

Wausau Fire Department Monthly Report

November 2023



(Water Rescue training before the river freezes over)

Fire Chief Report by Chief Robert Barteck

With November comes the start of our annual Keep the Wreath Green fire prevention campaign. As you drive past Central Fire you will see our huge wreath adorns the front of the station. Each time we have a fire within the City of Wausau we will change one green bulb for a red bulb. This is to draw attention to fire safety during the holiday season. We ask that you be fire-safe during this holiday season. If you invite a beautiful real Christmas tree into your home, please water it frequently and use quality lights in good working condition.

As we begin to close on 2023 the EMT-Basic to Paramedic class that we have seven bright new Wausau Firefighters enrolled in is drawing to a close. At the time that I am writing this report, I am excited to share that all seven passed the National Registry Exam and are now all licensed Wisconsin Paramedics. In December these seven will be joined by a newly hired Firefighter/Paramedic and all eight will complete a Fire/EMS academy to get them ready to hit the street in January. This is a huge step towards our new deployment model with the new fire/medic positions.

The months since my retirement announcement have flown by the transition of leadership of the department to incoming Fire Chief Jeremy Kopp has gone amazingly well. In my last days in office, we are tying up a few loose ends and Jeremy has worked hard to be ready to take command. Chief Kopp has made an outstanding selection for the Deputy Chief Position and once that individual passes through the bureaucratic hoops the department will announce his recruitment. I am excited for the future of Wausau Fire under Chief Kopp's leadership. He is a progressive and passionate fire service leader who will continue to improve the organization.

This will be my last Monthly Report of my tenure as Fire Chief of the City of Wausau Fire Department. This week I have been giving presentations to all the department staff titled *"Thirty Years of Lessons Learned as a Firefighter, Paramedic, and Fire Officer."* I designed the presentation to pass on many of the toughest lessons I have learned the hard way in this career. I cover drive, determination, grit, complacency, ignoring the negative, and how a lifelong commitment to continuous self-improvement can fuel a highly rewarding career. I share a few stories but mostly I am communicating how important it is for them as individuals to invest in themselves but also how self-improvement drastically increases our ability to meet the community's needs in their darkest hours. I close each session by thanking each firefighter for their buy-in to my leadership and their support throughout my tenure.

In closing, I would like to thank the Wausau community for all their support during my time here serving as Deputy Chief and Fire Chief. We have an amazing community, and we share a close relationship with many partners that support our organizational mission. As I depart my passion for this job has never been higher, yet the time has come to change my focus from Chiefly duties to being the best husband, father, and grandfather I can be.

Thank you, Wausau!

Fire Operations Division by Deputy Chief Jeremy Kopp

Significant calls:

Wausau Fire responded to 7 significant calls plus one mutual aid fire in the month of November. Three of these fires were building fires, two cooking fires, and two trash fires. On a lighter note, every year we want to wish the people of our community a safe and happy holiday season starting with Thanksgiving. It is a tradition for Wausau Fire to hang the big green wreath outside of central fire with green bulbs on it starting on Thanksgiving Day and going throughout the rest of the year with hopes to “keep the wreath green”, if we have a fire, we replace one of the bulbs with a red bulb indicating a fire during the holiday season. Help us spread the word and keep the wreath green.

Recruitment and Retention:

Our seven E.M.T. students passed their paramedic national registry and begin the academy December 4th along with Hunter starting on the 11th. The application process for firefighter produced three more candidates who will go in front of the Police and Fire Commission on December 18th. These three candidates will all complete the paramedic program in May putting us just two short of our new staffing number of 74. We hope to run another hiring process through the holidays to close in January to fill these two spots. The Deputy Fire Chief process ended, and the new deputy chief has been selected. We want to welcome Justin Pluess from Wisconsin Rapids who brings a lot of experience and skills to our department as the new deputy chief. We are excited to get him started in January 2024!

Fleet:

E-3 needs to go to Custom Fire this month to get water tank leak fixed under warranty. E-1 will be going to Cummins as soon as possible for small oil leak under warranty as well.

Buildings and Grounds:

The apparatus bay at station 3 has been completed with new floor drains and epoxy floor. The inside of station 3 also received a fresh coat of paint from our facilities division while we were out of the station during construction. We will be ordering new lockers and gear washer in January for station 3.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call or stop by my office. 715-261-7901.

