

3rd Quarter
2023

Fire Line Newsletter

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It's been a Year already?!

As the title of this article states, I can't believe it has been a year since the PFC had selected me as your Fire Chief. Although it has felt like the year went by super-fast, we as an agency have accomplished so much. Actually too much to include everything in this newsletter article, but there are two significant accomplishments that need to be highlighted and reflected on.

The first item is our focus on mental health and wellness. While I was interviewing and applying for the Fire Chief's position, I stated we need to do better for our members in the subject of mental health and mental wellness. I truly believed then, which still holds true today, that we need to make sure our responders are mentally strong, healthy and capable of doing their best work for our citizens. How can we help our community, if we are mentally in a bad place? Additionally, the longevity and health of our membership will make a better agency in the future.

This change first started with improving the internal culture at the Fire Department. Next we have taken huge strides by developing a solid mental health and wellness program. We have put into place six trained Peer Counsellors that have the tools and education to assist any member that may be struggling. Guiding our members to different resources whether it be our Employee Assistance Program (EAP), professional counseling, written resources, or just being able to be a "sounding board" about incidents that they have experienced. Although we have a solid mental health program, there are always areas to improve and we will continue to make this a priority for our membership family.

A second area that I wanted to concentrate on a year ago was our recruitment efforts, to include a more diverse work force. This process is not a quick fix, but more of a long-term challenge. Just as the entire country is battling to hire quality

candidates, so too are fire departments throughout the State. I am pleased to say that we have been able to make positive strides over this past year. In October of 2022, we were able to start a new Fire Explorer Program. This program takes youths, age's 14-20 y.o. during the school year and provides them real life training on what it is to be a Fire Paramedic. Special thanks goes to Lieutenant Keith Wendt for heading up the program. There are more details on our website, should you know of anyone that might be interested.

Late last December we had hired six candidates that were still in college studying paramedic. This is a new process for FDLFR, as typically we only hired members that were completed with their certification. Our thought process was; if we hire them early and invest in their education, that when they complete their education, they will in-turn invest in our agency. I'm happy to say that this investment has paid off, and as of today, Fond du Lac Fire Rescue is fully staffed. We will continue to find innovative processes and procedures for recruitment to find the very best candidates to protect and serve our City.

I outlined the success in these two areas, but we have done so much more over the past year. From increased training, to joining WI Task Force 1, to the new Record Management System and one of the biggest changes, the re-structuring of the organization. All of these great successes we share, because we cannot do them alone. Our department continues to strive for excellence and I am blown away by what an awesome agency we have here in Fond du Lac. #FDLFRfamily

Until next time, be safe!!

*"Your Fire Chief"
Chief Erick Gerritson*

...Acting to Save

Types of Calls:	May 2023	May 2022	Year to Date (2023)	Year to Date (2022)
Alarms Involving Fire	9	22	40	59
Fire Mutual Aid Given	2	3	10	6
Fire Mutual Aid Received	0	1	1	2
Other Calls (False Alarms, Service Calls, etc.)	138	108	552	411
Emergency Medical Calls	567	586	2729	2617
Paramedic Intercepts	8	7	40	35
Interfacility Transports	54	39	233	180
TOTALS	714	716	3321	3087
Fire Inspections Completed	306	15	1583	1298
Defects found during Fire Inspections	186	11	622	571

CONGRATULATIONS!

We greatly appreciate and value your hard work and dedication to Fond du Lac Fire Rescue.

Thank you!

*Engineer Mitch Petersen – 25 Years
 Engineer Rick Gerritson – 25 Years
 Engineer Mike Spencer – 20 Years
 Office Manager Lori Muentner - 5 Years*



Mitch Petersen
 Hire Date: 5/15/1998



Rick Gerritson
 Hire Date: 6/8/1998



Mike Spencer
 Hire Date: 6/23/2003



Lori Muentner
 Hire Date: 8/20/2018



EMS is Life!

By: Assistant Chief Garth Schumacher

Summer Wellness Tips

After what seems like an eternity, summer is now in full swing. If you are like me, it already seems to be on the down turn and fall is right around the corner. I felt like this was a good time to remind everyone on some simple steps to keep you healthy this summer season when you embark on your various outdoor adventures.

First is sunscreen, so many of us seem to put this off until we notice a hot sensation on our skin. I have noticed this while at sporting events with my children. The first application of sunscreen goes on without a hitch; the re-application of sunscreen often is forgotten. This is the same for when we are at the lake or at the local pool; sunscreen needs to be re-applied at least every hour to maintain protection. Not only does sunburn hurt, it can have long-term effects on our health that can include various types of cancer.

