

2025  
2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

# Fire Line Newsletter

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## Unprecedented Changes in FDLFR Leadership

I mentioned in the January newsletter about some “**new beginnings**” that were occurring at FDLFR for 2025, one of which was the promotion of Jason Roberts to Assistant Chief. Little did we know that since the “new beginnings” article, we would experience additional vacancies that have created an unprecedented and exciting change in the top leadership of the organization!

We are proud to announce a series of new promotions within our fire department leadership team, marking an exciting era of growth, dedication, and enhanced service to our community. These leadership changes are a testament to the hard work, commitment, and expertise of our team, ensuring that our department continues to meet the evolving challenges of emergency services with excellence.

As previously stated, **Jason Roberts** has been promoted to **Assistant Chief**. Jason is a 19 year, decorated and experienced member who was previously serving as the Division Chief of Community Risk Reduction. We look forward to AC Robert’s ability to lead our current and future members to a heightened firefighter standard and an increased level of professionalism.

**Andrew Aird** has been promoted to the position of **Assistant Fire Chief of EMS**. Andy is a 15 year, decorated member of FDLFR, coming from the Lieutenants position, with a vast majority of leadership experience. AC Aird has a background in building strong and winning teams and we are excited for his continued leadership and what fresh perspective he will bring to the future of our Emergency Medical Services.

**Keith Wendt** has been promoted to the position of **Division Chief of Community Risk Reduction and Life Safety**. Keith, formerly a Lieutenant,

is a highly decorated 25 year member, which in this new role, he will oversee department-wide initiatives to enhance risk reduction and community engagement. We look forward to DC Wendt’s expertise, passion and dedication, as well as a new outlook that he will bring to the risk reduction bureau.

With the aforementioned promotions, there were two Lieutenants openings that were needed to be filled. **Phil Seibel** and **Jacob Fisher** have been promoted to the positions of **Lieutenant**. Both members are highly decorated, with Lt. Seibel serving for 13 years and Lt. Fisher serving for just over 10 years. Both members have been active in the department’s special operations teams as well as taking on the duties of training our new recruits, getting them ready to be fully-fledge members of the department. Their experience and expertise will further strengthen our emergency response capabilities.

These promotions are more than just career milestones, they signal a strategic move towards a more dynamic, responsive, and community-focused department. Our newly appointed FDLFR family leaders bring a wealth of experience and passion for public safety, and we are confident they will continue to make a positive impact on our community.

One statement that was made in my previous newsletter article that still remains true... “**the future looks bright for Fond du Lac Fire Rescue, and I am so excited for what the (rest of the) year 2025 will bring!**”

Until next time, stay safe and be well!!  
“Your Fire Chief”  
Erick Gerritson

## ...Acting to Save

Types of Calls:	February 2025	February 2024	Year to Date (2025)	Year to Date (2024)
Alarms Involving Fire	2	4	11	16
Fire Mutual Aid Given	0	1	0	3
Fire Mutual Aid Received	0	0	0	0
Other Calls (False Alarms, Service Calls, etc.)	87	96	210	199
Emergency Medical Calls	551	468	1132	1074
Paramedic Intercepts	4	4	6	8
Interfacility Transports	12	20	28	47
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>568</b>	<b>1353</b>	<b>1289</b>
Fire Inspections Completed	232	282	421	525
Defects found during Fire Inspections	75	166	140	287

## CONGRATULATIONS!

**Thank you for your hard work, dedication to the community and commitment the FDLFR family. Congratulations on reaching this milestone in your career!**

*Firefighter/Paramedic Matt Kissinger – 15 Years*

*Date of Hire: April 19, 2010*



### April

Mike Spencer  
Keegan Schwab  
Alex Zabel  
Jim Hoepfner  
Ben Stephany  
Curt Smits  
Brett Hefty  
Noah Kreilkamp  
Amber Evers  
Reece Rick  
Rick Faris



### June

Anthony Gonzalez ~ Rick Gerritson  
Carl Bahr

### May

Jason Roberts  
Shawn Kneeland  
Jack Olstinski  
Max Blitzke  
Zach Mueller

# Emergency Medical Services

By: Assistant Chief of EMS  
Andrew Aird



## What is the Vision?

### What is the vision?

I have heard this question several times while meeting with crews in the last two months. I will be honest, this is not a question I pondered from the viewpoint of EMS. I did not believe my career path would involve playing a vital role in the administration of our emergency medical services. In the last two months, after talking with many of you, I have pondered this question in great detail. What is the vision for EMS and Fond du Lac Fire Rescue?

