

May
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Fire Line Newsletter

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Appointment to Interim Fire Chief

I am honored to have been appointed by the Police and Fire Commission to serve as the Interim Fire Chief for Fond du Lac Fire Rescue. Many have asked exactly what the interim position actually means, so I'll take some time in this month's newsletter to explain the circumstances. The interim position carries all the duties and authority of the Fire Chief, yet I am the "placeholder" until the next Fire Chief will be named. I have the ability to make any needed decisions and changes to make the agency better, yet I would not make any "extensive" changes, just to have the next Fire Chief come in and modify things to suit their vision. I will continue to press forward in the mission to provide the very best fire rescue service to the citizens and visitors of The City of Fond du Lac. I also intend to create a positive atmosphere with both internal and external stakeholders by providing the resources needed to create progressive change in mental wellness and strengthen relationships throughout the community.

Another question that I have been asked is how and what is the process for appointing the next Fire Chief? This process is solely decided on by the Police and Fire Commission (PFC). The PFC has decided to perform a nationwide search for the next Chief, which is not an uncommon practice in today's fire service. In order to accomplish this, the City will be hiring an Executive Search Consultant to assist the PFC in providing transparency and navigating through the process. These searches for Fire Chief can be a time

consuming task and have been known to drag out for months, but the PFC has placed a timetable for the selection and appointment to be completed by the middle of June 2022.

The last question I have been asked is, will I be applying for the Fire Chief's position? My answer is most unequivocally...YES! I want to be the next Fire Chief in Fond du Lac and I feel I am prepared and ready to take on that challenge. I feel with my over 27 years of experience in the fire service, an extensive education and a proven commitment to the City of Fond du Lac and Fond du Lac Fire Rescue's mission, makes me the ideal candidate for the position. My servant leadership style, knowledge of the agency needs, and willingness to adaptively change will assist me to create a clear vision for the future of Fond du Lac Fire Rescue. This is my organization and this is the agency I have passion for. I look forward to the process for selection of Fire Chief, serving the department and its citizens and I am excited for the future of Fond du Lac Fire Rescue.

Stay Safe and Well!

*Interim Chief
Erick Gerritson*

A Farewell from Retired Chief O'Leary

It's Time for Me to Fly

On October 31, 1988 if you asked me where I would be in my fire service career on April 13, 2022 there is no way I would have imagined that it would be my last day as a firefighter and it would be in Fond du Lac retiring as fire chief. The past 33 years have gone by quickly and they have been nothing short of incredible. I am grateful for all the firefighters I have worked with over the years; there are so many people who brought positive influences to my career and I won't soon forget their collective impact on the fire service.

My wife Bobbie and our children Michael and Thomas have been the ones who have given the most. Moving twice with young kids is not easy, moving away from family is even more difficult. My family made countless sacrifices for my career and I am grateful. I can never truly repay them for their unconditional support and encouragement over the years.

The Fond du Lac community has been exceptional! No matter what the cause they have stood alongside all of us and we are truly blessed to have this community and these people who we are lucky to protect. The public is our greatest asset and we can never lose sight of our promise to serve them without reservation.

We didn't get to where we are without teamwork, grit, determination and dedication to our mission. We have to continue to demand excellence and push hard to keep reaching for things that may seem out of reach. Continual improvement is not just words that we use for accreditation, they are what guides us though our time at the firehouse.

I have some regrets, some things I wish we figured out together. I am keenly aware of the toll this job takes on our mental wellbeing. Our profession needs help from professionals who understand our profession, professionals who we can feel comfortable talking to and taking their help. If we continue to be reactionary we will continue to suffer losses in our ranks. Please take care of each other and know it is okay not to be okay. If you know of someone who is suffering, take the lead and get help even if it makes you uncomfortable.

It's been an honor and privilege to serve as your fire chief. Thank you for your cooperation, dedication, commitment and willingness to serve our great community. I pray for your continued safety and good health.

