

Wausau Fire Department Quarterly Report

Quarter 4 –2025



(On December 1st, Lt. Pat Moucha retired after 35 years of service)

Fire Chief Report by Chief Jeremy Kopp

This report covers the period from October through December 2025. As we close out the year, there are several important items worth highlighting.

With the conclusion of the holiday season, we also wrapped up our *Keep the Wreath Green* campaign, which runs annually from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day. Unfortunately, multiple red bulbs were lit on the wreath this year, serving as sobering reminders of the increased fire risks during the holidays and colder months. As detailed in the Deputy Chiefs' report, many of these incidents were related to cooking fires and space heater use. Each year, I also want to take a moment to express our sincere appreciation to our firefighters' families for the sacrifices they make in support of our members—thank you.

For the first time in more than three years, I am pleased to report that the department has reached full staffing levels. Achieving this milestone required significant effort and innovative thinking. In 2025, we launched our first apprenticeship program in partnership with Northcentral Technical College (NTC). Six firefighter/EMT apprentices were assigned to shifts while simultaneously attending paramedic school and learning the operations of the Wausau Fire Department. All six successfully graduated from paramedic school in November and were welcomed into the department as probationary firefighter/paramedics—marking the successful completion of our inaugural apprenticeship program.

Unlike last year, this quarter quickly transitioned into cold and snowy conditions. Despite the challenges, we continued to train extensively for cold-weather emergencies and water-related incidents. As ice conditions develop, increased recreational activity on frozen waterways often leads to emergencies. A primary focus this quarter was public education on ice safety and cold-weather preparedness. Additionally, falls remain one of the leading causes of 911 calls, and these incidents increase significantly during winter months due to icy conditions.

The fourth quarter was also a very active period for personnel development and succession planning. We conducted multiple assessment centers to both fill vacant positions and promote internal candidates into leadership roles. These processes included:

- An assessment center to fill a Battalion Chief position anticipated to open in March 2026
- A Lieutenant promotional process to fill a current vacancy and establish an eligibility list for future openings over the next two years
- A selection process for a new EMS Division Chief
- A hiring process to fill a vacancy for Fire Inspector within the Inspection Bureau

While these efforts require significant time and resources, we are excited to move forward with these positions filled and to be operating with full staffing.

Overall, the fourth quarter of 2025 presented both challenges and successes for the Wausau Fire Department. We remain committed to enhancing operational readiness, strengthening community partnerships, and improving our facilities to ensure we continue providing the highest level of service to our residents.

On behalf of the department, I extend our sincere appreciation to the City of Wausau, our community partners, and the residents we serve. Your continued support and collaboration allow 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 at 715-261-7901.

Thank you for your continued support.

Fire Operations Report by Deputy Chief Justin Pluess

Operational and Organizational Report by Deputy Chief Justin Pluess

The fourth quarter of 2025 marked a significant milestone period for the Wausau Fire Department, defined by major staffing achievements, promotional processes, reporting software revamped and the recognition of long-serving leadership within the organization.

Staffing Milestone and Apprenticeship Program Success

In December 2025, the Wausau Fire Department achieved full staffing for the first time since receiving the SAFER and ARPA grants, which allowed the department to hire 12 additional firefighter/paramedics. Reaching full staffing represents a major organizational milestone and was the result of sustained effort in recruitment and retention. Maintaining these 12 essential firefighter/paramedic positions is critical to current operations. Full staffing allows the department to consistently staff a fourth ambulance while also maintaining a minimum of three personnel per fire engine. These two components are essential to an effective emergency response, particularly at working fires and complex incidents where adequate on-scene staffing directly impacts firefighter safety and incident outcomes. The availability of an additional staffed ambulance also reduces reliance on mutual aid from neighboring communities that are experiencing similar staffing challenges and helps ensure timely EMS response for residents who need care immediately. Maintaining current staffing levels is essential to preserving these operational gains and ensuring the Wausau Fire Department can continue to meet community needs reliably and safely.

Apprenticeship Program-

All six apprentices successfully completed the paramedic program at Northcentral Technical College ahead of schedule, while simultaneously working full-time for the Wausau Fire Department. Each apprentice completed an extensive and demanding educational process that included approximately over 600 hours of classroom and skills lab instruction, covering advanced subjects such as anatomy, pharmacology, cardiology, trauma management, and advanced life support techniques. In addition, each apprentice completed 750+ hours of supervised clinical and field experience, meeting rigorous state and national competency requirements. All six apprentices passed the National Registry Paramedic examination. They are now operating as fully credentialed firefighter-paramedics for the City of Wausau, significantly strengthening the department's EMS capabilities and long-term staffing stability.



