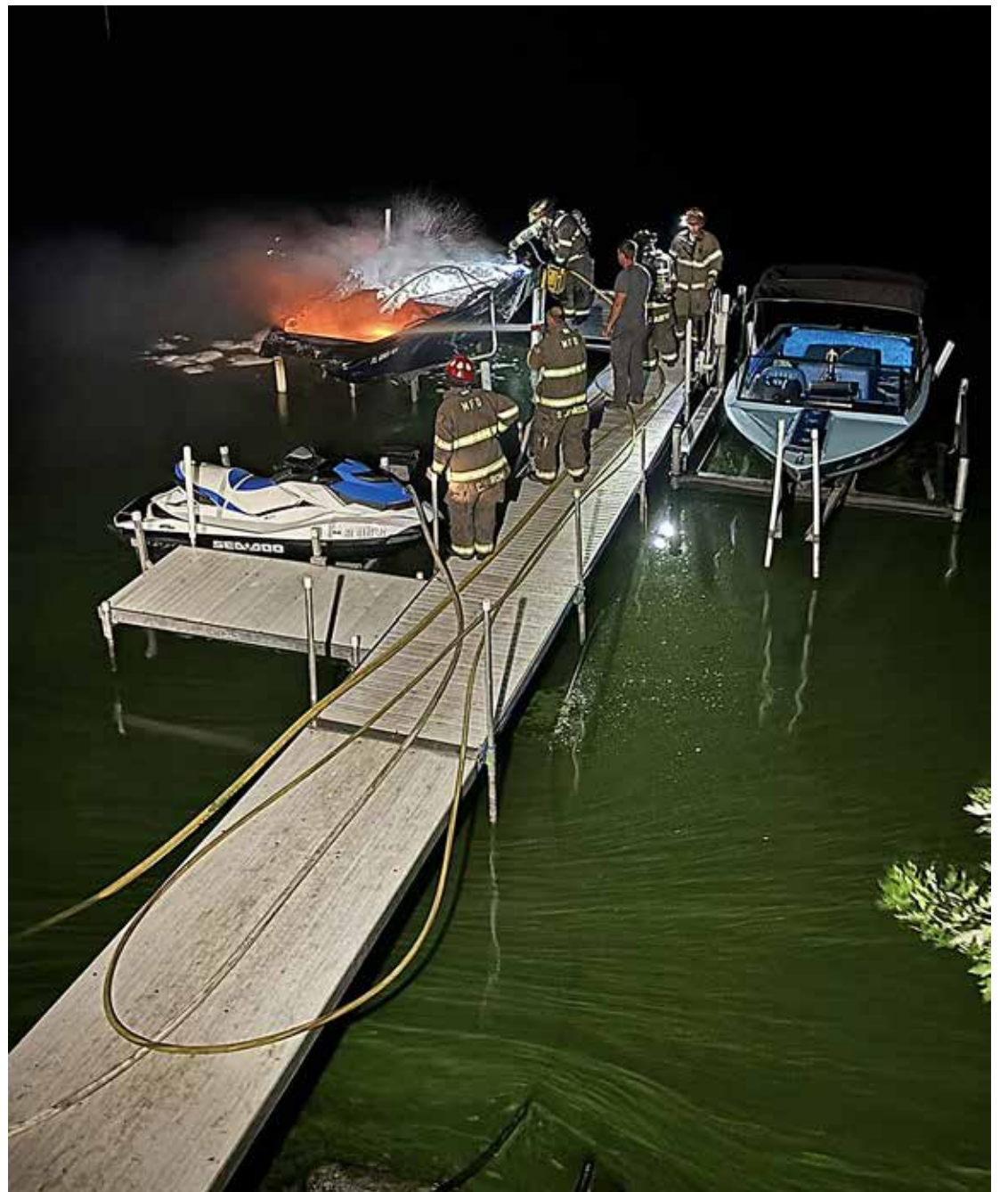


FOR SALE: 1998 Spartan Gladiator 8-man RD Murray/LTI 105' Aerial, 2,000 pump, loaded with options. **Chief Dan Roghair 712-395-2824**

If you have it and don't need it... SELL IT!
South Dakota Firefighter Classifieds...
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Firefighters Contain Boat Blaze Near Madison, Prevent Spread and Fuel Spill

Just before midnight on August 18, Madison and Wentworth Volunteer Fire Departments were dispatched to a fully engulfed boat still on the lift near Evergreen Acres Drive. Upon arrival, firefighters advised a working fire, and heavy smoke coming from one boat with a jet ski and second boat as additional exposures. Firefighters made an aggressive and effective initial knock down of the fire, protecting the other adjacent vessels and structures. After the fire was extinguished, responders noticed that fuel was leaking from the vessel. With assistance from Lake County Dive Rescue and utilizing their boat, floating absorbent boom was then deployed around the boat and dock to capture any additional spilled product. All units cleared the scene and were back in service by 2:30 a.m. No injuries to firefighters, civilians, or domestic animals were reported. Agencies Responding: Lake County 911, City of Madison Fire Department, Wentworth Fire and Rescue Lake County Emergency Management and Lake County Dive Rescue. From the Lake County SD Emergency Management Facebook page.



