

2025  
3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

# Fire Line Newsletter

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## From the Desk of Your Fire Chief

It's hard to believe we're already entering the third quarter of 2025. Fond du Lac Fire Rescue has experienced a number of incredible events this year, and we're only halfway through!

Here are just a few highlights from the first half of the year:

- In February, we proudly recognized our dedicated team during the annual Awards Ceremony.
- Our Brat Fry fundraiser for the American Red Cross was a huge success, raising over \$9,000!
- We held a Pinning Ceremony, celebrating Matt Kissinger's promotion to Engineer and officially welcoming Tyler Kuske, Amber Evers, Mason Jahn and Andy Hintz as full-fledged members of the FDLFR family.
- We gave a heartfelt send-off to Brett Hefty, Alex Zabel and Ethan Groh, who are currently deployed overseas with the Wisconsin Army National Guard. Thank you for your service!

### Coming Up This Summer and Fall

Starting July 7<sup>th</sup>, we'll begin our recruit academy for two of our newest members, Mason Walters and Deion Hargrove. Over the course of a month, they'll undergo intensive training in firefighting, paramedicine, department policies, work rules and guidelines, preparing them to become frontline public safety professionals. We're thrilled to welcome them to our team and the Fond du Lac community.

In August, FDLFR will participate in National Night Out, alongside our law enforcement partners. This beloved event kicks off the back-to-school season with family-friendly fun, and let's not forget the

Mascot Race. Sparky is ready to defend his title, so other mascots better be training!

In October, we'll host our annual Community Open House during Fire Prevention Week. This year, we're planning to expand and enhance the event, so stay tuned for more details in September. You won't want to miss it!

### Accreditation Efforts

Lastly, I want to update you on our progress toward re-accreditation. The FDLFR administrative team has been hard at work preparing for our site visit in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of this year, as part of our five-year accreditation cycle with the **Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE)**.

You might be wondering: *What is accreditation?*

Accreditation through CPSE and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) is a formal recognition that a fire and emergency services agency meets or exceeds national standards and best practices in performance, leadership and service delivery. More importantly, it's a continuous improvement model, meaning our department is always striving to grow, evolve, and deliver better service to our community. It's more than a badge or sticker to show off; it's a roadmap to excellence.

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



## ...Acting to Save

Types of Calls:	May 2025	May 2024	Year to Date (2025)	Year to Date (2024)
Alarms Involving Fire	9	4	43	41
Fire Mutual Aid Given	1	0	3	6
Fire Mutual Aid Received	0	0	0	1
Other Calls (False Alarms, Service Calls, etc.)	103	108	477	516
Emergency Medical Calls	569	567	2759	2714
Paramedic Intercepts	1	7	10	25
Interfacility Transports	19	22	75	97
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>681</b>	<b>679</b>	<b>3279</b>	<b>3271</b>
Fire Inspections Completed	191	229	1178	1287
Defects found during Fire Inspections	45	84	301	605

## CONGRATULATIONS on 25 Years!

Thank you for your dedication, hard work and everything you've done for the team and community over the years.

We appreciate you!

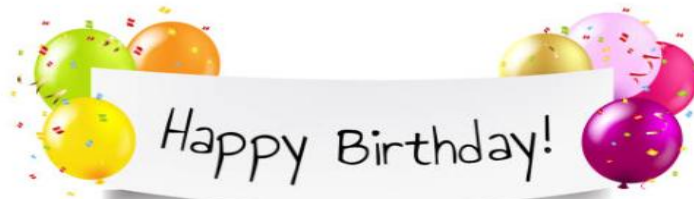
*Engineer Chris Behnke*

*Date of Hire: August 21<sup>st</sup>, 2000*



### July

John Rolfe  
Nate Wilson  
Lori Muentner  
Connor Knaus  
Joe Goldapske  
Sam Tennesen  
Taylor Huenink



### August

Joe Maramonte  
Drew Ashley  
Jerry Golla  
Keith Wendt

### September

Phi Seibel  
Jim Wamser  
Tristan Schill  
Gavin Forster  
Matt Kissinger

# Emergency Medical Services

By: Assistant Chief of EMS  
Andrew Aird



## “Winning” at Fond du Lac Fire Rescue...

*“Winning is not a sometime thing; it’s an all the time thing. You don’t win once in a while; you don’t do things right once in a while; you do them right all the time. Winning is a habit.”*  
— Vince Lombardi

Coach Lombardi’s words speak directly to who we are and what we’re building at Fond du Lac Fire Rescue. In our line of work, “winning” looks different — it’s not a final score or a trophy. It’s a life saved, a fire stopped before it spreads, a patient calmed and cared for in their most vulnerable moment. But just like in sports, our success depends on

habits — not heroics. And those habits are formed not in the spotlight, but in the shadows of routine.