"I'm OUT"

Chief O'Leary



FOND DU LAC FIRE RESCUE

OPERATIONS

By: Interim Chief
Erick Gerritson



Teams vs. Groups

I found the below article for this month's newsletter. This is a great reminder of the importance of a Team and Teamwork in the fire service. These 5 points are driven home weather you are in the Command Staff, all the way through the newest firefighter. Sometimes a little perspective and self-reflection is all that is needed to put all of us back on a successful path.

5 dysfunctions that turn teams into mere groups.

From issues of trust, conflict and commitment to accountability avoidance and inattention, dysfunction can render a team utterly ineffective.

Firefighting is the ultimate team sport. It cannot be done alone. All firefighters know the satisfaction and sense of pride and belonging when the team is functioning together seamlessly. Unfortunately, most firefighters also know the feelings that come when the team is not working well: discomfort, alienation, anger, even fear.

In his book "The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable," author Patrick Lencioni describes the five most dangerous ways that teams fail to operate effectively. Although his book is framed in a corporate model, his conclusions apply equally to emergency services.

Let's review each dysfunction and its application to the fire service.

DYSFUNCTION 1: ABSENCE OF TRUST

Trust is the bedrock of emergency service; without it, firefighters cannot do their jobs. If first responders lose the trust of the communities they serve, people will not call them for help when it is needed. They will not candidly answer questions or offer information. They will assume an adversarial relationship in any interaction.

Of course, firefighters must also have the trust of their coworkers,

whose lives are, sometimes quite literally, in their hands. Officers must be trusted by those they lead so that decisions are not second-guessed or undermined.

It is easy to break trust and hard to win it back. A firefighting team that does not value trust is one that is doomed to fail.

DYSFUNCTION 2: FEAR OF CONFLICT

This is a problem that affects many firefighters as individuals and teams. We used to joke in my department that if firefighters felt comfortable with conflict, they would have become cops.

Firefighters like being good guys, and many prefer to avoid conflict rather than deal with it. "Go along to get along" is something you hear as a value in many fire departments, and this approach can work with low-level conflict. But for real problems, firefighters may lack the will and skills to effectively deal with them. Poorly managed conflict always undermines team cohesion.

DYSFUNCTION 3: LACK OF COMMITMENT

On any given team, there may be individuals who seem to be going along for the ride, and who lack personal commitment to the goals and objectives of the team and organization. Sometimes these people are just slackers, and other times they might be actively undermining the team while still paying lip service to the stated mission.

DYSFUNCTION 4: AVOIDANCE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

This problem often goes hand-in-hand with the previous dysfunction: Everyone knows that one person isn't pulling their weight or may be actively doing damage to the team behind the scenes, but no one wants to say anything.

There are many reasons why it can be hard to hold someone

accountable. The individual in question may be someone that others like personally, or they may have a lot of seniority on the job. Maybe that person used to be a good firefighter, but performance has slipped for some reason. Sometimes peers and leaders fear confronting someone because they lack skills to do it and they don't want to escalate a conflict they think they can't handle.

DYSFUNCTION 5: INATTENTION TO RESULTS

This problem can manifest for a couple different reasons. Sometimes teams are poorly trained and not held to any standards of performance. Sometimes they value camaraderie over output. Sometimes they are hindered by members who put their individual need for recognition over the achievements of the group. Ultimately, teams exist to perform. While it is critical that they function interpersonally, they must also achieve results that serve the larger organization and mission.

WORK AS A TEAM, NOT A GROUP

It is easy to see how fire service teams could malfunction in any of these five areas. How many bad outcomes could have been avoided if someone had felt comfortable enough to say no when the rest of the group was going off the rails? How many "problem employees" could have turned their careers around if someone had held them accountable early on for their actions?

Team dysfunction is cumulative. You don't lose trust for one mistake if that bad action is recognized and atoned for. Everyone avoids conflict now and then, but when it becomes the norm, that will undermine the effectiveness of the team. Allowing individual team members to become

marginalized for any reason and allowing others to act alone means that you may be working in a group, but you don't have a team.