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SDFA OFFICER REPORTS



Charlie Kludt, President

"No matter where you are, what you have, or what size of department you are, the people in need are calling for your help. We owe it to them to provide the best help we can. Fall Fire Conference in Spearfish on 10-12 October will have two gentlemen that understand volunteer department challenges. Check the SDFA Events website to register."

What Do We Provide..?

Fire Prevention and Home Safety month. "Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home," is the slogan for this year.

You might be amazed at how many lithium-ion batteries you have in your home. They might have a longer shelf life, even up to ten years in a smoke detector. But, remember, keep testing them. If they get used a few times from an accidental smoked supper, they might run low before the 10-year life of the detector.

When those batteries from your

drill, leaf blower, other tools finally stop taking a charge. Check with your recycle center to see if they can take them. A local hardware store or construction equipment store may have a drop off to safely dispose of them.

I was at a national committee meeting a while back, when the question was posed, "Are there fire departments that don't respond to structure fires?" And several of us indicated, yes. Sort of.

We explained the existence of small, isolated, sparsely populated areas that may be primarily wildfire and rescue response. If

Fall Greetings from the Southeast District:

Hoping all are doing well, fall weather is approaching, hoping everyone is ready for farmers to be out in the field. Make sure you are ready for any emergency during harvest season.

Soon the sportsman will be out hunting, enjoying their days out. We all need to be prepared for any emergency that arises for these sportsman and farmers.

You also have to take care of yourselves, trying to be healthy, exercising, eating right. I know that is hard to do, but we gotta be ready to serve.

Fall school was held in Yankton, more to come in future newsletter. Everyone does need to be ready and trained for any event. Colton did some grain bin extrication training, big thanks to the Egger family, who are on or department, for using their equipment. Newer members have not used our equipment,

they did learn a lot on what to do. We did some vehicle extrication training, showed different ways to open the vehicle up to rescue someone. Always good training when you can destroy a car. These are good examples of local training, that any department can do, contact any local business that may have an emergency that would respond to. Question them on their protocols for an emergency, maybe do a night of training with them, learning from them.

Recently, I was involved with the SD Salutes on helping pick out 10 departments across the state to give them needed money for their immediate needs. It was interesting to review the sheets to see what everyone was requesting. We feel we picked out the most needing departments. The announcements of winners will be out soon. We did discuss that there are others venues to request funds, grants that are open year-

there is a structure fire, yes, they may still respond, but with limited capability. And due to distance away, it might only be exposure protection and keeping the fire from turning into a wildfire.

Which leads me to these questions for your department. What does your department provide? Do the people know your capabilities?

In our rural parts of the country, a vast majority of our fire is wildfires. Yes, grass and field fires are wildfires. We train and equip ourselves for what we are most likely to be dealing with.

As one individual has pointed out, we may not all need a structural pumper and structural firefighting gear. But we all have roads, cars, and crashes. Knowing how to do vehicle extrication and basic medical care is just as important.

Do you need all the expensive equipment to do vehicle rescue? No. But knowing how to cut or spread apart a vehicle with a sawzall, handi-man jack, and chains may be just a useful.

Have you ever had a cattle

trailer flipped on the side? Full or empty?

If your coverage area has a busy highway or interstate, you may run more calls than some fulltime stations.

No matter where you are, what you have, or what size of department you are, the people in need are calling for your help. We owe it to them to provide the best help we can.

Fall Fire Conference in Spearfish on 10-12 October will have two gentlemen that understand volunteer department challenges. Check the SDFA Events website to register.

The annual Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service will be held at the Fall Conference in Spearfish this year. In 2026, the service will be at the Memorial site in Pierre when we add the name of Murdo Firefighter Nick Van Dam to the monument.

Have a happy and fun Halloween.

Stay safe,

CHARLIE KLUDT
SDFA President



Dave Jorgenson, Southeast Director

"Dues will be going out in November, think about being a 100% department membership, we have heard of departments becoming 100% after learning about the benefits you receive. Give it a look and think about becoming a 100% department membership."

ly to apply for needs. So keep applying, check out other grant venues, keep trying, these forms are not hard to fill out.

The Fall Conference will be held October 10th thru 12th, at the Holiday Inn, in Spearfish. Make some plans to attend, we have some great speakers lined up, visit the SDFA website for bios on the speakers. Friday night for a meet and greet, then Saturday morning to start the conference.

Dues will be going out in November, think about being a 100% department membership, we have heard of departments becoming 100% after learning about the benefits you receive. Give it a look and think about becoming a 100% department membership.

Until next time, be safe, train and arrive home safe.

DAVE JORGENSEN
SESD District Director

Thoughts from the Tail Board

A short time ago, I heard a speaker talk about are you prepared and are you ready? At first I didn't think a lot about that and figured aren't they the same. Being prepared and being ready? Then I put it in the firefighter's context.