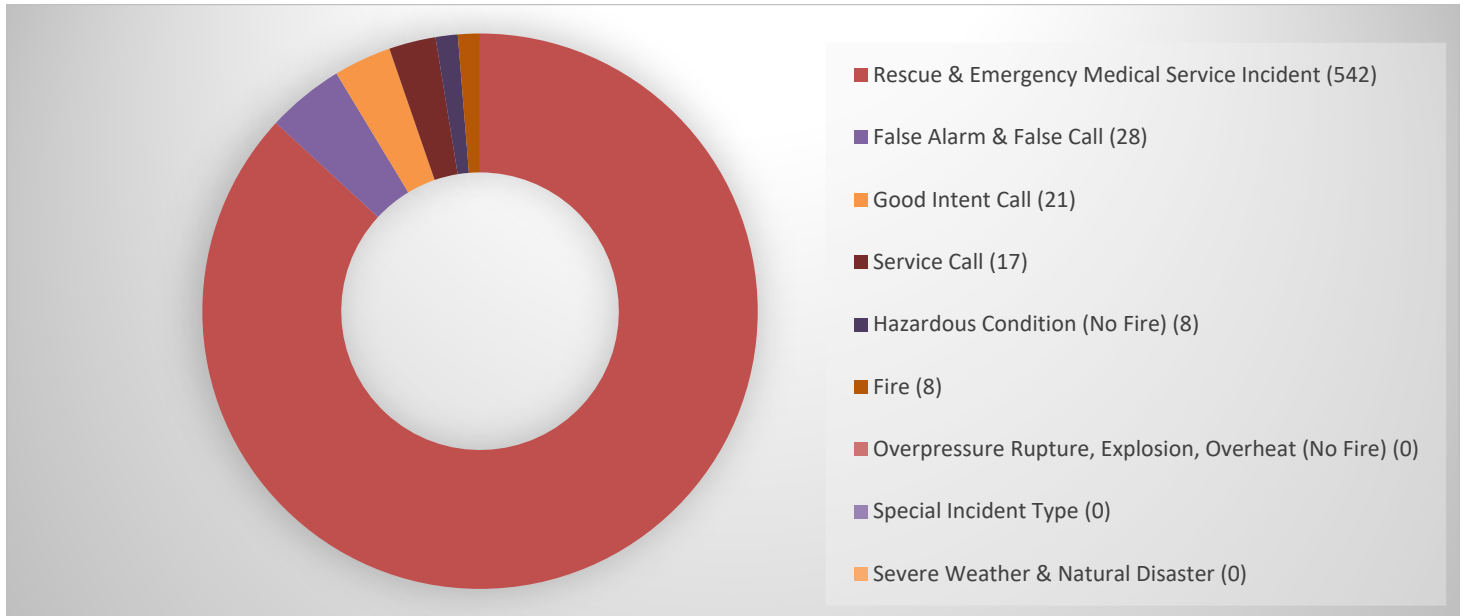
Significant Fire Events:

| Date | Address | City | Incident # | Type |
|------------|------------------------|-------------------|------------|---|
| 11/4/2023 | 1303 Foothill Avenue | Village of Weston | F23001886 | Building fire |
| 11/9/2023 | 1306 South 13th Avenue | City of Wausau | F23001920 | Building fire |
| 11/10/2023 | 500 East Thomas Street | City of Wausau | F23001924 | Cooking fire, confined to container |
| 11/13/2023 | 329 North 1st Avenue | City of Wausau | F23001942 | Dumpster or other outside trash receptacle fire |
| 11/16/2023 | 1902 North 6th Street | City of Wausau | F23001962 | Building fire |
| 11/19/2023 | 1201 Stewart Avenue | City of Wausau | F23001998 | Trash or rubbish fire, contained |
| 11/22/2023 | 1235 North 3rd Avenue | City of Wausau | F23002029 | Cooking fire, confined to container |
| 11/29/2023 | 1013 South 6th Avenue | City of Wausau | F23002080 | Building fire |