Lencioni's book was published in 2002, and he ends it with a section titled "A Special Tribute to Teamwork." He writes, "As I was nearing the completion of this book, the horrible events of September 11, 2001, occurred. Amid the unfathomable tragedy of the situation and the amazing triumph of the country's response, a powerful and inspiring example of teamwork emerged—one that must be acknowledged here."

He goes on to recognize the commitment and sacrifice of the men and women of fire, rescue and police departments who responded that day – "groups of people working together [who] can accomplish what no assembly of mere individuals could ever dream of doing."

At their best, firefighters are the epitome of what a team can be. The challenge is to maintain this commitment every single day.

Reference; Linda Willing or
firerescue1.com

**Until next time...
Stay Safe!!**



...Acting to Save

Types of Calls:	March 2022	March 2021	Year to Date (2022)	Year to Date (2021)
Alarms Involving Fire	3	12	20	28
Fire Mutual Aid Given	1	4	3	7
Fire Mutual Aid Received	0	3	0	5
Other Calls (False Alarms, Service Calls, etc.)	75	76	215	222
Emergency Medical Calls	419	454	1366	1382
Paramedic Intercepts	8	11	20	20
Interfacility Transports	49	39	106	115
TOTALS	554	592	1727	1767
Fire Inspections Completed	499	306	1191	795
Defects found during Fire Inspections	276	148	508	364



Current Status of New Construction

- River Hills Mixed Use Development on S. Main St. – *Building 12 is under construction*
- Forest Mall - *Meijer Project still in planning*
- Sister Catherine Drexel Homeless Shelter – *Under Construction*
- BCI Burke – *Addition starting soon*
- Hobby Lobby – *Construction/Renovation underway*
- Summit Auto – *Addition has begun*
- Brooke Street Lofts 14 & 16 N. Brooke St. – *Planning Phase*
- Kwik Trip (Schreiners) – *Demolition Completed*
- Taco Johns (West Johnson) – *Final Occupancy Approved – Opening Soon*
- Club Car Wash – *Planning Phase – E. Johnson & Pioneer Road Locations*
- Mercury Plant 4 – *Construction Began*
- Marchant Schmidt – *Site Plan Approved – will begin construction soon*



The Code Summary

By: Assistant Chief Garth Schumacher

Guiding Principles

I wanted to start off my first newsletter item as the Assistant Chief of EMS with a few of my guiding principles as it relates to the service and image we provide. If you recall Chief Janquart's final newsletter article, he details some areas that we as firefighters and paramedics we try to control. As first responders we are tasked with bringing chaos and stressful situations under control, to save lives and property, to create an atmosphere that is safe for the citizens we protect. What happens when we go on incidents where we feel we cannot control the situation? When we respond to nursing homes and residences we've been to multiple times in the past? What happens when we respond to these and it is for something minor and we end up not transporting, or better yet transporting when we know that transport isn't needed?

Is it advantageous to us to explain the lack of need for a transport to a patient during the call? Does it matter?

My guidance to everyone in EMS is this, it is what I made my practice in the 12 years I

had on the "box" and it worked for me, I want it to work for you as well. When faced with a patient that we have been to multiple times for calls other than an actual emergency, when the issue they are having is obviously not needing an ambulance, my response was simple. I would perform the assessment, take vitals, explain my findings to the patient, and let them know that based on our assessment I didn't believe they needed to go to the hospital by ambulance but if they still wanted us to take them we would get them to the ambulance and get them to the Emergency Room. That was the extent of the conversation, respectful and short. You see, Janquart hit it on the head, we are not going to change the mindset of the people that utilize the ambulance in this manner the only thing we are going to do is form complaints and tarnish the image that we have worked to build over the years.