Prepared. What does that mean? It could mean I have the training to do the "job." Our department has the equipment to do the "job." The equipment is prepared to do the "job." We have the necessary resources coming to do the "job." These all seem to be tangible things. Relatively easy to quantify. Generally something you can touch or see. If I answered yes to these then there is nothing to stop me from doing the "job."

Ready. Could mean something entirely different. I have the training but am I ready mentally to do the "job." Is my mind set ready to do the "job"? Is my body ready to do the "job"? If the incident involves children, elderly, or people in the community I know, am I ready to deal with that? Am I controlling what is happening? Am I ready to drive on a public road where you have no idea if that other driver is ready? If I'm not ready, then should I even go to the "job"? Being ready can be totally subjective.

I don't know where I'm going with this, but to have a successful outcome in the "job," there seems to be two parts. Our equipment and myself. If one or the other is not prepared or ready, then maybe we shouldn't go on the "job."

I saw on Facebook a number of South Dakota fire depart-



Denny Gorton, Retired Treasurer/Past President

"...to have a successful outcome in the 'job,' there seems to be two parts. Our equipment and myself. If one or the other is not prepared or ready, then maybe we shouldn't go on the 'job'."

ments that observed September 11. Some were full out with ladder trucks and others a dignified showing of your engine. It's not what you did, but it is important that you took the time to reflect on the terrible loss of life to everyone, fire, law, ems, companies and mostly families. As you read this month's article the South Dakota Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service will be held in

Spearfish at the Fall Conference. Take the time to remember those fellow South Dakotans who also made the supreme sacrifice for their fellow neighbors.

I now will stop and let you get to more important things.

Thank you, stay safe.

DENNY GORTON

Title Powerful Leadership Tools

By JERRY KNAPP

In the FD we promote successful Firefighters into leadership positions. Typically, we give our new officer the leadership responsibility of the office but not the leadership tools/training to accomplish his/her assigned mission: leading a company or FD and making/keeping it a high performing team. The new officer has the best of intentions will work hard but if s/he has not had leadership and/or management training their success and future of the department is in doubt. The new officer clearly owns the responsibility but may not have been taught the leadership skills to build a high performing team. How do expect them to be a success? This is akin to giving your new officer a building lot and all the lumber and nails, but no saw or hammer to put the pieces together. Hopefully, the officer has gotten some of the leadership skills from his/her career outside the fire service. Hope is never a plan.

The purpose of this article is to share several very powerful leadership tools and time tested military leadership concepts

So you have developed your plan, the question is when do you execute it? Do you wait until every I is dotted and every T crossed? Is this paralysis by analysis? Or do you shoot from the hip and let it roll without sufficient planning and preparation?

The US Marine Corps is a pretty successful organization we can learn from. This is especially applicable when we consider applying Marine planning and decision making to our size up process. David H. Freedman captures the essence of this in his book Corps Business: "By promoting the 70% solution, Marines do not advocate shoot from the hip decision making. Neither do they condone fast, foolish plans. But they do caution against waiting until all the angles are figured out. Marines act as soon as they have a plan with a good chance of working." Pg 8

For us on the fire scene it is very similar. If we make good but rapid decisions for strategy and tactics we can stay ahead of the fire and set the course for the life saving and firefighting operation.

RELAX, LOOK AROUND, MAKE THE CALL

US Navy SEALs use a similar method of decision making under high pressure situations. It is broken down into three words: relax, prioritize, execute. In the book, Extreme Ownership, How US Navy Seals Lead and Win (Willink and Babin) pg5 Leif

Babin describes how he was taught to lead and win by his mentor Lieutenant Commander Jacko Willink. This decision making process is directly applicable to fire officers on the fire-ground.

During a deployment to Iraq Babin was in a tough spot and under heavy enemy fire with an EOD operator battle buddy. They had a prisoner that had not been searched yet, a large enemy force was moving in on them with heavy fire power. He needed to get back to his role of ground commander, search and get rid of the prisoner and fend off the fast moving attackers. All urgent tasks.

Babin continues "The Laws of Combat were the key to not just

surviving a dire situation such as this, but actually thriving, enabling us to totally dominate the enemy and win. They guided my next move.

PRIORITIZE: of all the pressing tasks at hand, if I didn't first handle the armed enemy fighters bearing down on us within the next few seconds nothing else would matter.

EXECUTE: Without hesitation, I engaged the enemy fighters moving toward us with my Colt M4 rifle, hammering the first insurgent in line carrying the RPG with three to four rounds to the chest, dead center. As he dropped, I rapidly shifted fire to the next bad guy and the next.

We needed to move. There was no time for a complex plan.

Nor did I have the luxury of providing specific direction to my shooting buddy, the EOD operator next to me. But we had to execute immediately. Having dealt with the highest priority task—armed enemy fighters maneuvering to attack—and with that threat at least temporarily checked, our next priority was to fall back and link up with our SEAL assault force. To do this, my EOD operator and I utilized cover and move—teamwork. I provided cover fire while he bounded back to a position where he could cover me. Then I moved to a new position to cover for him."

The above are excellent examples of the very successful use of simple but effective proven lead-

ership tactics. Like the Marine 70% solution, the effective mantra: relax, prioritize then execute is a great sequence and a powerful leadership tool.