Live Fire Training and Kolbe & Kolbe Partnership

One of the most impactful training initiatives of the year occurred during the fourth quarter with the culmination of extended live fire training made possible through a generous partnership with Kolbe & Kolbe. WFD crews to conduct hands-on training throughout the summer and fall, leading up to a full-scale live burn training event in November. This opportunity enabled firefighters to train under realistic fire conditions, practice coordinated fire attack, ventilation techniques, primary search operations, and command functions in a controlled but authentic environment.





Command Staff Succession Planning and Promotions

The Wausau Fire Department completed a comprehensive and highly competitive promotional hiring process for both Battalion Chief and Division Chief of EMS. The process was intentionally designed to evaluate leadership, decision-making, and accountability in command-level responsibilities. Candidates were interviewed before a diverse panel that included fire chiefs from neighboring communities, the City's Human Resources Director, the department's medical control physician, members of the Police and Fire Commission, and Wausau Police Department management. This multidisciplinary panel ensured a balanced, objective evaluation of each candidate's leadership ability and professionalism.

In addition to panel interviews, candidates participated in multiple scenario-based and analytical assessments, including a human resources and employee conflict scenario, a simulated fire incident requiring command-level decision-making, and a formal quality-improvement presentation. Candidates were also assigned a policy review and leadership analysis focused on preventing a Line of Duty Death. The process attracted highly qualified internal and external candidates and was extremely competitive. Following the completion of all phases, Cody Wiesman was selected as the next Battalion Chief, and Matt Tormohlen was selected as the next Division Chief of EMS, reflecting the department's continued commitment to leadership development and accountability.

Federal Reporting Transition to NERIS

The Wausau Fire Department recently completed the required transition to the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS), as mandated by FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration, following the discontinuation of the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS). This transition required extensive updates to the department's incident reporting software and the creation and implementation of numerous new data fields. These changes significantly increased the time and complexity involved in completing incident report and adding a considerable administrative workload in ensuring these new data fields are being properly completed and collected.

WFD conducted department-wide training for all members on the new reporting system and expectations. The system went live at midnight on New Year's Eve, requiring WFD to manually transition from NFIRS to NERIS. Following implementation, multiple software issues were identified that required staff to spend additional time troubleshooting and coordinating directly with the department's third-party reporting vendor, ImageTrend, to resolve reporting errors and data submission problems. Despite these challenges and the increased administrative burden placed on personnel, the department remains compliant with federal reporting requirements and continues to refine processes to improve efficiency and data accuracy. Maintaining NERIS compliance is critical, as accurate and timely reporting directly impacts the City's eligibility for federal fire service grants and continued access to FEMA and U.S. Fire Administration funding opportunities.

Leadership and Department Legacy

The fourth quarter also marked the retirement of Lieutenant Pat Moucha, one of the longest-serving members in Wausau Fire Department history. Pat joined the department in September of 1990, and for more than 35 years served as a steady, trusted presence within the organization. Throughout his career, Pat earned deep respect not only for his firefighting skill and leadership, but for his compassion, professionalism, and genuine care for both the public and his fellow firefighters. His influence as a mentor and role model has left a lasting imprint on the department's culture. Pat's retirement represents both the closing of an extraordinary chapter and a reminder of the legacy of service that continues to shape WFD today



Significant incidents:

October 5th, 2025, Wausau Fire Department responded to a mutual aid request from the Riverside Fire Department for a reported basement fire in a residential structure. Truck 1 was deployed and, upon arrival, assisted on scene alongside Riverside and Safer units. Wausau firefighters supported interior operations by assisting with extinguishment and using positive pressure ventilation. After completing assigned tasks Truck 1 was released and returned to service.

On October 7, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a reported structure fire at the Gaslight Apartments located on 3rd Avenue, with initial reports confirming an apartment fully involved with flames visible. Upon arrival, crews observed significant fire on the southeast corner of the two-story, multi-family building and initiated an offensive fire attack. Firefighters conducted a coordinated transitional and interior attack, encountering hazardous conditions including fire extension into the basement and attic spaces. Multiple engine and truck companies worked jointly to suppress fire on multiple levels, complete primary searches confirming all occupants were out, ventilate the structure, and prevent further extension. Vertical ventilation and targeted attic suppression were required to bring the fire under control. One occupant was transported to the hospital for evaluation and treatment related to smoke inhalation. Crews conducted extensive overhaul, confirmed extinguishment using thermal imaging, and coordinated with law enforcement to secure the scene for fire investigation. All units were released after ensuring the structure was stabilized and safe.