I have been on calls where the lead medic had spent more time trying to talk someone into a no transport than it would have taken to get them to the hospital in the

first place, we could've been back at the station by the time that whole conversation was finished. This is completely unnecessary and we aren't going to change this mindset as things are currently, this isn't a new issue and it isn't going away, certainly not by anything we in EMS have any control over. So my advice to you is simple, don't create issues for yourself or our service by trying to change something you have no control over, it's ok to submit to the fact that you cannot control your patient's actions. Do what you can for the patient, perform your assessment, report your findings and respect the patient's wishes...it's really that simple be respectful and cordial with people, even if you've been there a dozen times. Nursing homes....does it benefit the patient to "educate" the nurse or caregiver on-scene at the time of call? Do we know the policies that are in place that the nursing staff have to follow before we are telling them what they "should" have done? They do not follow our protocols, or us theirs, we have to understand that these too are out of our control, be kind and respectful, let me work on these issues as they present, let me take the heat and have the

hard conversations with administrators, we need you all out on the street doing the good work you do, not in a puddle of hot water over something that is truly not necessary and beyond your control.

I leave you with something I always like to regurgitate from Gordon Graham, "if its predictable, its preventable" You will respond to hundreds of these calls in your career, you can predict that, you can control how you are going to react to them, you cannot control the fact that you will have to respond to them or when, but what you do and how you interact is completely within your control, I would suggest choosing the way that keeps you, the crew, and the department in a positive light.

As always, keep an eye out for each other, take care of each other. We are all in this together!

Garth



EMS WEEK

Rising to the Challenge

May 15-21, 2022



The second graders at Chegwin Elementary had a unit on community leadership. They found 40 students in their school who identified as in need. FDLFR donated sleeping bags and hygiene kits to the students. The second graders helped unload, carry and will distribute the items to those children identified.



Happy May Birthday

Noah Krielkamp (April) • Jim Knowles •
Jason Roberts • Jack Olstinski • Shawn Kneeland •
Max Blitzke • Zachary Mueller



Thank You!

A quick note, to thank EMTs for saving my husband's life for the third time... not sure which Station House. Came to Agnesian pain clinic where [redacted] was getting a shot in his neck, where his chronic pain emanates from for the last 16 years or so, and his "normal" morphine was combined with their sedative form of a benzo.... Which your men immediately recognized was the reason he was not waking up following the procedure. Administered Narcan, small dose... Then off to emergency room. am sitting next to him in the hospital where he ended up on a ventilator, and is now hopefully coming around. Not sure how this will turn out, but hoping this will not happen to anyone else... Your guys are the best. Please let me know which Station House crew this was, and let them know how much their work has meant to me, and my husband who is very fragile with his smoking and diabetes, and horrible raking pain every day, and chronic infections, but is again still alive, thanks to your/our EMTs.

Sincerely, and best to you,

Please note the FireLine Newsletter will be sent bimonthly going forward.

Congratulations!



Dwight Fisher with the Honor Guard



Todd Janquart with the Honor Guard



Paul Loderhose with the Honor Guard

With retirements comes promotions. Enjoy retirement Dwight Fisher, Todd Janquart, and Paul Loderhose. Congratulations AC of EMS Garth Schumacher, Engineer Taylor Huenink, and Engineer Nick Czaja on your promotions. Congratulations to Noah Lorenz for completing probation and being sworn in as a full member of FDLFR! That is a lot of ice cream being bought at the stations this month! **CONGRATULATIONS!**



DC Garth Schumacher being pinned by his Mom, Kerry



Engineer Taylor Huenink being pinned by his fiancé, Marissa



Engineer Nick Czaja being pinned by his wife, Jamie



FF/P Noah Lorenz being pinned by his Dad, Tom



Well-trained people are the best defense against fire.

By: Assistant Chief of Training/Safety
James Knowles III

Dissecting Buildings: Creating a Mental Blueprint

Fireground performance is largely determined by the ability of firefighters to confidently navigate the fire building. Their initial actions, particularly those of the first-in company officers, is what sets them (and the entire incident) up for success. The capacity to rapidly assess the conditions encountered on arrival and accurately anticipate the environment in which they will operate is paramount. The groundwork for this mental skillset must be diligently laid long before the bell ever hits for the alarm of fire.