Consider using and/or exploring in depth—buy these books for your FD leaders or aspiring leaders-- some or all of these powerful leadership tools contained in these two easy to read books appropriately during your career to solve problems so you can create your high performing company or department. I was going to say, I hope they are useful to you in helping you achieve your goals. However, hope is not a plan for professional, personal or organizational success, time tested leadership tools like these are.



Dear Old Timers

Dear Old Timers (DOTs) is a gathering of firefighters, husbands and wives, and families of the fire service. Some with over 60 years!

The DOTs Social will be Saturday at the Fall Fire Conference in Spearfish

Everyone is welcome

Come and enjoy longtime friendships and reminisce at Dear Old Timers.

\$10.00 Membership donations to DOT are used to assist funding the annual scholarship given to a high school senior.



**Don't need it...
SELL IT!**
South Dakota
Firefighter
Classifieds...

jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com

Victim Removals Through a Window

By COLE KLEINWOLTERINK

We all know that when a victim is found inside a house fire, the priority is rapid, safe removal. During VES (aka VEIS) the most direct path of removal is often the same window the firefighter entered. Likewise, a search that begins through the front door doesn't have to end there; a window may still be the fastest, safest way out.

This month's article details a step-by-step technique for moving an unconscious victim through a window and onto a firefighter on a ground ladder for a controlled descent. I'll paint the picture the best I can in words and pictures, but the online version may be worth checking out as it includes a short video to help you visualize the process: bit.ly/IowaFirefighter.

Before we get into the technique, let's discuss how to properly set the ladder to make removal as safe as possible. When positioning the tip of the ladder, it should be placed at or below the windowsill (not inside the

opening) and set at an angle for rescue of 60° or less. A shallower angle transfers more of the victim's weight to the ladder and less to your arms, reducing fatigue on long descents. For more on ladder angles, following the aforementioned link to the online articles, head over to the Resources Tab and read "43 Degrees of Separation."

Let's start with the "inside" firefighter, or the firefighter that is inside the structure. This firefighter should begin by dragging the victim feet-first to the window. The standing leg-lock or double underhook drags work well because they position the victim supine and allow the firefighter to position the victim with their buttocks a couple feet from the wall. From there, the victim's knees should be pushed to their chest in order to bend their legs in a way that positions their toes against the wall.

Next the firefighter should move to behind the victim's head, sit them up, and use your knee to hold progress as they lift them into an upright position.

From this position, it's advantageous to hand the victim's arms to the outside firefighter that's on the ladder. While some suggest the ladder firefighter should communicate head placement, I've found it unnecessary because once the hands are transferred, the ladder firefighter can guide the head whichever way is needed.

The victim is now positioned for the window removal; think of them like a spring and push from behind the shoulder blades to drive them out the window. This pushing motion should feel rather effortless, especially when compared to trying to lift the victim's dead weight from under their armpits. As the victim is pushed out the window, the ladder firefighter should guide the victim's hands to the side they want the victim's head to come out. Once the victim is brought out of the window in the chosen direction, the ladder firefighter should grip the ladder beam for stability and position their forearm under the victim's trapezius, with both of the victim's arms positioned off



the side of the ladder. This creates a secure brace that prevents the victim from sliding headfirst off the ladder. The firefighter should also stay close to the victim, using their body to pin them against the ladder to control the descent and further reduce the chance of slipping.

Once the victim's upper body is secure, the inside firefighter should remove the legs one at a time. For narrow windows, bend the victim's heel toward their buttocks, lift at the knee, and slide the leg out. If needed, the ladder firefighter can move down a rung with the victim to create additional space. After the first leg is clear, the ladder firefighter should place their arm between the victim's legs and grab onto the ladder's beam for stability. The second leg can then be guided out of the window. With the victim fully on the ladder, the firefighter can descend in a controlled manner.

A few tips when drilling this technique: depending on the victim's size and weight, repositioning the arm from the trapezius to under the armpit may provide better stability. If staffing allows, placing a second ladder parallel to the first creates a wider platform, and allows a second rescuer to assist with the descent. In cases involving large victims, a two-person team inside may be necessary.

When drilling, it's always best

to begin on a short ladder from a first-story window, then progress to second-story evolutions once crews are comfortable, always using a belay to protect against slips during the drill. Remember: window removals rely on position, leverage, and coordinated movement, not brute force. Execution under stress comes from simple, repeatable steps done the same way every time, so build those steps into your reps until they're automatic. Practice dry, in smoky conditions, and on longer ladders.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion, the firefighter will be able to:

Position a ground ladder at or below the windowsill and at a rescue angle ($\leq 60^\circ$) to facilitate window-based victim removal.

Using a window as the egress point, remove an unconscious victim from inside a structure to the exterior.

From a ladder, receive an unconscious victim exiting a window and guide a controlled, safe descent to the ground.

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.

For some "5-Alarm Deals"...

don't forget to check out the classifieds!

