

Wausau Fire Department Quarterly Report

Quarter 3 –2025



(WFD personnel set up flag for 9/11 on Grand Avenue)

Fire Chief Report by Chief Jeremy Kopp

This report covers departmental activities, progress, and challenges for the third quarter of 2025 (July through September). Despite facing several ongoing operational and infrastructure challenges, we have made significant progress toward key goals and milestones that support our mission and enhance the services we provide to the community.

Operational Updates and Progress

The apprenticeship program continues to perform exceptionally well. All six initial candidates remain active and are on track to complete their training and test for paramedic licensure in November. This milestone positions us to be fully staffed by the end of the year.

We are still awaiting decisions on several FEMA grants applied for earlier in the year. However, we have recently received several other important funding awards:

- A Forest Fire Protection (FFP) Grant provided wildland firefighting gear for 13 department members who previously lacked this essential equipment.
- A \$15,000 grant from the Community Foundation will go toward the purchase of new extrication equipment, alleviating the need to use previously earmarked CIP funds.
- We have successfully completed the first phase in qualifying for a Leary Firefighters Foundation Grant, which would fund the acquisition of new thermal imaging cameras.

Planning continues for a training tower, with site assessments currently underway. Our partnership with Northcentral Technical College (NTC) remains strong, and we are actively exploring cost-sharing models to ensure the project's long-term sustainability.

Personnel development is another area of focus this quarter. We have officially begun the promotion process for a new Battalion Chief, who will succeed Battalion Chief Michael Becker upon his planned retirement in March 2026, following a distinguished career with WFD. We are also in the early stages of hiring or promoting a new EMS Division Chief to fill the currently vacant position.

Leadership and Strategic Development

Our strategic planning committee continues to meet regularly and has begun drafting core focus areas for the department's future direction. These areas include:

- Staffing and personnel development
- Facility planning and infrastructure
- Technology and equipment modernization
- Public engagement and education
- A refreshed mission statement and department slogan

Facilities and Infrastructure

Central Fire Station remains one of our most pressing challenges. The station is showing significant signs of aging, with ongoing issues such as:

- Leaking pipes
- HVAC system failures (including a major disruption due to the replacement of the shared cooling tower with the Police Department, leaving both departments without air conditioning since June).
- Deteriorating platforms on both the front and rear of the station (patching was done in September) - thank you DPW!
- Chronic overcrowding and inadequate working and parking space

We have reached out to state representatives to explore potential financial assistance and are currently awaiting feedback on available funding options.

To address immediate overcrowding, we have initiated early-stage planning to add office space to Station 2, which will help alleviate space constraints at Central.

A facility assessment report has outlined several critical infrastructure needs for Central Fire Station. Based on these findings, we are actively pursuing \$700,000 in funding to begin the architectural design phase for a new fire station on Grand Avenue—a critical step toward ensuring the department can continue to grow with the city.

Conclusion

The third quarter of 2025 has been marked by continued progress across key operational, strategic, and infrastructure areas. From preparing our next paramedic class and receiving critical funding to advancing our long-term facility planning and leadership transitions, the Wausau Fire Department remains committed to excellence in service, preparedness, and innovation.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the City of Wausau, our community partners, and the residents we serve. Your ongoing support and collaboration enable us to meet the evolving needs of our community with strength and resilience.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions or for additional information, 715-261-7901.

Thank you for your continued support.

Fire Operations Report by Deputy Chief Justin Pluess

The Wausau Fire Department continues to serve and protect the citizens of Wausau while advancing the department's standing within the modern fire service. This past quarter was a pivotal time for both operational progress and public engagement.

This summer, the department successfully provided EMS coverage at the Wisconsin Valley Fair. The presence of our personnel was well received by the fair board and attendees, demonstrating our commitment to community service and public safety.