Along with fire behavior, building construction represents the very foundation upon which all strategy and tactics are framed. It must be acknowledged that the fire not only has a head-start, but also maintains the “home” advantage. To level the playing field, firefighters must possess an intimate familiarity of the building stock within our communities, particularly the floorplans. The greater our body of knowledge and the deeper our understanding of how the specific built environment, the fire, and our operations are all interconnected, the more concise and reliable our decision-making process will become. Through consistent training and drilling, coupled with a focused study of the specific construction and occupancy types that make up our communities, firefighters can achieve a level of competency that can be continuously honed. A good place to start is by conducting area surveys to identify the composition of our respective response districts. This will provide a baseline of the prominent building styles within each particular area. With this intelligence, we can begin to profile the individual neighborhoods/streets to narrow

down the potential configurations we will be confronted with.

Once the common construction and occupancy types have been compiled, the next step is to examine how they are laid out. Residential occupancies, specifically private-dwellings, can most often be categorized into one of the following universally recognized styles: ranch, raised-ranch (bi-level), split- (tri-) level, Colonial, bungalow, Cape Cod, or Victorian. By characterizing each one, specifically the typical pattern of the floorplan, we can streamline our size-up and create a “mental blueprint” of the interior to provide us with the insight and guidance needed to orient ourselves and maneuver, even in zero visibility, despite never having set foot in the home previously. Most of us innately possess a considerable degree of knowledge when it comes to this, but we may not have explicitly connected the dots. Throughout our lives, we have likely spent a great deal of time in most of these different types of homes. Whether we grew up in one of them ourselves or we visited family members and friends who did, if we stop and think, we can probably envision the different floorplans in great detail.

The orientation of the rooms, however, can be inverted from one building to another, that is, a mirror image. Using a ranch-style house as an example, the location of the bedrooms/ bathroom and the living room/kitchen are interchangeable, and can be found on either side of the front door. Because of this variability, we must use exterior features to identify the specific configuration of each building we encounter. The most telling characteristics are the size, shape, and positioning of the windows, as well as the chimney, and the vent/soil pipes. A large picture/bay

window or a bank of multiple, full-size windows (side-by-side) in the front of the house should indicate the living room. If the house has a chimney, it will serve that space and be located along that exterior sidewall.

Continuing to use the ranch-style house as an example, the common floorplan will adhere to following pattern: the kitchen will be located directly behind the living room (straight in from the front door), which may have a separate dining room adjacent to it (in the back corner of the building) that is open to the living room. The windows serving the kitchen will be elevated and are often casement-style, found in a series of two to four. If there is an attached garage, access to it will be along that sidewall of the structure. The bedrooms and bathroom will be located on the other side of the home, connected by a center hallway running parallel with the front wall (the long axis) of the building. The bathroom will be located off of the backside of the hallway, between the kitchen and the rear (master) bedroom. In larger ranches, a pair of bathrooms may be found, with one serving as an on-suite for the master bedroom. The bathroom(s) will also be evident from the exterior by an elevated, smaller, double-hung-style window (which may be frosted for privacy), as well as a vent/soil pipe penetrating through the roof directly above. The door serving the stairs to the basement (if one is present) will be located directly opposite the bathroom door and will be outward swinging. Another outward-swinging door may be present between the bathroom and back bedroom, which will serve a (linen) closet. Across the hall, along the frontside of the house, two more bedrooms will be located.

A tremendous asset for developing this knowledge and skillset is the use of real estate websites. In addition you may use the assessor’s page for your community. While conducting an area survey, any address can be entered into an Internet search engine or the municipal property database and a detailed description, history, and visual of the property can be obtained. Doing so allows you and your crew to take a digital walk-through of the entire property, both inside and out, as well as the particulars of the construction and utilities. Because private dwellings are largely off limits to building inspections and surveys, every incident we respond to should be used (when appropriate and with tact) to physically recon these buildings and build your familiarity with them. The most routine calls for service can be turned into some of the most impactful learning opportunities. By taking this approach you will dramatically up your “street IQ” and be able to read buildings more fluently. Armed with this mindset, you will become more deliberate in your actions and greatly enhance your efficiency of movement, improving your overall effectiveness on the fireground.