- Page 5

Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department leads effort for Hippy Hole Trail markers

By LESLIE HLADYSZ

The Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department (RVFD) has installed trail markers at Hippy Hole. The news was shared on a Facebook post by the department itself and confirmed in a separate interview with department Chief Gail Schmidt of the RVFD. Chief Schmidt said the move took place after numerous conversations with the United States Forest Service (USFS).

Markers were placed Saturday, Sept. 6, with help from the Pennington County Search and Rescue (PCSAR) and the Pennington County Sheriff's Office (PCSO).

The Hippy Hole trail is technically an unsanctioned trail by the USFS and has thus remained previously unmarked. But while Schmidt said some locals might not be fond of the markings, the "secret's out" about the popular summer spot.

"It feels good," Schmidt said about marking the trail. "It's the right thing for the community."

By community, Schmidt means both hikers and first responders.

This season RVFD has been paged to four rescues, which included one fatality, and at least one lost person, at Hippy Hole.

"It's not just us" that responds, Schmidt said, noting often Keystone Ambulance Service and PCSAR are also on site. She estimated about 30 personnel, many of whom are volunteers, come to each rescue. Most rescues take at least four hours.

Logistically, Schmidt said, it is a lot.

"They have to carry in all the gear. Most times it's a rope rescue, which means hooking up ropes," she said.

Schmidt estimates volunteers are carrying in 50 to 60 pounds of gear, risking their own potential for injury in doing so, since the Hippy Hole area involves cliffs, rocks and water. In the event of a water rescue, dive gear and bottles also have to be brought in and out.

Once a patient is reached, he or she undergoes assessment and stabilization.

A Stokes basket is used to move a patient. If more than one rope system is set up, the patient in the basket needs to be moved from one rope system to another.

Once on the flats, the patient is then wheeled out. Some rescues are so challenging the South Dakota National Guard or Life Flight have to be called in.

There's also the issue of poor communication. This is true for both reporting parties, those who are calling in about an injured person, and for first responders.

"We don't have good communication down there," Schmidt said. "We can't talk to dispatch from Hippy Hole."

Schmidt said first responders have to set up a communications relay with a truck radio at the parking lot, communicating to responders down at the hole.



"It's a lot to coordinate," she said.

Since cell phone coverage is spotty at Hippy Hole, the reporting person usually has to get to the parking lot to call for help, meaning the injured party's condition may change by the time a call is made and responders reach the victim. This adds an additional layer of challenge.

Last summer Schmidt said the RVFD was paged for one lost party and encountered three lost parties, none of which had made their way to the correct parking lot.

"It boiled down to we're not going to keep people off the trail," Schmidt said about the need to mark the trail and the correct parking lot. Schmidt began to have conversations with Mystic District Ranger Jim Gubels, who ultimately gave RVFD permission to put up trail markers.

She called the USFS a "key partner," adding, "We could not have done this without them."

RVFD paid for the markers and nail. Department members, along with PCSAR and PCSO, moved through the area slowly and deliberately as they placed markers, being certain to look and relook as they approached trail spurs to help keep people on the correct trail.

"Someone came up with the brilliant idea of marking the markers with numbers," which the department then mapped,

Schmidt said.

"If someone gets injured and says they are by marker eight, I know where they are," Schmidt said.

Matt Thompson, ambulance director for the Keystone Ambulance Service Inc., reminds hikers that the markers will help, but being prepared for the conditions is still imperative.

"Overall we continue to ask everyone that ventures down

there to make sure they are adequately prepared for the hike. While it is short, it is very strenuous so adequate footwear, plenty of water and preparation will go a long way in preventing issues," Thompson said.

"We ask if someone is injured, attempt to call or text 911 from where the injury occurred and to stay in one place so it is easier for rescuers to find them. If they do have to find cell service, again

stay in one place once in contact with 911 so we can easily find them."

Schmidt reiterated, she is super grateful to the USFS and while the markings are not a "perfect answer," they are "absolutely huge."

She also reminds hikers to, "be smart when you're hiking. Wear solid footwear, bring plenty of water and be aware of your surroundings."

Grass Fire torches 142 acres in Allen

At approximately 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, August 25, the Martin Volunteer Fire Department was dispatched to a grass fire at Allen.

Although the fire danger was low, the fire burned well and at times the flames reached 4-5 feet in length.

Multiple other departments responded to the fire as well including Pine Ridge, which currently has several supplemental fire fighters and grass trucks contracted for extra support this fire season.

The Incident Commander, the contracted fighters, is a former Bennett County resident and Martin Fire Fighter.

A single engine air tanker

(SEAT) came in to drop fire retardant on the fire twice which helped quell the flames.

No one was officially evacuated though locals were warned to stay vigilant as the fire was suppressed. There were no struc-

tures reported lost in the incident. A total of 142 acres were burned in the fire. The cause of the fire is unknown.

(By Chris Docter, Martin-Bennett Co. Booster II, Martin, SD, Sept. 3, 2025.)

**ACTION PHOTOS
NEEDED!**

Please send them to

jeff@southdakotafirefighter.com

along with information to explain the photo.