Monthly NFIRS Incident Comparison:

| | 2023 | 2022 | 2021 | % Of Change from 2022 to 2023 |
|----------|------|------|------|-------------------------------|
| January | 579 | 591 | 502 | -2.03% |
| February | 506 | 507 | 456 | -0.20% |
| March | 551 | 540 | 497 | 2.04% |
| April | 527 | 498 | 503 | 5.82% |

| | | | | |
|--------------|-----|-------------|-------------|--------|
| May | 574 | 574 | 556 | 0.00% |
| June | 553 | 590 | 583 | -6.27% |
| July | 679 | 531 | 587 | 27.87% |
| August | 571 | 600 | 577 | -4.83% |
| September | 548 | 524 | 525 | 4.58% |
| October | 616 | 545 | 552 | 13.03% |
| November | 624 | 574 | 562 | 8.71% |
| December | | 612 | 590 | |
| TOTAL | | 6686 | 6490 | |



Responses by Municipality (All NFIRS Reports):

| City | # of Runs | % of Runs | # of Runs - YTD |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
| City of Abbotsford | 0 | 0.00% | 3 |
| City of Antigo | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| City of Colby | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| City of Merrill | 1 | 0.16% | 4 |
| City Of Mosinee | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| City Of Schofield | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| City Of Wausau | 579 | 92.79% | 5,867 |
| Clark County | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Rosholt | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Taylor County | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Bergen | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town Of Berlin | 5 | 0.80% | 34 |
| Town of Bern | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Bevent | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town Of Cassel | 2 | 0.32% | 5 |
| Town Of Elderon | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town Of Emmet | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Frankfort | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town of Franzen | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| Town of Halsey | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town Of Hamburg | 1 | 0.16% | 1 |
| Town of Harrison | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town Of Hewitt | 1 | 0.16% | 23 |
| Town of Johnson | 0 | 0.00% | 3 |
| Town of Knowlton | 1 | 0.16% | 1 |
| Town Of Marathon | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Town Of Mosinee | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Town of Norrie | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town Of Rib Falls | 0 | 0.00% | 5 |
| Town Of Rietbrock | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Town of Ringle | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town Of Stettin | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Town Of Texas | 4 | 0.64% | 46 |
| Town Of Wausau | 8 | 1.28% | 116 |
| Town Of Weston | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town Of Wien | 0 | 0.00% | 3 |
| Village Of Athens | 0 | 0.00% | 6 |
| Village Of Brokaw | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Village Of Edgar | 2 | 0.32% | 5 |
| Village of Hatley | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Village Of Kronenwetter | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Village Of Maine | 14 | 2.24% | 139 |
| Village Of Marathon City | 2 | 0.32% | 10 |
| Village Of Rib Mountain | 2 | 0.32% | 8 |
| Village Of Rothschild | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Village of Stratford | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Village Of Weston | 2 | 0.32% | 27 |
| Wittenberg | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Wood County | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Total | 624 | 100.00% | 6,328 |

Activity/Incident Hours Committed:

| Category | Time Committed |
|--|-----------------------|
| NFIRS Incidents | 168:22:12 Hours |
| EMS Incidents | 869:24:59 Hours |
| Non-Incident Activities (Station Maintenance, Vehicle Check-off/Fire Pre-plan, Hazmat Outreach, Administration duties, Public Education, Committee and Staff Meetings) | 653 Hours |
| Training (including Wellness) | 1,107 Hours |

Aid Responses:

| Type of Aid | # of Runs |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| Mutual Aid Given – EMS | 7 |
| Mutual Aid Given – Fire | 0 |
| Automatic Aid Given – EMS | 24 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Automatic Aid Given – Fire | 2 |
| Mutual Aid Received – EMS | 1 |
| Mutual Aid Received – Fire | 0 |
| Automatic Aid Received – EMS | 0 |
| Automatic Aid Received – Fire | 0 |
| Other Aid Given – EMS | 0 |
| Request for EMS from Other Agencies to the City of Wausau (not Aid) | 1 |
| Request for Fire from Other Agencies to the City of Wausau (not Aid) | 0 |
| Total Non-Aid Incidents (outside City with no other agency response) | 11 |

EMS Division by EMS Division Chief Jared Thompson

EMS Patient Experience

The EMS Division would like to share our patient care experience report for November. Our overall score was **94.65%**. I would like to highlight the specific category entitled ***“Degree to which the medics took your problem seriously.”*** Our department scored 98.21%. We were pleased to see this score because not every call is technically classified as an emergency. It can be daunting at times to display the urgency that some of our patients may expect when their reason for calling 911 is minor in nature.