On November 6, 2025, Wausau Fire Department responded to an automatic mutual aid request from the SAFER Fire Department for a reported structure fire. Truck 1 responded emergently with a crew of four. Wausau firefighters were assigned to perform vertical ventilation over an attached garage, completing the operation safely, and later assisted with overhaul by removing the main garage door to improve access. After the fire was declared under control, Truck 1 completed cleanup operations and returned to service without incident.

On November 11, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a reported structure fire at 900 block of Jackson Street, with reports of smoke inside the residence and pets potentially trapped. Upon arrival, crews observed smoke conditions and initiated a search, during which active fire was located in a first-floor room. Firefighters made entry and quickly knocked down the fire using coordinated interior suppression and ventilation operations. Crews secured utilities, conducted extensive overhaul, and used thermal imaging to confirm the fire was fully extinguished. Primary searches confirmed no occupants were inside, and multiple animals were safely removed from the home. After ventilating the structure and ensuring no remaining hazards, the scene was turned over to the fire department's investigators.

On November 17, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a reported structure fire at South 9th Avenue, after fire conditions on the rear porch were observed remotely by the homeowner. Upon arrival, crews encountered significant fire damage at the back entrance of the residence, with reports of heavy smoke and fire conditions upon initial arrival. Firefighters conducted fire suppression and overhaul operations to ensure the fire was fully extinguished. Thermal imaging was used to confirm the fire had not extended into the interior of the home. The scene was secured for investigation, and a fire investigator responded to determine cause.

On December 13, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a report of smoke and burned material at a commercial business. Upon arrival, crews found light smoke conditions with occupants already evacuated.

Firefighters identified burned material on a bathroom wall with no active fire and no extension into wall cavities. Crews ensured the area was safe and coordinated with law enforcement, who conducted an investigation. After advising staff on monitoring for any further issues, the scene was left in the care of the business and police, and all fire units returned to service.

On December 18, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a reported structure fire at South 5th Avenue, with initial reports indicating a bedroom fire possibly caused by a space heater. Upon arrival, crews encountered heavy smoke conditions inside the residence. Firefighters initiated an interior offensive attack under challenging conditions, including limited staffing on initial arrival, and located the fire in a lower-level bedroom. Crews knocked down the fire, searched and ventilated the structure. Extensive overhaul using thermal imaging to confirm the fire had not extended beyond the room of origin. All units were released after the structure was stabilized and deemed safe.

On December 21, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a reported electrical fire at a single-family residence. Upon arrival, crews observed heavy smoke venting from the structure and confirmed all occupants had exited, with one dog believed to be inside. Firefighters initiated a quick interior fire attack while simultaneously conducting a primary search, during which crews located and rescued the dog from the structure, with the animal surviving the incident. The fire was brought under control, and crews completed ventilation, overhaul, and thermal imaging to confirm the fire was fully extinguished and confined to the room of origin. The structure was secured, and occupants were advised to relocate for the evening due to fire and smoke damage.

On December 27, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a structure fire on Fleming Street, with initial reports indicating an occupant trapped inside the residence. Upon arrival, Battalion 1 reported a two-story residential structure with active fire on the first floor, operating in an offensive strategy. A Wausau Police Department officer arrived ahead of fire units and made entry into the burning structure, locating the occupant on a couch and removing her from the home under extreme conditions, sustaining injuries in the process. Fire crews initiated a coordinated transitional interior fire attack, quickly bringing the fire under control while conducting primary and secondary searches of all levels of the structure. WFD treated and transported occupant to Aspirus Wausau Hospital with critical burn injuries. The injured police officer was also treated and transported for medical evaluation. Firefighters completed ventilation and overhaul, and confirmed no extension beyond the room of origin. This incident highlights the rapid, coordinated response of Wausau Fire Department and law enforcement personnel, including the extraordinary and heroic life-saving efforts of the responding police officer, who placed himself at significant personal risk in an attempt to save a life.