Stange sentenced to 55 years for Pringle fires

By JASON FERGUSON

A Pringle man was sentenced to 55 years in prison last Thursday afternoon for starting a series of fires in the Pringle area late last summer.

Jeremiah James Stange, 32, received the maximum sentence agreed upon by both the state and the defense after Stange agreed to plead guilty but mentally ill to all nine charges he faced for the arson spree.

Stange was charged with six counts of Reckless Burning or Exploding, a Class 4 felony, two counts of Second-Degree Arson, a Class 4 felony, and one count of First-Degree Arson, a Class 2 felony. The more serious counts are for the structure fires Stange admitted to starting.

The plea agreement was spurred in part by the fact that Stange was found to be mentally ill during the series of a pre-sentence investigation that included a mental evaluation.

Stange also agreed to pay

\$154,489 in restitution and possibly additional costs if the state requests, although Seventh Judicial Circuit Court Judge Heidi Linngren said it's likely Stange will never pay any of said restitution.

In asking for the maximum agreed-upon sentence, Custer County state's attorney Tracy Kelley said Stange's history, which includes six prior felonies for drugs and theft, paints a picture of someone who has no regard for other people or their property.

Kelley said the pre-sentence investigation report revealed Stange felt he should receive leniency because the fires he set did not hurt anyone, which she challenged.

"He did hurt people," she said. "His actions destroyed the property of others." Kelley said the fires also put firefighters in danger each time they had to respond to a blaze, and that the community was held captive with fear wondering when the next fire would happen.

Kelley said Stange also put his children in danger, pointing out he both took his children with him when he started fires and left them home alone to go start fires.

She pointed out he set a fire near his own home to try to deflect suspicion away from himself. Stange is a danger to the public, Kelley said, saying his fires were intentional, malicious acts, and Stange admitted he hoped for larger scale destruction.

She said the presentence investigation shows Stange has no remorse for the fires. "I am asking for this court to give him every bit of that 55 years," she said.

Stange's defense attorney, Kyle Beauchamp, said based on his client's actions he is extremely lucky nobody was hurt.

"I think it's incredibly lucky we are not here on more serious charges," he said. Beauchamp asked for mercy from the court for Stange, showing the mental evaluation conducted on Stange showed he was

mentally ill at the time he was setting the fires.

"Almost every conversation I've had with him is him accepting responsibility," Beauchamp said, adding Stange wanted to move forward with accepting responsibility more quickly, but Beauchamp insisted on the mental health evaluation.

Beauchamp said Stange had a bad childhood that included physical abuse. His childhood eventually led to his turning to meth, alcohol and marijuana.

Beauchamp said Stange will get the help he needs in the state penitentiary (because of the mental illness diagnosis/plea the state is required to treat him for that illness) and hopes to someday get out of prison, take care of his family and work to pay off the restitution he owes.

"I know Mr. Stange is incredibly sorry," Beauchamp said.

When he was offered the chance to speak, Stange declined. "I would like to not speak," he said.

Before handing down her sentence, Linngren acknowledged there was nothing she could do to replace what the victims of the fires lost, and acknowledged Stange's rough childhood. However, she said, he was an adult who made deliberate choices

when he was setting the fires. "You were a functioning member of society at the time," she said.

Linngren said when Stange first started setting the fires he did so with the intention to harm people, and said it is her responsibility to make sure he is never in the position to harm someone. There may be a reason or explanation for his actions, she said, but there is no justification. She said she doesn't believe Stange has a handle on how serious his actions were.

Upon receiving his 55 years, which will run consecutively, Stange, who was in a Pennington County Jail uniform and shackles, was led out of the courtroom.

He will receive credit for the 330 days he has served in jail. The state has a formula for parole dates that varies depending on the level of felony and previous record, but Stange likely will not be eligible for parole until he is in his 60s.

Stange faced over 100 years in prison prior to the plea agreement. South Dakota's Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) and the Custer County Sheriff's Office led the investigation. Other assisting agencies were the DCI Forensic Lab, U.S. Forest Service, the State Fire Marshal's Office and State Wildland Fire

I-29 in Watertown closed briefly for car fire

A car fire sent Watertown Fire Rescue to Interstate 29 on Tuesday, Aug. 6. At approximately 4 p.m. Tuesday, Watertown Fire Rescue responded to a car fire following a single-vehicle incident on I-29 near mile marker 173, according to a release.

WFR units Engine 4, Tender 1 and Medic 4 responded to the scene.

Upon arrival, crews found a two door BMW fully engulfed in flames, with debris scattered across both southbound lanes of

I-29, according to a release. Engine 4 initiated fire suppression efforts while Medic 4 evaluated the driver.

Tender 1 provided water supply support.

The driver sustained minor injuries and declined transport to Prairie Lakes Hospital for further evaluation, the release stated. Engine 4 extinguished the fire, which had spread to the vehicle's fuel tank.

After the fire was put out, crews from Engine 4 and Tender

1, with assistance from Performance Towing, worked to clean up debris from the roadway. The east lane of I-29 southbound was closed for approximately 45 minutes during the incident, the release stated. Performance Towing, the South Dakota Highway Patrol, and the Codington County Sheriff's Office helped WFR. The vehicle was deemed a total loss.