Your Score

94.65

Your Patients in this Report

30

Total Patients in this Report

5,654

Total EMS Organizations

227

Executive Summary

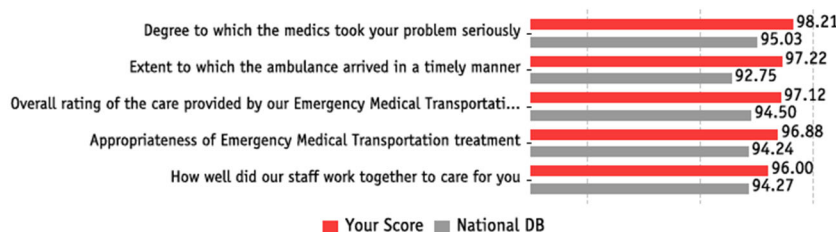
Your overall score for the time period selected is **94.65**. This is a difference of **5.46** from your previous period's score of **89.19**.

Your overall Top Box score, which represents the percentage of the highest possible rating Very Good, is **79.97%**.

In addition, your rolling 12- month score of **91.20** is a difference of **-2.35** from the national database score of **93.55**.

When compared to all organizations in the national database, your score of **91.20** is ranked **75th** and **13th** for comparably sized organizations.

5 Highest Scores



Degree to which the medics took your problem seriously



New Initiative

Since completing our CAAS accreditation, the EMS Division has been moving towards its new initiative to become a **HEARTSafe Community!** This is no easy task, and the planning phase has started. Our goal is to become Wisconsin's second agency to achieve this recognition.

When it comes down to it, improving cardiac arrest survival is a **communal effort**. Bystanders must be trained and ready to act. When someone calls 911, a coordinated system that includes EMS, fire departments, and first responder agencies should work together to help increase the likelihood of survival.

The HEARTSafe Community program is a set of criteria and guidelines designed to improve outcomes of sudden cardiac arrest emergencies through specific training, preparation, and response protocols.

These criteria support the cardiac arrest “chain of survival” and encourage communities to implement that chain of survival. Activities include:

- Widespread CPR instruction
- Public access defibrillators
- Aggressive resuscitation protocols for first responders and area hospitals

Communities that strive to become “heart safe” must meet the criteria established by the Citizen CPR Foundation. Upon completion, they receive signage and official recognition as a HEARTSafe Community to demonstrate a commitment to citizen health and safety.

Please stay tuned as this initiative moves forward!

Responses by Municipality (EMS Patient Care Reports):

| City | # of Reports | % of Reports | # of Reports – YTD |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|
| City of Abbotsford | 0 | 0.00% | 3 |
| City of Antigo | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| City of Merrill | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| City of Mosinee | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| City of Schofield | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| City of Wausau | 507 | 92.69% | 5,270 |
| Clark County | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Other | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Bergen | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town of Berlin | 5 | 0.91% | 35 |
| Town of Bevent | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Bern | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Cassel | 2 | 0.37% | 5 |
| Town of Elderon | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Emmet | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Frankfort | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town of Franzen | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Hamburg | 1 | 0.18% | 1 |
| Town of Halsey | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------|------------|----------------|--------------|
| Town of Harrison | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Town of Hewitt | 1 | 0.18% | 26 |
| Town of Johnson | 0 | 0.00% | 3 |
| Town of Knowlton | 1 | 0.18% | 1 |
| Town of Marathon | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Town of Mosinee | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town of Norrie | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town of Rib Falls | 0 | 0.00% | 5 |
| Town of Rietbrock | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Town of Ringle | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Town of Stettin | 0 | 0.00% | 2 |
| Town of Texas | 4 | 0.73% | 50 |
| Town of Wausau | 8 | 1.46% | 120 |
| Town of Wien | 0 | 0.00% | 3 |
| Village of Athens | 0 | 0.00% | 7 |
| Village of Edgar | 1 | 0.18% | 3 |
| Village of Hatley | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Village of Kronenwetter | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Village of Maine | 14 | 2.56% | 142 |
| Village of Marathon City | 2 | 0.37% | 10 |
| Village of Rib Mountain | 1 | 0.18% | 7 |
| Village of Rothschild | 0 | 0.00% | 1 |
| Village of Stratford | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Village of Weston | 0 | 0.00% | 26 |
| Wittenberg | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Wood County | 0 | 0.00% | 0 |
| Total | 547 | 100.00% | 5,189 |

Fire Training Division by Training Division Chief David Briggs

November Scheduled Training:

A brief breakdown of our scheduled activities follows:

- Emergency Vehicle Operations
- Airboat Operations
- DOT Traffic Incident Management
- Vehicle Extrication (Make-up)

Emergency Vehicle Operations

Every year, each member must complete our practical driving course to meet the NFPA standard and state statute requirements. This Fall, we added an online training covering more of the rules of the road than physical driving tasks. This course is hosted through our online training platform, Vector Solutions. In the training, members are given examples and case studies throughout the country to learn from incidents that have occurred to prevent others.