I believe our focus should be on fostering a culture of excellence, continuous education, and community involvement. My job is to ensure that all of you have the resources, training, and mindset necessary to meet the evolving needs of the public. After meeting with all the crews, I have developed a few key goals and objectives for the future.

### Key Goals and Objectives

#### 1. Enhanced Training and Development:

As many of you know, my passion revolves around training. I have taught for many years both inside and outside of the department. I am actively involved on several committees for the Wisconsin Society of Emergency Services Instructors (WSESI) and the International Society of Fire Service Instructors (ISFSI). Recently, I furthered my

education and attained Fire and Emergency Services Instructor III. I believe my background, education, and experience will advance our EMS training to a new level. My primary objective is to continue to invest in ongoing training for our personnel through the use of simulations, props, and hands on experiences. With the healthcare landscape constantly changing, it's essential that all EMS staff are equipped with the latest knowledge and techniques. This includes regular training in advanced life-saving procedures, mental health awareness, trauma care, and the use of new medical technologies. We will continue to research and implement diverse ways to improve our training which elevates the patient care and service we provide to the community.

#### 2. Community Engagement and Education:

We know that the relationship between EMS teams and the community is foundational. By engaging with residents through health education programs, public outreach, and wellness initiatives, EMS can improve overall health outcomes and prevent emergency situations before they arise. Several outstanding ideas have come from our very own personnel. These initiatives might include CPR training, injury prevention programs, and information about how to access appropriate care

when needed. Working with the Community Risk Reduction Division, we will implement new programs to improve the overall health and safety of our community.

#### 3. Mental Health and Resilience for EMS Personnel:

Fire and EMS work is physically and emotionally taxing. FDLFR is committed to addressing mental health in the fire and EMS workforce, ensuring that all personnel have access to the support systems they need. This includes counseling services, peer support programs, and other strategies to promote emotional resilience in such a high-stress profession. Initiatives have already been put in place such as EAP and the Peer Support Team, but mental health support will always remain a priority. Our greatest resource is our people, and we will always support your needs!

#### Looking to the Future

The vision for the future of EMS at Fond du Lac Fire Rescue is not only focused on operational improvements but also on fostering a culture of care, respect, and innovation. We must commit to professional development, patient-centered care, and community outreach to ensure that the department will continue to evolve and meet the ever-changing needs of the community. One of my favorite authors and speakers, Frank Viscuso

says, "Whatever you are not changing, you are choosing." Every day we have a choice, to remain the same or strive for excellence in everything we do. Every day is another opportunity to become better, to improve on the day before. Every day, ask yourself these questions:

*What valuable lesson have you learned today?*

*What problem have you solved today?*

*What experience did you share today?*

*What difference did you make today?*

*What obstacle did you overcome today?*

*What contribution did you make today?*

*Today is a great day to step up and lead!*

I am excited for the opportunity to work with you all in a new capacity. I remain open to fresh ideas and perspectives. Together, we can achieve greatness and remember, leave a trail of value everywhere you go!







Leadership changes are always a big moment. Congratulations to all of the individuals promoted - **Assistant Chief Jason Roberts, Assistant Chief Andrew Aird, Division Chief Keith Wendt, Lieutenant Philip Seibel and Lieutenant Jacob Fisher.** The ceremony was filled with special moments, from Chief Gerritson's remarks to the meaningful tradition of family members pinning the badges on their loved ones. The presence of City Clerk Maggie Hefter administering the Oath of Office and Chaplain Jeff Blain blessing the badges adds such a personal and heartfelt touch to the occasion. ***Congratulations to this group of individuals!***



FDLFR recently participated in the Home Show, demonstrating the proper use of a fire extinguisher – a great way to help people feel more confident and prepared in emergency situations.