Another area that sometimes is overlooked and we as medical professionals see a lot of, is heat related emergencies. Staying hydrated and limiting outdoor activities during extreme heat is essential to not being overcome by the heat. In our profession, we do not always get the opportunity to stay inside on days like this, and to the contrary could have to exert ourselves on these days as emergencies arise. Staying hydrated is not just the guidance for when your outdoors, hydration starts when you wake up in the morning until you are down for the night. Allowing yourself the proper intake of fluids keeps you ahead of the curve should you have to be outside for work or leisure an extended period.

Alcohol consumption during extreme temperatures is not advised as alcohol actually dehydrates your body quickly

and by the time you realize there is a problem you are usually far worse. Alcohol in moderation with the intake of water is the best way to keep ahead of this curve should you decide to consume on these extremely hot days.

One last item to address, and I know DC Roberts has been working hard to raise awareness is the use of fireworks. As July 4th is upon us, it is a tradition of so many that fireworks are lit to celebrate the Nation's independence. Fireworks are very appealing to the masses and for that reason so many cities, towns, and villages have professional pyrotechnic companies perform these shows. We all know that these fireworks stands all up and down the highway sell the illegal type of fireworks, designed to be lit off at their designated areas. These are one, not legal to be lit anywhere other than the retailers designated area and two,

extremely dangerous to those not professionally trained to lite them off. Every year people sustain significant burn and blast injuries from these pyrotechnics, and they do have higher instances of malfunction then that of the professional grade pyrotechnics. I cannot reiterate enough the fact that these should be lit by a professional pyrotechnician. Can you imagine having family watching your private show and having a malfunction or error and injuring a family member or worse yet a child that was unattended and too close? It is not worth the risk to life and limb, leave it to the professionals to create a safe show everyone can enjoy and leave with all their appendages when the show is over.

Until next quarter, stay safe!

Fond du Lac Fire Rescue medics are continually training and honing their skills. Pictured below are crews who recently took time to work on their techniques with SALAD training - Suction Assisted Laryngoscopy Airway Decontamination.





A pinning and swearing-in ceremony was held for Firefighter/Paramedic Cade Curtis who recently progressed from probationary status to full-member status. City Clerk Maggie Hefter gave the Oath with Cade's father, Todd, pinning the badge on his uniform. **Congratulations, Cade!**



FDLFR and the Local 400 presented a check to the Red Cross for the proceeds made from the Brat Fry that was held in May at Station 1. An amazing \$7,621.74 was raised in one day. This is a direct result of great community support. **Thank you** to everyone who helped with and supported this event!



FDLFR enjoys the partnership with The ARC of Fond du Lac. Crews played a game of basketball with The ARC team and had fun at the Ice Cream Social held for First Responders.



An EMS Open House was held at Station 1 featuring various first aid demonstrations. Sparky was also on hand to meet and greet those in attendance.



To mark the end of the school year, Crews spent time reading to the students at Riverside Elementary.



International students studying at Winnebago Lutheran Academy this year stopped at Station 1 for a tour and to learn about fire safety in America.

~ July ~

**John Rolfe • Nate Wilson • Lori Muentner • Connor Knaus • Andrea Hoksbergen
Joe Goldapske • Sam Tennesen • Mitch Petersen • Taylor Huenink**

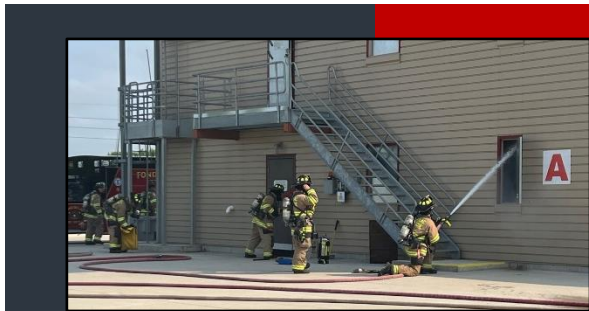
~ August ~

**Joe Maramonte • Jennie Mildebrandt • Drew Ashley
Jerry Golla • Keith Wendt**

~ September ~

Phil Seibel • Jim Wamser • Tristan Schill • Gavin Forster • Matt Kissinger





Well-trained people are the best defense against fire.

By: Assistant Chief of Fire
James Knowles III

Viewing Extinguished Fires as Hazmat Scenes

For many years the fire service has accepted injuries, illnesses, and a line of duty death as an occupational hazard. Over the past 20 years the "16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives" have shifted that accepted perception towards progress in health and safety, technology advancement, better personal protective equipment, safer fire apparatus, and mental health / member assistance programs. Despite all of the progress, firefighters still place their health and safety in danger when mitigating fires by removing SCBA too early during overhaul and not properly decontaminating their gear.

Every firefighter should know that today's fire is nothing like the fires of yesterday.