Airboat Operations

Throughout the different seasons of the year, our airboat operators need to practice operating the AirRanger airboat. Different water conditions, temperatures, and victim scenarios come together to change the needs of the operator. It is only through training that our members become proficient to perform rescues with such a unique piece of equipment. Due to our department's pending retirements, it is imperative that we also add new members to the cadre of boat operators. Each training session is an opportunity to hone prior skills and create new ones.



Above: Tethered rescue swimmers made it to the simulated victim before the Airboat could deploy from the nearest boat launch. This is part of a tiered approach to water and ice rescue.

DOT Traffic Incident Management

The Department of Transportation is a resource for our members and responders throughout the state for many different topics. This month, we are hosting two of three sessions on Traffic Incident Management at our Fire Station #2. Retired Portage County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Dan Kontos was gracious enough to provide this training to two crews in November and a third crew coming up in December. The training provides instruction and best practices on setting up for safer scene staging for traffic incidents. For example, members learn what early warning, traffic tapers, and severity levels of scenes entail. While we do a very good job on directing motorists through scenes, we can always improve. Not to mention, our generally young organization has many individuals who have never had this training.

Vehicle Extrication

Extrication training for us in November is not the normal schedule. Due to logistical issues, we had one crew in need of completing this annual skill. "A" crew spent an entire day at Hilltop Auto working through incident size-up, vehicle positioning, approaching a vehicle crash scene, stabilizing the vehicle(s) and extricating patients. It is powerful to see so many more senior firefighters pouring their wisdom and experience into the newer generation of firefighters.



Above: Firefighters perform various skills with a vehicle on its roof. This poses different challenges than one on its wheels.

Unscheduled Training

- Hoses and Streams
- Pump Operations
- Structure Fire Scenario with Rescue

Hoses, Streams, and Pump Operations

“B” crew wanted to get some practice on pulling hoses and pumping water. During this self-initiated training, 8 members participated in various aspects of water movement. This included hooking to a hydrant, “stretching hoselines,” pumping the correct pressure from the fire pump, and operating various nozzles.





Above: Flowing A LOT of water in an afternoon.

Structure Fire Scenario with Rescue

No, Central is not on fire. This was a crew-initiated drill in which they wanted to assess the knowledge, skill, and abilities of some of the more junior crew members. In the scenario, the crew was called for a working fire in a multi-story building with a person trapped. The Battalion Chief, Engine, Ambulance, and Truck arrived on scene to implement an Initial Action Plan. A hose was pulled from the engine as the aerial positioned and stabilized. The engine company stretched the line to the “fire floor” and the aerial went to the window for a rescue. All aspects of this scenario were performed with a high degree of skill.

Following the scenario, all members critiqued their actions and the overall flow. This is a crucial step in learning from our actions to improve for the next “performance.”



Above: Acting BC Ambrosius sets the tone as the Commander of the scenario. He also took the lead role in assessing performance with the Training Division Chief.

| Type of Training | # of Hours | % of Hours | # of Hours -YTD |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Company Training | 304.25 | 33.48% | 6,154.45 |
| Driver/Operator Training | 192 | 21.13% | 1,007.75 |
| Facilities Training | 9 | 0.99% | 48 |
| Hazardous Materials Training | 10 | 1.10% | 466 |
| Misc Training | 0 | 0.00% | 55.25 |
| Officer Training | 328.5 | 36.15% | 693.95 |

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|---------|----------|
| Specialty Training | 65 | 7.15% | 1,254.25 |
| Total | 908.75 | 100.00% | 9,679.65 |

Training Categories:

Company Training – General firefighting training

Officer Training – Included leadership, management, supervision, and tactical considerations

Driver/Operator Training – Operation of fire apparatus

Hazardous Materials Training – How to mitigate the leak or spill of hazardous substances

Specialty Training – Rope, confined space, trench, collapse, ice, water, and other special rescues.