## Fond du Lac Fire Rescue Brat Fry

**Friday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2025**  
**10:00am - 2:00pm**

Fire Station 1  
815 S. Main St. Fond du Lac

*All Proceeds to benefit the American Red Cross*

Want to Pre-Order?  
Find an order form at [fdlfire.com](http://fdlfire.com) or call Station 1 at 920-322-3809 by 3pm on May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Delivery available for orders over 20 items or Easy and convenient drive-thru service at the Station



# Fire Operations and Training

By: Assistant Chief of Fire  
Jason Roberts

The fire service is continuing to adapt to the challenges of personnel shortage and filling vacancies in both the volunteer and career fire departments. The shortage is a reflection of a change of duties within the fire service, increased risks of danger and exposure and the competition of jobs within the private sector. Fond du Lac Fire Rescue has been presented with additional struggles based on the historical rotation of hiring. Historically, there has been a large amount of members that were hired in a short amount of time. This equates to also a large amount of retirements thirty years after. Over 50% of the Fond du Lac Fire Rescue team has been hired within the last ten years.

Although our department is young, it provides an opportunity to be fresh and capitalize on new ideas that the next generation of firefighters have to offer. It also provides our veteran members with a renewed

sense of purpose and motivation to share the wealth of knowledge and experience with our young members. We are excited to navigate our challenges while pressing forward towards future success.

Fond du Lac Fire Rescue has been completing subtle renovations to the classrooms at both station 2 and station 3. These enhancements will provide our members with the space, technology access and resources to meet the streaming and self-learning applications. As a community member and a member of this agency, I always stress to our community members to feel welcome stopping by our fire stations. Stop by and take a station tour to see the updates and renovations the next time you are near one of our three fire stations.

The agency has been focused on implementing health and wellness training

to its members. May is Firefighter Mental Health Month. FDLFR Peer Support Team members along with EAP representatives are providing training to our members and making sure they are connected with resources to maintain and improve their mental health. The agency will also be starting the annual wellness initiative testing to include blood draws, assessment screenings, physical testing and annual exams. Firefighting continues to be one of the most demanding careers, and the on-going testing assists our members with reducing long-term work interruption from injury or illness. New trends in the industry of testing for major risks associated with cardiac and cancer continue to be a focus.

Our members are constantly training to enhance their techniques and tactics to respond to and serve the community. Several recent

trainings evolved around firefighter survival, initial fire ground operations, grant supported hazardous materials refresher training by Emergency Response Specialists, LLC, and extensive training to implement the agency's new cardiac monitors, LIFEPAK 35 monitor/defibrillator. Additionally, our agency has placed a large focus on performing pre-planning and site visits to our community commercial properties. The information collected will be uploaded into our response databases and also expand building familiarization to our members. We appreciate all the continued partnerships with Fond du Lac businesses and their willingness to share vital information should our agency need to respond for service.

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*Updates to the classroom at Station 2 will provide members with additional space and improved access to essential resources.*



*Our crews are continually training to enhance their skills and techniques. Pictured are crews working with the new LifePak 35 and training with blacked-out SCBA masks.*







# Community Risk Reduction & Life Safety

By: Division Chief Keith Wendt  
CRR Specialist Rachel Vaughan

I want to formally introduce myself as the new Division Chief of Community Risk Reduction and Life Safety. I come to the role with 25 years of experience as a line member of Fond du Lac Fire Rescue. I have held multiple ranks and positions in my time including Fire Fighter/Paramedic, Engineer, and most recently Lieutenant in charge of truck company operations.

My father and step grandfather were both members of Fond du Lac Fire Rescue. My father

retired from the department in the Division Chief role I currently hold. It is an honor for me to follow in his footsteps and continue the goal of improving the safety of the members of the department and the citizens of Fond du Lac.

I was born and raised in the Fond du Lac area and have close ties with many people that live here. My wife Stephanie and I are raising our 4 children in this community. The support I have received from my family and my work family

has led me to where I am now. The crews I have worked with in my career are the backbone of the department and I will continue to rely on them to better the division. I would also like to thank the rest of the command staff in their continued support while I grow in my new role.