Residences and occupancies are filled with products made from chemicals. When those products burn, they create a toxic, flammable, carcinogenic

gases, and particulates. Metering for CO (carbon monoxide) and HCN (hydrogen cyanide) is a great practice that we do at a majority of our structure fires. Using the a CO and HCN meter as the determining factor of when members should be on or off SCBA air leads firefighters to be in danger from overhaul chemicals. If our only capability is to measure for CO and HCN, the mindset should shift toward all members being on air when inside the structure, period. That will keep firefighters the safest until time, proper ventilation, and effective cooling stopping the chemical reactions take place until those gases are out of the structure.

Do you know / have you identified the gases released during the overhaul phase? A few that I can name include: ammonia, benzene,

formaldehyde, hydrogen chloride, hydrogen fluoride, sulfur dioxide, and vinyl chloride. Many of these chemicals, when encountered at hazmat incident require Level A protection. Why would anyone of us want to breathe in these harmful chemicals during overhaul? While in overhaul we should shift our minds in hazmat mode until the fire situation is completely mitigated.

After the fire is extinguished and the overhaul phase begins, staying on air is imperative for increased firefighter health and safety. The process of firefighter decontamination is also imperative! We never doff chemical protective gear at a hazmat scene without first going through the decontamination process. It is unimaginable to remove the chemical suit and come off air with corrosive, toxic,

and carcinogenic chemicals still contaminating the suit. This should be the same mindset after fire suppression tasks have completed. Properly performing decontamination promptly after fire extinguishment, overhaul, ventilation, and metering are completed will decrease the amount of chemicals saturating the personal protective gear.

Life safety is and always have been a top priority in the fire service. Protecting our own lives and placing our health at a high priority avoids the horrible fate of suffering from a disease. Changing our mindset and treating our fire scenes as a hazmat incident will hopefully reduce the number of illnesses throughout our career.



Seven new members of Fond du Lac Fire Rescue recently completed their rigorous Recruit Academy which concluded with a live burn held at the Public Safety Training Facility. The recruits were able to put all lessons learned into seven live fire training evolutions with various building entries. The members are now on their individual 24 hour shifts and working their way through the one year probation period.

Community Risk Reduction & Life Safety

By: Division Chief Jason Roberts and
Community Risk Reduction Specialist Jennie Mildebrandt

**BE SAFE.
DRIVE SMART.**

Fond du Lac Fire Rescue has made some subtle changes to the fire inspection process with commercial properties and businesses. Some of these changes are a direct result of new events that are being offered and popping up in our community. The first change has been the addition of a new software reporting system providing a more fluid tracking for the department and allowed us to increase our presence at community events inspecting tents, food trucks and meeting with organizers to provide direction and education while promoting fun, safe events and emphasizing reduced risk to attendees.

The final change has been focusing on making the inspection process more efficient for the businesses as well as the department members. Personnel have been focused on aligning inspections into territories and grouping buildings occupied by the same business/owner. This has reduced the travel and inspection time for crew members. It has also reduced the workflow interruption time for business personnel and allows a relationship to be built with the inspectors and business owners.



The second change is that Fond du Lac Fire Rescue has placed an extra emphasis on re-inspections of fire violations and system compliance. The goal is to reduce the risk to area businesses from lost time, productivity and business sustainability when correcting the violations in a timely manner. Through the efforts of department members and business representatives, the number of system deficiencies has been reduced by 25% in the past 3 months.

Summer has gone by so fast and now school is back in session! Fond du Lac Fire Rescue wants to remind motorists to be extra vigilant of pedestrians and cyclists throughout our City. This is especially true near our many school zones. Fond du Lac Fire Rescue is in the process of updating the signs that are placed on the back of the fire apparatus. Check out the reminders as the crews travel the City Streets.



Car Seat Inspection and Installation: Fond du Lac Fire Rescue has teamed up with staff at SSM Health to coordinate car seat inspections and installations. The first event occurred on Wednesday, June 21, 2023.

The event was a huge success with 8 vehicles and 15 car seats being checked and/or installed. The next scheduled event is September 20, 2023. Please reach out to the fire department if you or your family is interested in participating in this event. We are also available to schedule a time outside of these designated events for an inspection/installation.



Fond du Lac Fire Rescue is gearing up for Fire Prevention Week 2023 which begins Sunday,

October 8th through will be Saturday, October 14th. We will be focused on providing education throughout our schools. We are still patiently waiting for National Fire Protection Association to release the 2023 fire prevention theme. Community members can continue to monitor the release with us through their website: <https://www.nfpa.org/Events/Events/Coming-soon> or following Sparky and NFPA through their multiple social media platforms.



Fond du Lac Fire Rescue is inviting the entire Fond du Lac area to their 2nd Annual Community Fire Department Open House being held on the Public Safety Training Facility grounds located at 750 N. Rolling Meadows Drive. There will be numerous demonstrations and interactive activities available to people of all ages. We hope to see all of you there on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 from 4-7 p.m.