Additionally, for the first time since 12 additional firefighter positions were approved over three years ago, WFD is proud to report that at the conclusion of the most recent recruit academy, we will be fully staffed at the firefighter level.

Our recruitment efforts remain strong, with continued participation in career fairs, technical colleges and community outreach events. One highlight includes our involvement in the 'Build My Future Northcentral WI' career expo, where students explored a wide array of skilled trades. WFD provided hands-on demonstrations and education about careers in fire and EMS, strengthening our talent pipeline.

Fleet

During the third quarter, the Wausau Fire Department advanced several critical Capital Improvement Projects, including the acquisition of Ladder 2 and the procurement of a new ambulance (Med-3). These capital upgrades are instrumental in maintaining ISO compliance, meeting modern safety and operational standards, and enhancing our emergency response capabilities.

The Wausau Fire Department operates three frontline ambulances that collectively respond to well over 6,300 emergency medical calls annually. Due to the high call volume, these units experience significant mechanical stress and frequent wear. As a result, it is not uncommon for one or more ambulances to be taken out of service for routine maintenance or repairs. In several instances during this quarter, we faced operational strain when only two frontline ambulances were available, with the remaining units awaiting parts or service. These challenges underscore the importance of timely ambulance replacement and strategic fleet management.



Workforce Development and Training

The department continues to strengthen internal leadership development and succession planning through structured mentoring, updated promotional assessment centers, and continued education. The firefighter/paramedic apprenticeship program has progressed with six apprentices nearing their completion of their clinical rotations.

Build My Future Northcentral Wisconsin



As part of our continued commitment to workforce development and public outreach, the Wausau Fire Department proudly participated in the Build My Future Northcentral Wisconsin event this quarter. This hands-on career exploration event invited over 1,600 area high school students to engage directly with various professions within the construction and public safety sectors. Students were able to experience fire apparatus up close, explore tools and gear, and speak directly with firefighter-paramedics about their career paths.

Leadership Staffing and Assessment Center Preparation

During Q3, significant effort was invested into preparing the job postings, application screening process, and assessment materials for two key leadership positions: Battalion Chief and Division Chief of EMS. These hiring processes incorporate rigorous interviews, scenario-based simulations, and a comprehensive assessment center, all designed to ensure that the next leaders of the Wausau Fire Department embody the highest professional standards and exemplify our core values. The two-hiring process will take place in mid to late October.

Community Engagement Highlight: Fire & Police Department Community Picnic

In a show of unity and service, the Wausau Fire Department joined forces with the Wausau Police Department to host a Community Picnic on the 400 Block this quarter. The event was designed to give back to the residents we proudly serve, while fostering positive relationships between public safety personnel and the community.





Many Wausau residents came out to enjoy the festivities. Children and families were given the opportunity to explore fire trucks and police vehicles, engage directly with officers and firefighters, and learn more about the services and people that keep their community safe. Events like this not only strengthen the community bond but also help humanize our departments, allowing citizens to see us beyond the uniforms.

EMS Division Chief Report

This section is reserved for the EMS Division Chief's quarterly update. As the position was vacant during Q3, there is no report for this period.

Division Chief of Fire Report

This section typically provides updates on fire operations, training, and compliance efforts. Due to this position not being filled during Q3, there is no report available at this time.

Significant Incidents

July 9 – Lake Wausau Water Rescue

On July 7th, Wausau Fire Department's Airboat unit was dispatched to assist the Wausau Police Department with the retrieval of an individual who had entered Lake Wausau after scaling a fence at a local healthcare center. Upon arrival at the Memorial Park boat launch, WFD personnel were joined by officers from WPD and navigated to the individual's location on the water. The subject was safely transported back to the boat launch and transferred to the custody of WPD without incident.

July 18 – Boat Rescue on Wisconsin River

Wausau Fire Department was dispatched for a water rescue incident at the Brokaw boat landing in the Village of Maine. Initial response included the department's airboat (88 Airboat), but due to the specific location of the stranded individual, the response was adapted to utilize the department's smaller Tracker vessel (88 Boat), which was better suited for river navigation in the area.