Facilities Training – Training at a live-burn facility (may include off-duty time)

Misc Training – Any other training category such as software, administrative, etc.

| Type of Training | # of Hours | % of Hours | # of Hours -YTD |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------|
| Admin Training | 0 | 0.00% | 109.5 |
| EMS Training | 154.5 | 77.93% | 3,659.25 |
| Fire Instructor Training | 43.75 | 22.07% | 535.75 |
| Fire Prevention Training | 0 | 0.00% | 28 |
| Investigation Training | 0 | 0.00% | 112.5 |
| Total | 198.25 | 100.00% | 4,445.00 |

Fire Prevention Division by Fire Marshal Brian Stahl

Inspections: Following a busy October focused on education, the month of November shifts back into fire inspection mode where we visited 354 public buildings and places of employment. We had 22 properties with Fire Code Violations, more specifically 28.6% being overdue fire extinguisher annual maintenance, and 21.4% being overdue fire alarm system annual service. These properties will require follow-up inspections to confirm compliance. We conducted four consultation inspections for the month. These entailed consulting for two each for Fire Alarm Systems and Knox Box key updates. We also received and reviewed 155 reports through the Compliance Engine for services and maintenance of fire protection systems at various businesses.

Investigations: There were two fire investigations performed during the month. The first was a fire originating in a residential kitchen on a stove top where it was concluded a “counter cruising” dog had turned on a burner which eventually ignited the cabinet and microwave above. The second was a dumpster fire behind the Bethesda thrift shop. The cause of both fires was determined to be accidental.

Public Outreach: Throughout November we had several outreach opportunities. We witnessed and advised on one fire drill at Lincoln Elementary School. New smoke alarms and a CO detector were also installed in three separate private residences with a total of thirteen smoke alarms and two CO detectors placed.

Education: FF Ludwig and Lt Kariger both renewed their Advanced Cardiac Life Support Provider (ACLS) through a hands-on and lecture refresher session which is required to maintain their state Paramedic licensure. Lt Kariger completed his last course through Columbia Southern University for his bachelor's degree in November. He is patiently waiting for the results of his degree audit and anticipates graduation with summa cum laude honors in December. Lt Kariger attained a 4.0 GPA in his pursuit of a B.S. Fire Administration/Fire Investigation.

Winter Holiday Safety: The Fire Prevention Division would like to remind everyone that the three leading dates for home structure fires are typically Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day due to holiday cooking and use of decorations, candles, or additional lighting. LED candles are a great alternative as they are much safer and can replicate the look without the danger. Anyone who puts a real tree in their home for the Christmas holiday season should ensure the water level should be topped off twice a day for the first week or two, then at least daily until the tree is removed from the home. A neglected or inconsistently watered Christmas tree is a significant fire risk once it begins to dry out.

See the following YouTube link for a demonstration on how quickly they can burn once ignited-
<https://youtu.be/xr6b9b8FYKk>

Put a **FREEZE** on Winter Holiday Fires

It's fun to decorate for the winter holidays, but holiday decorations can increase your risk for a home fire. As you deck the halls this season, be fire smart.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
|  <p>Half of the home decoration fires in December are started by candles.</p> |  <p>More than 1/3 of home decoration fires are started by candles.</p> |  <p>Christmas is the peak day for candle fires.</p> |
|  <p>Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that burns.</p> |  <p>A dry Christmas tree can burn very hot and very fast.</p> |  <p>More than 1 in every 5 Christmas tree fires were caused by a heat source too close to the tree.</p> |
|  <p>Read manufacturer's instructions for the number of light strands to connect.</p> |  <p>Make sure your tree is at least 3 feet away from heat sources like fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, candles or heat vents. Also, make sure your tree does not block exits.</p> |  <p>Get rid of your tree after Christmas or when it is dry.</p> |



For more information on how to prevent winter fires, visit usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/holiday.html and nfpa.org/winter.

Prevention Division Activities:

| Inspections Completed | Monthly | Year to Date |
|--|---------------|--------------|
| Routine Fire Inspections | 330 | 2,856 |
| Re-inspections | 24 | 295 |
| All other Inspections (Consults/burn complaints,etc) | 0 | 44 |
| Total Inspections | 354 | 3,195 |
| Fire Investigations | 2 | 19 |
| Inspection Department Activities | Number | YTD |
| Public Engagement Activities | 7 | 160 |