Source: Papa, N. (2022). *Dissecting buildings: creating a mental blueprint*. Fire Engineering. Retrieved from: <https://www.fireengineering.com/fire-prevention-protection/firefighter-training-dissecting-buildings-creating-mental-blueprint/>

Fire Prevention

The Bureau Never Sleeps

By: Division Chief of Community Risk Reduction & Life Safety
Jason Roberts



Community Risk Reduction

As a new leader focused on Community Risk Reduction, I am excited to use this newsletter to share the great programs and projects that our team is currently working on to reduce the risks to the members of our community and their property. The platform will continue to provide a focus on fire & life safety tips as it pertains to the volume of incidents in our city, the upcoming events, and the anticipated climate.



On Monday, April 18, 2022 our organization teamed up with the ACE Career Showcase at Fond du Lac High School. The department partnered with the building construction class to build props for a miniature size house (Palmer Doll House) that is utilized to demonstrate flow paths and how ventilation affects the environment for citizens and firefighters in fire conditions. This project

allows the students to expand their building construction knowledge and have a direct impact on the community. In addition to the 120+ students, this project will train current members and new recruits, inform partners in the community, and teach citizens messages on fire science and life safety.

DC Jason Roberts



Free Smoke Alarm Installation

Fond du Lac Fire has partnered with the American Red Cross of Wisconsin and the Fond du Lac Senior Center to perform home safety visits and install smoke alarms. This is a two-day event on May 24-25, 2022. During the 20-minute visit, volunteers and other partners will install the smoke alarms and share information on causes of home fires, how to prevent them, what actions to take if a fire starts, and how to create a fire escape plan.

Residents who would like assistance can visit <https://www.redcross.org/local/wisconsin/about-us/our-work/home-fire-campaign/smoke-alarm-request.html> or call **888-376-4056** to schedule an appointment.

Installations in May are part of *Sound the Alarm*, a national Red Cross initiative in May to install **50,000** free smoke alarms with partners in more than **50** at-risk communities across the country. *Sound the Alarm* events are a critical part of the national Red Cross Home Fire Campaign, which has helped save 1,243 lives since launching in October 2014.

Thank you to the generous support of local businesses who have also contributed allowing this event to be successful.



Grilling Safety

There's nothing like outdoor grilling. It's one of the most popular ways to cook food. But, a grill placed too close to anything that can burn is a fire hazard. They can be very hot, causing burn injuries. Follow these simple tips and you will be on the way to safe grilling.

SAFETY TIPS

- ❗ Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- ❗ The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- ❗ Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grill area.
- ❗ Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- ❗ Never leave your grill unattended.
- ❗ Always make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it.

CHARCOAL GRILLS

- ❗ There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- ❗ If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
- ❗ Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.
- ❗ There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.
- ❗ When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

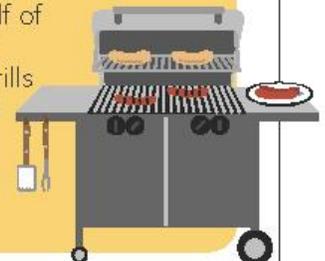
PROPANE Grills

Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. A propane leak will release bubbles. If your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubble test, and there is no flame, turn off both the gas tank and the grill. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department. **If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department.** Do not move the grill.

If the flame goes out, turn the grill and gas off and wait at least **5 minutes** before re-lighting it.

FACTS

- ❗ July is the peak month for grill fires.
- ❗ Roughly half of the injuries involving grills are thermal burns.



NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION
The leading information and knowledge resource on fire, electrical and related hazards



nfpa.org/education ©NFPA 2019