(By Watertown Public Opinion Watertown, SD, Aug. 12, 2025.)



Hot Springs firefighters contain fuel leak after semi crash on Fall River Road

On Sept. 16 at 2:07 p.m. Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department was paged out for a semi accident with unknown injuries on Fall River Road. They responded with six personnel, rescue engine and light rescue truck. Once on scene they found the semi had heavy damage with a pretty serious fuel leak. Once they knew there was no extrication needed, firefighters stopped what was left of the leaking fuel and took care of the hazardous material problem. There were no injuries. They cleared the scene three hours later after the wrecker company had everything under control. Thank you to Fall River County Sheriff's Office, Hot Springs Ambulance Service, Hot Springs, SD Police Department, Fall River County Emergency Management, SD-DOT, South Dakota Highway Patrol and Olson's Towing. From the Hot Springs Volunteer Fire Department Facebook page.

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South Dakota First Responders Support Training



Focus Groups for Volunteer SD Firefighters

These focus groups will include questions and discussion about health and wellness policies, facilitators and barriers to physical activity and nutrition implementation, and knowledge and application of existing resources and health and wellness programs.

About the Focus Groups

My name is Allison Barry, and I am an assistant professor in exercise science at SDSU. I am conducting focus groups to explore what physical activity and nutrition looks like in the South Dakota Volunteer Fire Service.

This will be the second phase of a FEMA (EMW-2023-FP-00535) funded research project sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security entitled **Empowering Volunteer Firefighters: A Community-Based Approach to Enhancing PA and Nutrition**.

- Participation will occur at the SD Firefighters Conference, **October 10th-12th** in **Spearfish, SD**.
- Each focus group will last approximately 50- 60 minutes and will be conducted in-person at the respective conferences.
- Each group will consist of 5-8 people and be asked to complete two focus group sessions (Day 1 and Day 2).
- **You will only be allowed to participate in this if you are a volunteer and at the rank of a firefighter.** When you completed both sessions, you will be compensated with a **\$50 gift card for your time**.

Survey Link: <https://redcap.sdstate.edu/surveys/s=7DWLNPF9K8J8X8XH>

If selected, you will be notified prior to the conference to provide more details.



If there are any questions about participating in this study, please contact Allison Barry at allison.barry@sdstate.edu. If you would prefer to speak with someone else, you may contact SDSU's Research and Integrity and Compliance Officer at 605-688-5051 or sdsu.irb@sdstate.edu.



Huron FD responds to structure fire

On Sept. 15, the Huron Fire Department responded to a structure fire outside of the city limits. Unfortunately, the fire had too much of a head start and crews had to back out after making an attempt at an interior stop. The fire was eventually able to be brought under control, and some items were retrieved from the basement for the homeowner. Huron Fire thanks Wolsley Fire Department and Hitchcock Fire Department for their assistance, providing vital water supply and manpower. From the Huron Fire Department Facebook page.



Submit Your Presentation Proposal for the 2026 NVFC Training Summit

Proposals due
October 20

By **KIMBERLY QUIROS**,
Chief of Communications

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is pleased to announce that it will host its signature annual conference, the NVFC Training Summit, on June 26-27, 2026, in Arlington, VA. The NVFC is now accepting proposals from qualified instructors and speakers for presentations to educate first responders about critical issues in the fire and emergency services. Submit your proposal by October 20, 2025.

The NVFC Training Summit provides an opportunity to share ideas and best practices, network, and participate in training regarding key topics in the fire and emergency services. Breakout sessions will be offered in three tracks: Health, Safety, and Training; Recruitment and Retention; and Leadership. Sessions will be 90 minutes in length. Examples of relevant presentation topics include but are not limited to:

effective training; fireground/response; physical health; behavioral health; fire and life safety education; working intergenerationally; diversity, equity, and inclusion; mentorship; family engagement; work/life/volunteer balance; recruitment; communication; management; long-term planning; data for the fire service; technology/AI for fire departments; and finding funding and resources.

The NVFC values the different experience and perspectives of first responders nationwide. Find out more about the call for presentations, including more topic examples and how to write a successful proposal, in the Call for Presentations Guide.

Proposals must be submitted by October 20, 2025. A peer review team will evaluate all presentation proposals. Selections will be made based on quality, relevance, focus, practical application, and the presenter's experience and credentials. Selected presenters will be notified by November 24, 2025. Find out more and submit your proposal here.

The NVFC will cover travel

expenses and provide a stipend for selected presenters. Teaching teams are welcome to apply, but only one instructor per course can receive travel reimbursement/stipend. Please note, while organizations and companies are welcome to apply to share their subject matter expertise, all courses must be educational in nature.

Learn more about the NVFC Training Summit at www.nvfc.org/summit. Read about the 2025 Training Summit here. Questions? Contact Amanda Tegtmeyer, Training Coordinator, at 202-887-5700 or amanda@nvfc.org.

