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## CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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### **TESTING OF AERIAL, GROUND LADDERS COMPLETED**

*Muscatine Fire Department equipment passes required annual test of ladders*

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** – The aerial ladder truck and the ground ladders used by the Muscatine Fire Department (MFD) are required to be tested annually according to the requirements of the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Codes & Standards.

All of the ladders, both ground and on the aerial truck, were tested by an independent firm (American Test Center) on Monday, Sept. 28, in the alley behind the Public Safety Building. The testing including a visual inspection, handiness testing, liquid penetrant testing, and service testing.

An annual inspection and test program uncovers many defects before they become major problems, thus resulting in better safety precautions and lower maintenance costs according to the [American Test Center](#) website. The Center continues by stating that properly maintained ladders are essential to the safe and economical operation of a fire department, and for the firefighters who rely on the ladders to perform structurally and mechanically as intended.

“Our ladders passed,” Mike Hartman, Assistant Fire Chief said. “This annual inspection by a third party is in conjunction with the inspections we perform on all of our equipment including the hoses and the vehicles.”

Maintaining the equipment to NFPA standards is just as important as maintaining the training of the fire fighters.

“We train with our staff every day and expect them to be ready to respond to any call that we receive,” Hartman said. “We expect no less of the equipment we use.”

Not only are the ladders tested annually but so are the hoses. Every roll of hose in the fire departments arsenal is pressure tested and visually inspected for leaks annually.

Having a third party to inspect the ladders is an additional safeguard to the safety of fire fighters and the public.

“We inspect our equipment regularly and having a third party come in to complete the annual examination provides independent verification that our equipment is up to the NFPA standards,” Hartman said.

Ladder and hose testing is performance based which is good according to Hartman.

“Ensuring that our equipment is up to specifications and will perform as needed when needed is important to the safety of our staff and to the safety of the public,” Hartman said.

The ladders are visually inspected for defects along with a hardness test and a load test to determine the ladders strength. Heat from a fire can affect the structural integrity of aluminum ladders in ways that are not visible to the naked eye.

Ladders also undergo a horizontal bending test where the ladder is placed in full extension between two saw horses with a weight placed in the middle for one minute. The testers look for any permanent deformation or other visible weakening once the weight is removed. The same test is applied to ladders with roof hooks.

“Ladders that fail these tests have to be cut up and disposed of,” Hartman said. “Fortunately we have not had a ladder fail a test, but are replaced from time to time due to their age.”

The scope of NFPA 1932 (Standard on use, maintenance, and serving testing of in-service fire department ground ladders) states that: “ground ladders used in the fire service must be constructed to rigid standards to ensure that the ladders are of the highest quality. These ladders often provide the only means of fire fighter entry into a building or portions of a building and could be the only means of egress for victims trapped by a fire within a building. Fire department ground ladders serve as a path for fire fighters to transport people, equipment, and extinguishing agents from one level to a higher or lower level. Because the lives of fire fighters and fire victims often rely on the performance, without failure, of these valuable pieces of fire department equipment, these standards of performance are critical.”