Doing things right can’t be a sometime thing for us. We don’t get to choose which call, which training, or which station task matters more than another. Every detail matters. Excellence starts long before the call comes in. It starts with how we check our gear, how we maintain our ambulances, how we communicate with our partners, and how we prepare ourselves physically and mentally for the shift ahead.

We often talk about “high performance” in EMS — and that’s absolutely what

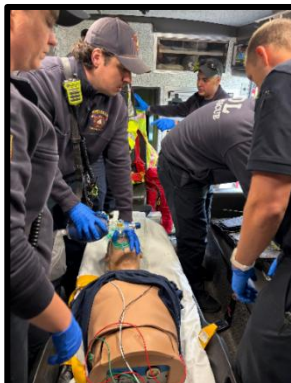
we aim for. But high performance doesn’t begin when the pressure is on. It begins with consistency, repetition, and pride in the process. It begins with treating every little task like it’s essential — because it is.

When we embrace the small things — wiping down equipment, checking drug expiration dates, practicing that one skill we rarely use — we’re not just being thorough. We’re building habits. And as Lombardi reminds us, winning is a habit. Doing things right all the time — not just when someone’s watching, not just when it feels important — creates the kind of crew

others can count on without hesitation.

The culture we build here isn’t accidental. It’s the sum of thousands of decisions made every day by people who care. People who know that small choices shape big outcomes. And when we all commit to doing the little things right, we create a department where excellence is not the goal — it’s the expectation.

Let’s continue building those habits together. Let’s be the kind of team that doesn’t wait for the big moment to rise to the occasion — because we’ve been rising, day in and day out, all along.



Crews recently participated in hands-on training with our Medical Director, Dr. Grahl, working through real-life emergency scenarios. This session focused on responding to an unresponsive person at Lakeside Park – reinforcing rapid assessment, teamwork, and critical decision-making in the field.

*The Tech Rescue Team has been hard at work sharpening their skills with training focused on HazMat response and confined space rescue scenarios.*





*FDLFR had the honor and the privilege to celebrate the promotion of five of our family members. Matt Kissinger was promoted to the position of Engineer. Tyler Kuske, Amber Evers, Mason Jahn and Andy Hintz all completed their probationary period making them fully-fledged members of the agency. **Congratulations to all!***



FDLFR is excited to welcome **Mason Walters and Deion Hargrove** to the team! We're glad to have them on board as they begin their fire and EMS careers!



*FDLFR recently welcomed Marc Hill for a leadership training during our quarterly officers meeting. Marc shared powerful insights, reminding us that great leadership isn't about perfection – it's about being honest, humble, accountable, consistently showing up for your team and never forgetting where you came from.*



**Congratulations to Engineer Mitch Petersen** on his retirement after 27 years of dedicated service to FDLFR! In recognition of his commitment, Mitch was honored with the flag that flew over Station 1 – the station he proudly served from. Thank you, Mitch, for your years of service and the lasting impact you've made. Wishing you all the best in your next chapter!



FDLFR & Local 400 were proud to present a \$9,000 check to the Red Cross – proceeds from our recent brat fry fundraiser. Thank you to everyone who came out to support a great cause!







# Fire Operations and Training

By: Assistant Chief of Fire  
Jason Roberts

## ***A Safe, Healthy, Prepared and Resilient Organization***

There are times that individuals may not realize what is missed until it disappears. This has been evident on several levels with programming across the country as cuts were made. The National Fire Academy was one of those programs that was closed and suspended operations for nearly three months while a review was conducted. The closure affected fire, emergency services, and emergency preparedness education both on-site and across the country at state and local levels. Additionally, the actions also led to the closure of the National Fire Academy library and the Learning Resource Center. The library is the largest fire and emergency management library in the world utilized by a large contingent of engineers, scientists, fire experts and students across the globe. Beyond the immediate impact, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) sustained cuts resulting in losses of research and inability to complete line-of-duty death investigations in a timely manner to name a few examples.

The greater long-term impacts are still unknown. However, I will provide a few examples. Budgets are becoming tighter for municipalities directly affecting fire departments. Fire departments have already

shifted to utilizing grants such as the SAFER grant to offset funding of staffing. It has been learned that other funding programs have been significantly reduced or removed completely. This will have an impact of maintaining equipment and resources that the department depends on for serving the community. Another impact is the inability or delay of completing classes or programs for professional development. Although the initial impact seems minimal, it could result in an unanticipated gap in organization succession planning. A short shut-down can result in individual classes being pushed out 6 months or greater for the next enrollment.