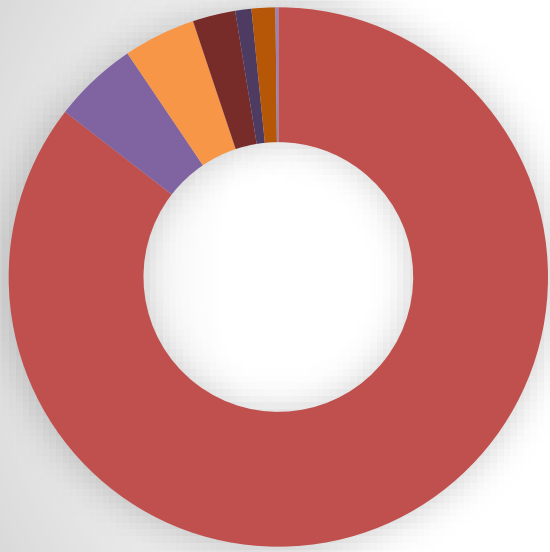
On December 31, 2025, Wausau Fire Department units responded to a reported structure fire on Sturgeon Eddy Road, with initial reports of flames visible on the first floor. Upon arrival, crews found heavy smoke conditions persisted throughout the multi-story apartment complex. Firefighters located and fully extinguished the fire, removed burned debris and initiated extensive ventilation operations. Crews conducted coordinated primary searches of all three floors, assisting residents out of the building, ventilating individual apartments, and using gas-monitoring equipment to confirm safe air conditions. The fire was confirmed to be confined to the first-floor hallway, with no extension into living spaces. Due to the suspicious nature of the fire, fire prevention officials were notified and responded for further investigation. After ensuring the building was stabilized and safe, all Wausau Fire units were released.

Significant Fire Events:

Date	Address	City	Incident #	Type
10/1/2025	500 River Drive	City of Wausau	F25001761	Mobile property (vehicle) fire, other
10/2/2025	601 Mcindoe Street	City of Wausau	F25001769	Trash or rubbish fire, contained
10/3/2025	1010 Grand Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001774	Cooking fire, confined to container
10/5/2025	3903 Michael Drive	Village of Weston	F25001788	Building fire
10/7/2025	1025 South 3rd Avenue	City of Wausau	F25001802	Building fire
10/11/2025	165402 County Road Z	Wausau	F25001826	Building fire
10/12/2025	500 East Thomas Street	City of Wausau	F25001829	Natural vegetation fire, other
10/18/2025	307 East Campus Drive	City of Wausau	F25001876	Fire, other
11/1/2025	400 East Thomas Street	City of Wausau	F25001961	Passenger vehicle fire
11/6/2025	150836 Ibis Lane	Rib Mountain	F25001999	Building fire
11/11/2025	916 Jackson Street	City of Wausau	F25002025	Building fire
11/17/2025	1025 South 9th Avenue	City of Wausau	F25002064	Building fire
11/21/2025	North 6th St And Mcindoe St	City of Wausau	F25002094	Mobile property (vehicle) fire, other
11/21/2025	221 Scott Street	City of Wausau	F25002096	Fire, other
11/25/2025	5606 Hewitt Avenue	Village of Weston	F25002115	Building fire
12/2/2025	1000 Mcdonald Street	City of Wausau	F25002153	Road freight or transport vehicle fire
12/13/2025	310 Grand Avenue	City of Wausau	F25002233	Fire, other
12/14/2025	111 North Bellis Street	City of Wausau	F25002241	Cooking fire, confined to container
12/14/2025	244686 County Road Ww	Wausau	E25006052	Fires in structure other than in a building
12/18/2025	517 South 5th Avenue	City of Wausau	F25002278	Building fire
12/21/2025	822 Winton Street	City of Wausau	F25002295	Building fire
12/27/2025	409 Fleming Street	City of Wausau	F25002324	Building fire
12/28/2025	807 Le Messurier Street	City of Wausau	F25002332	Cooking fire, confined to container
12/30/2025	915 Townline Road	City of Wausau	F25002352	Passenger vehicle fire
12/31/2025	111 Sturgeon Eddy Road	City of Wausau	F25002356	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	542	564	616	545	-3.90%
November	582	556	624	574	4.68%
December	633	606	623	612	4.46%
TOTAL	7206	6961	6951	6686	3.52%



- Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident (1502)
- False Alarm & False Call (89)
- Good Intent Call (76)
- Service Call (45)
- Hazardous Condition (No Fire) (17)
- Fire (25)
- Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat (No Fire) (0)
- Special Incident Type (3)
- Severe Weather & Natural Disaster (0)