Marathon County Sheriff's Office advised that an adult male and his dog were stranded in a small boat downriver from the launch point. Wausau Fire launched 88 Boat with a crew of three firefighters. Using a tethered rope system, they secured the individual and his dog, and safely towed the boat back to shore. No injuries were reported, and no additional rescue measures were needed.

August 30 - Structure Fire

WFD was dispatched for a reported structure fire in a two-story multi-family residence. Upon arrival, light smoke was visible from the D-side of the structure. Engine 3 crew entered the affected unit and located a mattress smoldering against a baseboard heating unit. The fire was quickly controlled, and ventilation was performed. The fire was determined to be accidental, likely due to a child unintentionally adjusting the heating control. Power was secured to the affected heating circuits. Affected tenants were offered support via the WFD Charitable Foundation.

September 29 - Mutual Aid Structure Fire

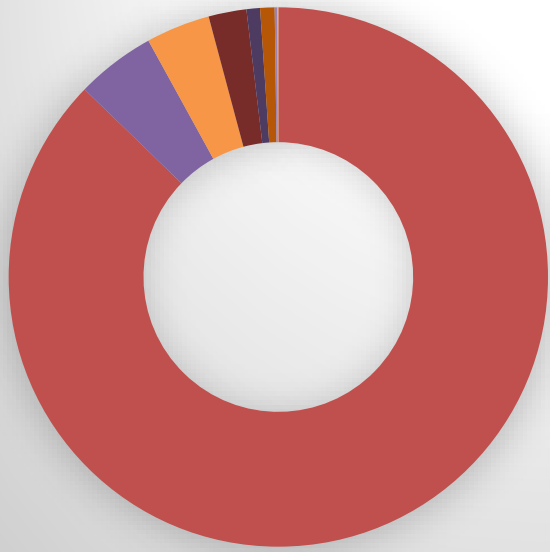
WFD Truck 1 was dispatched to provide mutual aid to SAFER for a structure fire at Crystal Finishing Inc. Upon arrival, SAFER crews were actively deploying lines and initiating a fire attack. Truck 1 assisted with backing up interior crews during initial operations. Later, Truck 1 completed reconnaissance of the main building. Truck 1 was subsequently released from the scene without further incident.

Significant Fire Events:

Date	Address	City	Incident #	Type
7/6/2025	300 North 1st Street	City of Wausau	F25001195	Dumpster or other outside trash receptacle fire
7/7/2025	1520 Elm Street	City of Wausau	F25001204	Cooking fire, confined to container
7/10/2025	507 North 3rd Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001218	Special outside fire, other
7/11/2025	500 Grand Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001225	Cooking fire, confined to container
7/18/2025	1500 North 1st Street	City of Wausau	F25001283	Cooking fire, confined to container
7/27/2025	530 North 32nd Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001340	Building fire
8/4/2025	Us 51 NB To Bridge Street & W Bridge St	City of Wausau	F25001387	Grass fire
8/7/2025	1921 North 10th Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001413	Dumpster or other outside trash receptacle fire
8/11/2025	7100 Stewart Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001429	Building fire
8/18/2025	South County Road K & Naugart Dr	Merrill	F25001482	Passenger vehicle fire
8/23/2025	1418 North 1st Street	City of Wausau	F25001516	Cooking fire, confined to container
8/27/2025	232851 US 51 SB	City of Wausau	F25001540	Passenger vehicle fire
8/30/2025	2202 North 13th Street	City of Wausau	F25001554	Building fire
9/2/2025	8000 Highland Drive	City of Wausau	F25001574	Forest, woods or wildland fire
9/7/2025	914 Grand Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001603	Cooking fire, confined to container
9/29/2025	2608 Ross Avenue	Village of Weston	F25001747	Building fire