My goals during my time in this position align closely with the individuals that held the position before me. I plan to continue to build relationships with the members of the community I have called home my entire life. I will continue to

work hard at strengthening our current community risk reduction programs, and also look to addressing other risks with new programs or prevention efforts. I will work with our business owners to educate on fire safety and fire code compliance to assure a safe working environment for our community.

I welcome open communication with those concerned with issues in our community, and look forward to the years ahead.

## Grilling Safety...

As the weather warms up, residents of Fond du Lac are starting to fire up the grills! Grilling is a fun, delicious way to spend time outdoors and with family, but it's important to remember that it can also pose serious risks. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), each year, approximately 10,600 home fires are caused by grilling, resulting in an estimated \$27.6 million in property damage. With a few simple safety precautions, you can enjoy a safe grilling season.

Here are some key safety tips to keep in mind:

- **Check Your Grill:** Before you start cooking, make sure your grill is in good working order. Inspect hoses, connections, and burners

to ensure they're free of damage or leaks. A quick leak test is simple: apply a water and soap mixture to the hoses and connections and watch for bubbles, which indicate a gas leak. Additionally, always clean your grill regularly to remove grease buildup. Grease buildups can ignite and cause a flare-up or even a fire. Keeping your grill well-maintained not only improves its performance but also reduces the chances of an unsafe cooking experience.

- **Grill Away from Structures:** Always ensure that your grill is setup at least 10 feet away from any buildings, structures, or flammable materials such as

fences, trees or shrubs. Grills should never be used in enclosed spaces, such as garages, and should be kept clear of overhanging branches or other potential fire hazards. The goal is to minimize the chances of flames or heat escaping and igniting nearby combustibles. Grilling outdoors in an open, well-ventilated area provides ample space for the grill to safely operate without risk of fire spreading to structures or landscaping.

- **Grill on the Ground Level:** In multi-story homes, never use a grill on a balcony or deck above the ground floor. Decks and balconies can quickly ignite if a grill is placed too close or if there's a grease

fire. The heat from the grill can also damage the structure, leading to a potential fire hazard that could affect the entire home.

- **Never Leave Your Grill Unattended:** One of the most important rules when grilling is to never leave the grill unattended. Fire can spread quickly, and it only takes a few seconds for an accident to happen. Stay close so you can act quickly if anything goes wrong. If you need to step away for any reason, ask someone else to watch over the grill or turn off the burners until you return.

By following these simple steps, you'll be able to enjoy your grilled meals without worrying about potential hazards.

## Awards & Recognition Banquet

Recently, Fond du Lac Fire Rescue and IAFF Local 400 celebrated our members' heroic efforts at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Recognition & Awards Banquet. This incredible event honored the selfless dedication of our members and was attended by many esteemed dignitaries representing our great city. Below, you'll find those who went above and beyond, demonstrating exemplary service worthy of special recognition.



**Officer of the Year**  
Lt. Matt Simon



**Firefighter of the Year**  
Engineer Eric Rebedew



**Award of Excellence**  
BC Jim Wamser  
Lt. Jake Fisher  
Lt. Phil Seibel



### Unit Citations

FF/PM Reece Rick, FF/PM Dusten Hilgendorf, FF/PM Zach Mueller, FF Jack Prall, FF/PM Cade Curtis, FF/PM Mason Jahn, FF/PM Carter Aisbet, FF/PM Max Blitzke, FF/PM Gavin Forster, FF/PM Tyler Kuske, FF/PM Brett Hefty, FF/PM Cole Berendsen, FF/PM Anthony Gonzalez, FF/PM Amber Evers, Engineer Nick Czaja and Engineer John Rolfe.  
Merit Award – DC Keith Wendt (off-duty efforts)

Pictured below are some of the members who were able to attend.



Special Thanks to **Marty Schibbelhut** for being the Emcee and to **Council Vice President Keith Heisler** for the inspirational words!



**Firefighters Local 400 Leadership Award Recipient**  
Chief Erick Gerritson