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	1,640	93.34%	6,734
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	4	0.23%	36
Town of Bern	0	0.00%	0
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	0
Town of Cassel	5	0.28%	11
Town of Easton	1	0.06%	1
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	0	0.00%	1
Town of Hewitt	6	0.34%	19
Town of Hull	0	0.00%	0
Town of Johnson	0	0.00%	4
Town of Knowlton	0	0.00%	1
Town of Marathon	2	0.11%	6

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	0	0.00%	5
Town of Rietbrock	1	0.06%	3
Town of Ringle	0	0.00%	1
Town of Stettin	1	0.06%	5
Town of Texas	23	1.31%	77
Town of Wausau	31	1.76%	100
Town of Weston	0	0.00%	0
Town of Wien	1	0.06%	6
Village of Athens	0	0.00%	3
Village of Brokaw	0	0.00%	0
Village of Edgar	0	0.00%	4
Village of Hatley	0	0.00%	0
Village of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	1
Village of Maine	30	1.71%	129
Village of Marathon City	1	0.06%	11
Village of Rib Mountain	4	0.23%	16
Village of Rothschild	0	0.00%	2
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	1
Village of Weston	7	0.40%	24
Wittenberg	0	0.00%	0
Wood County	0	0.00%	0
Total	1,757	100.00%	7,206

Activity/Incident Hours Committed:

Category	Time Committed
NFIRS Incidents	631:49:17 Hours
EMS Incidents	2587:55:52 Hours
Non-Incident Activities (Station Maintenance, Vehicle Check-off/Fire Pre-plan, Hazmat Outreach, Administration duties, Public Education, Committee and Staff Meetings)	2,451.09 Hours
Training (including Wellness)	4.168.49 Hours

Aid Responses:

Type of Aid	# of Runs
Mutual Aid Given – EMS	14
Mutual Aid Given – Fire	2
Automatic Aid Given – EMS	56
Automatic Aid Given – Fire	4
Mutual Aid Received – EMS	5
Mutual Aid Received – Fire	1
Automatic Aid Received – EMS	0
Automatic Aid Received – Fire	4
Other Aid Given – EMS	0

Request for EMS from Other Agencies to the City of Wausau (not Aid)	11
Request for Fire from Other Agencies to the City of Wausau (not Aid)	1
Total Non-Aid Incidents (outside City with no other agency response)	40

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	1,428	93.03%	5,917
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	4	0.26%	36
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	0
Town of Bern	0	0.00%	0
Town of Cassel	5	0.33%	11
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	0	0.00%	2
Town of Hewitt	6	0.39%	19
Town of Hull	0	0.00%	0
Town of Johnson	0	0.00%	4
Town of Knowlton	0	0.00%	0
Town of Marathon	1	0.07%	5
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	0	0.00%	5
Town of Rietbrock	1	0.07%	3
Town of Ringle	0	0.00%	0
Town of Stettin	0	0.00%	4
Town of Texas	23	1.50%	77
Town of Wausau	28	1.82%	101
Town of Wien	1	0.07%	6
Village of Athens	0	0.00%	3
Village of Edgar	2	0.13%	6
Village of Hatley	0	0.00%	0
Village of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	1
Village of Maine	31	2.02%	129
Village of Marathon City	0	0.00%	10
Village of Rib Mountain	2	0.13%	10
Village of Rothschild	0	0.00%	0
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	1
Village of Weston	3	0.20%	5

Wittenberg	0	0.00%	0
Wood County	0	0.00%	0
Total	1,535	100.00%	6,360

Type of Training	# of Hours	% of Hours	# of Hours -YTD
Company Training	2,301.49	68.54%	8,466.04
Driver/Operator Training	57	1.70%	824
Facilities Training	321	9.56%	353
Hazardous Materials Training	98.25	2.93%	317.40
Misc Training	5	0.15%	61
Officer Training	68.75	2.05%	485.75
Specialty Training	506.25	15.08%	975.75
Total	3,357.74	100.00%	11,482.94

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	92.5	11.41%	208
EMS Training	573.25	70.71%	3,032.05
Fire Instructor Training	87	10.73%	401.25
Fire Prevention Training	58	7.15%	67
Investigation Training	0	0.00%	64
Total	810.75	100.00%	3,772.30

Fire Prevention Division by Fire Prevention Division Chief Shahn Kariger

Inspections: Throughout the fourth quarter of 2025, we completed inspections for 817 public buildings and places of employment. We performed 738 inspections that passed, and we had 79 properties with Fire Code Violations. 84 inspections were follow-up inspections from previous violations. The failed inspections were primarily comprised of overdue fire extinguisher annual maintenance, overdue sprinkler system maintenance, and fire alarm annual maintenance. These properties will require follow-up inspections to confirm compliance. We conducted 18 consultation inspections for the quarter. These entailed consulting for Fire Alarm Systems, Knox Box updates, and new construction. We also received and reviewed 418 reports through the Compliance Engine for services and maintenance of Fire Protection Systems at various businesses.