Monthly NFIRS Incident Comparison:

	2025	2024	2023	2022	% Of Change from 2024 to 2025
January	677	646	579	591	4.80%
February	590	597	506	507	-1.17%
March	561	555	551	540	1.08%
April	555	541	527	498	2.59%
May	646	605	574	574	6.78%
June	570	578	553	590	-1.38%
July	638	585	679	531	9.06%
August	615	581	571	600	5.85%
September	597	547	548	524	-0.18%
October		564	616	545	
November		556	624	574	
December		606	623	612	
TOTAL	5449	6961	6951	6686	



- Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident (1614)
- False Alarm & False Call (88)
- Good Intent Call (71)
- Service Call (42)
- Hazardous Condition (No Fire) (15)
- Fire (15)
- Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat (No Fire) (0)
- Special Incident Type (3)
- Severe Weather & Natural Disaster (1)

Responses by Municipality (All NFIRS Reports):

City	# of Runs	% of Runs	# of Runs - YTD
City of Abbotsford	0	0.00%	0
City of Antigo	0	0.00%	0
City of Colby	0	0.00%	0
City of Merrill	0	0.00%	0
City of Mosinee	0	0.00%	1
City of Schofield	0	0.00%	0
City of Wausau	1,750	94.59%	5,094
Clark County	0	0.00%	1
Lincoln County	0	0.00%	0
Oneida County	0	0.00%	0
Rosholt	0	0.00%	0
Taylor County	0	0.00%	0
Town of Bergen	0	0.00%	0
Town of Berlin	9	0.49%	32
Town of Bern	0	0.00%	0
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	0
Town of Cassel	1	0.05%	6
Town of Elderon	0	0.00%	0
Town of Emmet	0	0.00%	0
Town of Frankfort	0	0.00%	0
Town of Franzen	0	0.00%	0
Town of Halsey	0	0.00%	0
Town of Hamburg	0	0.00%	2
Town of Harrison	1	0.05%	1
Town of Hewitt	2	0.11%	13
Town of Hull	0	0.00%	0
Town of Johnson	1	0.05%	4
Town of Knowlton	0	0.00%	1
Town of Marathon	0	0.00%	4
Town of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0

Town of Norrie	0	0.00%	0
Town of Plover	0	0.00%	1
Town of Rib Falls	1	0.05%	5
Town of Rietbrock	0	0.00%	2
Town of Ringle	0	0.00%	1
Town of Stettin	0	0.00%	4
Town of Texas	11	0.59%	54
Town of Wausau	21	1.14%	69
Town of Weston	0	0.00%	0
Town of Wien	2	0.11%	5
Village of Athens	1	0.05%	3
Village of Brokaw	0	0.00%	0
Village of Edgar	1	0.05%	4
Village of Hatley	0	0.00%	0
Village of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	1
Village of Maine	39	2.11%	99
Village of Marathon City	2	0.11%	10
Village of Rib Mountain	3	0.16%	12
Village of Rothschild	0	0.00%	2
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	1
Village of Weston	5	0.27%	17
Wittenberg	0	0.00%	0
Wood County	0	0.00%	0
Total	1,850	100.00%	5,449

Activity/Incident Hours Committed:

Category	Time Committed
NFIRS Incidents	482:00:22 Hours
EMS Incidents	2919:44:14 Hours
Non-Incident Activities (Station Maintenance, Vehicle Check-off/Fire Pre-plan, Hazmat Outreach, Administration duties, Public Education, Committee and Staff Meetings)	2,736.50 Hours
Training (including Wellness)	3,109.01 Hours

Aid Responses:

Type of Aid	# of Runs
Mutual Aid Given – EMS	9
Mutual Aid Given – Fire	2
Automatic Aid Given – EMS	55
Automatic Aid Given – Fire	2
Mutual Aid Received – EMS	2
Mutual Aid Received – Fire	2
Automatic Aid Received – EMS	0
Automatic Aid Received – Fire	2
Other Aid Given – EMS	0
Request for EMS from Other Agencies to the City of Wausau (not Aid)	14