As the fire academy reopened in June, it was fitting that a member of our agency attended an Executive Fire Officer (EFO) organizational leadership course focused on safety, health, preparedness, and resilience. The fire service has never placed more emphasis on safety and health than it currently has. It is imperative that leaders understand the challenges that they are faced with and constantly reflect on how to adapt to the ever-changing environment.

## **Safe**

Our agency participated in a cancer risk reduction facepiece and seat apparatus cleaning process

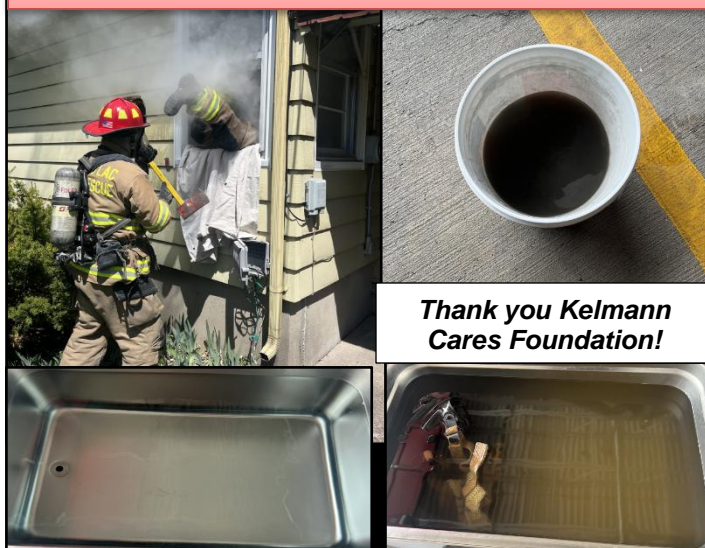
through the Kelmann Cares Foundation. Cancer is one of the leading causes of death for firefighters. Studies through Center for fire Rescue & EMS Health Research, DetecTogether, and Firefighter Cancer Support Network showed that firefighters have a 14% greater risk of dying from cancer than civilians. Firefighters have a heightened risk of as much as 60% or greater for certain types of cancer. Our agency takes pride in cleaning its apparatus and equipment. However, those who have experienced a fire can attest that the smoke particles and byproducts cling to anything it is exposed to. The images reflect the before and after of the cleaning process after just a few masks or one apparatus. These images

provide the reason why our agency purchased a clean, unused set of gear to demonstrate for school education and avoid exposure to our youth.

## **Healthy**

Our agency has completed its annual physicals to provide early detection, reduce risk and address any health concerns through screening centered around their physical and emotional well-being to provide continuous service to our community. Our focus continues to be around the three top risks to firefighter health and safety: Cancer, Heart Disease and Suicide. We continue to implement education through monthly training and modifications to the screening and testing

***Firefighter exposure;  
dirty water from apparatus seats***



***Thank you Kelmann  
Cares Foundation!***

***Clean water before SCBA mask cleaning;  
dirty water after the cleaning***



# A Safe, Healthy, Prepared and Resilient Organization, Continued...

By: Assistant Chief Jason Roberts

process. A few additions this year were two labs focused on cancer markers and a new approach to improve dietary tracking. Another focus on diet came through the implementation of a small garden at each of the stations. One additional health program



Garden box at Station 1

that our agency is starting to implement is a functional movement screening designed to assess and assist individuals with personal dietary and exercise needs.

## Prepared

Through 2025, Fond du Lac Fire Rescue has been working through the reaccreditation process. This process allows our agency to evaluate our programs ensuring it meets the established quality standards. Our agency has placed greater initiative efforts on pre-planning, enhancing basic foundation

training, and consistency in training standards. Several training opportunities with community stakeholders will improve our responses to aircraft incidents and enhance the utilization of emergency preparedness.

## Resiliency

Despite challenges, our team remains committed to overcoming obstacles and upholding high standards. Every dollar supports lives saved, property protected and community readiness. Nelson Mandela stated "I never lose. I either win or learn." We continue to

encourage our members to evaluate fresh ideas, work together and take calculated risks of failure to achieve a positive outcome for our community.

**Stay Strong, Stay Safe.**

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Kelmann Cares crew keeping our cabs clean and safe.