Investigations: There were seven formal fire investigations performed during the fourth quarter of 2025. Electrical failure was found to be the cause in two of the fires due to an overloaded outlet, an overloaded extension cord, and an unattended space heater too close to combustible materials. Careless use of smoking materials was found in 3 cases, from cigarette butts which were not fully extinguished. Two fires were at multi-family apartment buildings with one being undetermined and the last investigation of the year being an intentionally set fire.

Public Outreach: Throughout the fourth quarter we had the opportunity to get into seven elementary schools during the month of October. Although the number of schools has dropped due to the consolidation of some elementary schools and the closure of others, we saw more students than the previous year, even with one school not responding to our request to provide education. The Prevention Division provides fire safety education to 1st, 3rd, and 5th grades students through in-person demonstration and videos totaling approximately 2,043 students and 117 adults.

New smoke and CO detectors were placed in two private residences impacting two occupants, one being in her 90's. We witnessed several fire drills throughout the school district which are common in the fall during fire safety month and before the weather turns colder. The state of Wisconsin requires all schools to perform monthly fire drills with one of them witnessed by the fire department during the school year. We saw nearly 3,000 students and teachers during these fire drills.

The Wausau Fire Prevention Division was one of five departments chosen by staff members of the WI DSPS in late 2024 to participate in the Sound Off with the Home Fire Safety Patrol. This is a voluntary program which is made possible by the Michigan Public Health Institute with a grant from USDHS/FEMA to provide tailored educational materials focused on grades 2-3. This fills a vital gap as we currently do not have a program for 2nd grade students. The funding also provides additional smoke alarms for families in need which may not be covered by our existing partnership with the Red Cross. The Division has been diligently working with the DSPS Fire Prevention Coordinators for the past year in preparation for this program, which just got federal funding approval for 2026.

Education: The fourth quarter of 2025 saw Division Chief Kariger and Lieutenant Ludwig attend the WSFIA annual Fire Inspection conference in Wisconsin Dells for 3 ½ days of fire prevention continuing education. Multiple topics were discussed including code updates, fire prevention efforts, CRR, fall reduction, lithium-ion battery safety, and plan review.

Keeping Your Home Safe

Fire Prevention

CHECK YOUR SMOKE DETECTORS

- 20% of homes have smoke detectors that **do not** work or are missing batteries.
- Working smoke alarms can **double** your chances of survival in a fire.
- Replace batteries **twice a year** and keep alarms free of dust.
- Smoke alarms should be installed on **every floor** of your home.

KNOW THE RISKS

- There is a house fire **every ten seconds** in the U.S.
- Home fires can spread in as little as **thirty seconds**.
- Make sure that your family has a **fire escape plan** for your home and practice it regularly.
- Cooking is the **leading cause** of house fires.
- More than **15,000** fires a year are started by clothes dryers. Clean the vents at least once a year.
- Remember:** If there's ever a fire, **GET OUT, STAY OUT and CALL** for help.

MAINTAIN YOUR ELECTRICAL SYSTEM

- Electrical fires can be caused by: broken wires, wire insulation drying out, loose switches or receptacles, and overheating caused by dirt and oil.
- Get your electrical system checked by a licensed electrician **every four years**.
- Faulty wiring is the number one cause of electrical fires. **The warning signs?** Flickering lights; breakers that always trip; fuses that blow; a burning smell when you plug in appliances; outlets and switches that spark; and discolored wall outlets.

Prevention Division Activities:

Inspections Completed	Quarterly	Year to Date
Routine Fire Inspections	715	2,984
Re-inspections	84	443
All other Inspections (Consults/burn complaints,etc)	18	90
Community Paramedic Home Inspection	0	21
Total Inspections	817	3,538
Fire Investigations	7	15
Inspection Department Activities	Quarterly	YTD
Public Engagement Activities	46	134