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)	32

Responses by Municipality (EMS Patient Care Reports):

City	# of Reports	% of Reports	# of Reports – YTD
City of Abbotsford	0	0.00%	0
City of Antigo	0	0.00%	0
City of Merrill	0	0.00%	0
City of Mosinee	0	0.00%	1
City of Schofield	0	0.00%	0
City of Wausau	1,536	94.12%	4,487
Clark County	0	0.00%	1
Oneida County	0	0.00%	0
Other	0	0.00%	0
Town of Bergen	0	0.00%	0
Town of Berlin	9	0.55%	32
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	0
Town of Bern	0	0.00%	0
Town of Cassel	1	0.06%	6
Town of Elderon	0	0.00%	0
Town of Emmet	0	0.00%	0
Town of Frankfort	0	0.00%	0
Town of Franzen	0	0.00%	0
Town of Halsey	0	0.00%	0
Town of Hamburg	0	0.00%	2
Town of Harrison	2	0.12%	2
Town of Hewitt	2	0.12%	13
Town of Hull	0	0.00%	0
Town of Johnson	1	0.06%	4
Town of Knowlton	0	0.00%	0
Town of Marathon	0	0.00%	4
Town of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
Town of Norrie	0	0.00%	0
Town of Plover	0	0.00%	1
Town of Rib Falls	1	0.06%	5
Town of Rietbrock	0	0.00%	2
Town of Ringle	0	0.00%	0
Town of Stettin	0	0.00%	4
Town of Texas	11	0.67%	54
Town of Wausau	25	1.53%	73
Town of Wien	2	0.12%	5
Village of Athens	1	0.06%	3
Village of Edgar	1	0.06%	4
Village of Hatley	0	0.00%	0
Village of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	1
Village of Maine	37	2.27%	98
Village of Marathon City	2	0.12%	10
Village of Rib Mountain	1	0.06%	8
Village of Rothschild	0	0.00%	0
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	1
Village of Weston	0	0.00%	2
Wittenberg	0	0.00%	0

Wood County	0	0.00%	0
Total	1,632	100.00%	4,823

Type of Training	# of Hours	% of Hours	# of Hours -YTD
Company Training	1,736.76	64.53%	6,082.47
Driver/Operator Training	470.50	17.48%	763
Facilities Training	0	0.00%	32
Hazardous Materials Training	6	0.22%	213.15
Misc Training	3	0.11%	56
Officer Training	132.50	4.92%	414
Specialty Training	342.50	12.73%	468.50
Total	2,691.26	100.00%	8,029.12

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	27	6.46%	115.50
EMS Training	321.50	76.96%	2,371.80
Fire Instructor Training	67.25	16.10%	261.75
Fire Prevention Training	0	0.00%	1
Investigation Training	2	0.48%	64
Total	417.75	100.00%	2,814.05

Fire Prevention Division by Fire Prevention Division Chief Shahn Kariger

Inspections: Throughout the third quarter of 2025, the Prevention Division diligently inspected 643 public buildings and places of employment. We performed 553 inspections that passed, and we had 90 properties with fire code violations. 107 of the 643 were re-inspections from previous violations. The failed inspections were primarily overdue fire extinguisher annual maintenance, fire alarm system annual service or repair, and smoke alarms needing replacement. These properties will require follow-up inspections to confirm compliance. We conducted 28 consultation inspections for the quarter. These include consultations for new and modified sprinkler systems, fire alarm systems, Knox box updates, liquor license inspections, and new construction or remodeling. We also received and reviewed 363 reports through the Compliance Engine for services and maintenance of Fire Protection Systems at various businesses. 29 re-inspections carried over into the fourth quarter.