## Summer Safety Tips for a Fun and Injury-Free Season

*Summer is the perfect time to enjoy the outdoors, but it also brings new risks of injury and health concerns. Whether you're spending time at the park, biking, working outdoors, or simply enjoying the sunshine, taking a few precautions can help you and your family stay safe and healthy.*

### Sun and Heat Safety

Protecting your skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays is crucial. Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen generously and don't forget often-missed spots like the back of your neck, ears, and the tops of your feet. Sunscreen does expire so check the date to ensure you're still protected. Stay hydrated by drinking small amounts of water frequently throughout the day. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and sugary drinks on hot days, as they can contribute to dehydration.

### Be Visible and Follow the Rules

When biking or walking near traffic, make sure drivers can see you. Wear neon or reflective clothing, use lights when riding at night, and always follow traffic laws. Ride single-file in the direction of traffic, remain alert, and use hand signals when turning. At intersections, stop and look both ways before proceeding.



### Staying Safe While Working Outdoors

If you work in hot environments, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recommends frequent breaks in the shade, smaller meals, and avoiding heat-aggravating substances like caffeine and alcohol. Wear breathable cotton clothing and be mindful that protective equipment like respirators can increase heat stress. If you're on medication, ask your doctor whether heat may affect your response.





# Community Risk Reduction & Life Safety

By: Division Chief Keith Wendt  
CRR Specialist Rachel Vaughan

## Stay Safe This Summer: Fireworks and Water Safety Tips

As the summer season heats up, families in the Fond du Lac area are gearing up for outdoor fun, including celebrations with fireworks and time spent near water. While summer is a great time to enjoy the outdoors, it's important to prioritize safety. Fond du Lac Fire Rescue urges everyone to keep safety top of mind, especially when it comes to fireworks and recreational water activities.

### Fireworks: Leave It to the Professionals

The NFPA strongly advises against the use of consumer fireworks. Every year, fireworks cause thousands of injuries and fires, many of which are preventable.

### Key Fireworks Safety Messages:

- **Leave fireworks to the professionals.** Attend public displays conducted by trained pyro technicians.

- **Never allow children to handle fireworks.** Sparklers may seem harmless, but they burn at about 1,200°F—hot enough to cause third-degree burns.
- **Keep a safe distance.** Even at a public display, stay back and follow all safety barriers and guidance from local officials.
- **Dispose of fireworks properly.** If you find leftover fireworks, do not try to relight them. Soak them in water and dispose of them safely.

Fireworks are not just a fire hazard—they are a significant source of injury. According to the NFPA, fireworks start an average of 19,000 fires and send more than 9,000 people to emergency rooms every year in the U.S. This year Fond du Lac Fire Rescue and the Fond du Lac Police department are teaming up to keep the community safe.

Division Chief Wendt and a patrol Officer will be out enforcing the city ordinance that bans illegal fireworks in the city. We will be out patrolling on target dates and times over the summer. The key takeaway is if it leaves the ground or makes a loud boom, don't buy it!

### Water Safety: Know the Risks and Stay Aware

Whether you're heading to the pool or enjoying Lake Winnebago, water safety is critical. The Fond du Lac Fire Rescue reminds everyone to stay alert and prepared to avoid accidents and injuries.

### Key Water Safety Tips:

- **Always supervise children near water.** Never leave children unattended, even for a moment.
- **Wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket.** Especially when boating or swimming in natural bodies of water.

- **Don't rely on toys or floaties.** Inflatable devices are not substitutes for life jackets.
- **Learn CPR.** Quick action can save a life in an emergency.
- **Avoid alcohol while swimming or supervising others.** Alcohol impairs judgment and reaction time.

Whether it's around a pool or at a waterfront celebration, water safety starts with awareness and preparation.

### Summer Safety Checklist:

- ✓ Attend professional fireworks shows only
- ✓ Keep a bucket of water or hose nearby during cookouts
- ✓ Supervise all swimming activities
- ✓ Use proper flotation devices
- ✓ Stay hydrated and wear sunscreen

By taking these simple precautions, you can help ensure a summer full of safe, happy memories. For more information visit [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).

**Have a safe and fun summer!**



# MILITARY SEND-OFF

Brett Hefty, Alex Zabel, Ethan Groh



*Fond du Lac Fire Rescue proudly hosted a military send-off for Brett Hefty, Alex Zabel and Ethan Groh. The ceremony included remarks from Chief Gerritson, City Leaders and National Guard representative, with a heartfelt performance by Paul Rosenfeldt. We thank these brave individuals for their service and look forward to their safe return.*