ABOUT THE NVFC

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading nonprofit membership association representing the interests of the volunteer fire, EMS, and rescue services. The NVFC serves as the voice of the volunteer in the national arena and provides critical resources, programs, education, and advocacy for first responders across the nation. Learn more at www.nvfc.org.



Joe Foss Field Honors Retiree

Tim Staples of Joe Foss Field Crash Fire Rescue retired on September 8 with 27 years of service to the department. Staples served the department for 20 years as a member of the South Dakota Air National Guard. He retired from military service as a Master Sergeant. Staples was recognized as one of the most knowledgeable rescue firefighters during his service. His uncanny ability to retain information and training material made him an on scene asset. Staples plans to try something a little different for a little while and looks forward to his new direction in life.

ACTION FIRE PHOTOS NEEDED!

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

Piedmont structure fire escalates to two alarms

On Sept. 15, Piedmont Fire Department, responded to a reported structure fire in the 400 block of Main St, Piedmont, Meade County, SD. First arriving firefighters found a free burning fire with a heavy smoke condition, issuing from the single story, residential structure with fire extending into the ceiling and roof assembly and immediately struck a second alarm. Rapid attack by firefighters contained the fire to the structure of origin, stopping the spread of the flames to nearby structures, infrastructure and other improvements. The American Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota, family and neighbors are assisting the residents. No injuries to civilians, firefighters or domestic animals were reported. Agencies responding: Pennington County 911, Meade County Dispatch, Piedmont Fire and Ambulance Service, Meade County Sheriff's Office, Meade County Emergency Management, Black Hawk Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hawk Fire Corp., North Haines Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire Department, Box Elder Volunteer Fire Department, United States Air Force 28th Bomb Wing/ Ellsworth Air Force Base Fire Department, Doty Volunteer Fire Department, Whispering Pines Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department, Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department, Black Hills Energy, Montana Dakota Utilities, South Dakota Fire Marshalls Office, the Red Cross Serving Central and Western South Dakota. Photos courtesy of the Piedmont and North Haines Volunteer Fire Department.



What's an inch tall and can move a fire truck?
A classified ad in the South Dakota Firefighter!

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

National Volunteer Fire Council National Meeting held in Rapid City



The South Dakota Firefighters Association and the Pennington County Fire Service hosted the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) Fall Conference in Rapid City.

The 4-day conference was held on Sunday September 21st through Wednesday, September 24th 2025 at the DoubleTree Hotel and Convention Center with representatives from 38 States, Puerto Rico, American Samoa and two Canadian provinces.

Highlights of the conference included a picnic dinner held on Monday September 22nd, hosted by the Rapid Valley Volunteer Fire Department. The picnic served over 300 participants including representatives from

South Dakotas Congressional delegation, Senator Thune's and Representative Johnsons Office.

96.6% percent of the South Dakota Fire service is volunteer based.

In Pennington County alone, there are 18 Volunteer and two career departments

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is the leading organization representing volunteer fire, emergency medical and rescue services in the United States.

The NVFC has direct influence on federal, state and local fire programs and regulations

You can learn more about the NVFC by visiting their website at www.NVFC.org





YOU SHOULD HAVE YOUR DEPARTMENT FEATURED!

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

Submitter's Name _____ Submitter's Phone # _____

Department Name: _____ Total Number of Members: _____

Volunteer _____ # Paid _____ Year Department Established: _____

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

Pumpers _____ # Tankers _____ # Rescue _____ # Ambulance _____ Other: _____

Names in picture: (on separate form please)

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

Officer's Name: _____

Office: _____

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

Black Hills Wind and Fire annual fundraiser

Black Hills Wind and Fire held their annual summer fundraiser for Black Hills Children's Home on July 30. Total raised was in the amount of \$2,000. Half was raised by boot donation collections and other half was Wind and Fire members from around the country. Wind and Fire motorcycle group are firefighters who raise money for children's camps and homes nationwide. Local chapter can be reached at wnfire@rocket-mail.com.



Sign Up Now for the NVFC Step Strong Challenge

The National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) is excited to launch its inaugural Step Strong Challenge, which will run from October 1-31. Participants are challenged to meet certain step goals during the month of October to improve their fitness and earn chances to win prizes. Responders can up the challenge by making it a competition in their departments or families as to who can earn the most steps.

TO PARTICIPATE:

Download the Challenge app from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

Launch the app and select "NVFC Step Strong" Challenge from the list.

Complete the in-app registration and pair your supported activity tracker. Anyone with a smartphone can track their steps. Starting October 1, sync your step data to the app by selecting "Tap to sync steps" at the top of the Summary tab. Sync at least one time per 24-hour period and before the Challenge end time to make sure all of your steps count!

Bonus activities will also be offered throughout the month to earn a 5,000-step boost per activity.

Every participant who achieves at least 200,000 steps (approximately 6,500 steps daily) will be entered into raffles for the chance to win prizes. Additional raffles will be held for those who achieve 300,000 steps (approximately 9,700 steps daily) and the top 10 steppers. The overall top stepper will win a grand prize.

Download the app now and get ready to start stepping in October! Find more information at www.hekahealth.com/nvfc25. Learn more about the NVFC at www.nvfc.org.

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