The Division is proud to announce we proactively transitioned from the state adopted 2012 edition of NFPA 1, Fire Code, to the 2024 edition through an update to the city ordinance in September. This marks a significant step to maintain current standards and has a positive impact on the City's ISO rating. We will automatically adopt the newest version of NFPA 1 going forward.

Investigations: The Division did not formally investigate any fires during the third quarter of 2025.

Public Outreach: Throughout the third quarter we had several outreach opportunities. We were invited to participate in Longfellow's monthly neighborhood meeting and speak about the Department's smoke alarm and CO detector program, fire safety in the home focusing on cooking safety. Recreational burn permits were thoroughly discussed to ensure understanding of when and where firepits are allowed in the city. It was a great discussion. New smoke alarms and CO detectors were installed in 4 private residences, with a total of 9 smoke alarms and CO detectors placed. A strobe light smoke detector was also installed in an apartment for an individual with hearing impairment. Instead of a loud audible alarm, it uses a flashing strobe like what is found in a commercial building to

wake them in the event of a fire. The Division witnessed a school fire drill to reinforce not only the need to have an escape plan in place, but to also practice the plan in case of a real emergency. 22 adults and 173 children participated in this drill. We also gave out “We Visited the Fire Station” goodie bags to nearly 35 children during several station tours at Station 1.

Education: The Prevention Division continued working on Paramedic refresher courses to maintain our state licenses. We also participated in tested online training for fire investigation continuing education focusing on fire patterns.

Promotions and vacancy: The Inspector position received three applicants when posted externally. An interview process was completed in late July/early August, with an offer of employment made to a well-qualified candidate. The position is still vacant at the time of this report as the candidate had obligations to fulfill with their current employer. Operating with only two staff members instead of the usual three, the Prevention Division successfully completed all the required inspection and prevention activities which demonstrated exceptional dedication and efficiency despite limited staffing.

CHARGE into Fire Safety™
Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home

Most of the electronics we use in our homes every day are powered by lithium-ion batteries. In fact, most everything that's rechargeable uses this kind of battery.

e-bikes	hoverboards	tablets	cordless vacuum cleaners
e-vehicles	power tools	mobile phones	remote control cars
e-scooters	laptops	e-cigarettes/vapes	drones
golf carts	smart watches	headphones	toys

LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES store a lot of energy in a small place. These batteries can overheat, start a fire, or explode if overcharged or damaged. By learning how to **BUY**, **CHARGE**, and **RECYCLE** these batteries safely, you can help prevent a fire in your home.

- BUY** only listed products. When buying a product that uses a lithium-ion battery look for a safety certification mark such as UL, ETL, or CSA. This means it meets important safety standards.
- CHARGE** devices safely. Always use the cables that came with the product to charge. Follow the instructions from the manufacturer. Buy new chargers from the manufacturer or one that the manufacturer has approved.
- CHARGE** your device on a hard surface. Don't overcharge your device. Unplug it or remove the battery when it's fully charged.
- STOP** using your device right away if the battery smells weird, gets too hot, makes popping noises, changes in shape or color. If it is safe, move the device away from anything that can catch fire. Call **9-1-1**.
- RECYCLE** batteries responsibly. Don't throw lithium-ion batteries in the trash or regular recycling bins because they could start a fire.
- RECYCLE** your device or battery at a safe battery recycling location. Visit call2recycle.org to find a recycling spot near you.

NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION
 NFPA The Leading Information and Knowledge Resource on Fire, Electrical, and Related Hazards

Prevention Division Activities:

Inspections Completed	Quarterly	Year to Date
Routine Fire Inspections	508	2,269
Re-inspections	107	359
All other Inspections (Consults/burn complaints,etc)	28	72
Community Paramedic Home Inspection	0	21
Total Inspections	643	2,710
Fire Investigations	0	8
Inspection Department Activities	Quarterly	YTD
Public Engagement Activities	31	88