



City of Muscatine Fire Department
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Jerry Ewers, Fire Chief



PRESS RELEASE

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FIRE DEPARTMENT RENEWS PREVENTION EFFORTS

Community Risk Reduction Week highlights fire prevention education

MUSCATINE, Iowa – It may not surprise you that the main mission of the Muscatine Fire Department (MFD) is not just to fight fires, but also to educate the public on preventing fires from occurring in homes and businesses.

“An important part of our mission is to put out fires,” Battalion Chief Ted Hillard said. “But another important part, and perhaps the most important part, is the prevention of fires through public education and building inspections.”

The week of January 16-22, 2023, was designated as Community Risk Reduction Week with the goal to build healthy, safe, and resilient communities by raising awareness to reduce the occurrence and impact of emergency events to the community and to first responders, thus making the community safer.

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“We want to prevent fires from happening,” Hillard said. “By hosting educational events for residents of all ages, especially young children, and by conducting building inspections of businesses, we hope to prevent fires from occurring.”

When the COVID pandemic first started, protocols were instituted that prevented the fire department from going out into the community to do fire inspections and sponsor educational programs.

“We have now resumed those operations,” Hillard noted.

According to the U.S. Fire Administration, a division of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), fire departments are uniquely positioned to know their communities better than most other organizations. Firefighters and emergency medical services responders see firsthand, whether through medical calls, inspections, or simply driving through the community, how people live and the needs they have.

The primary goal of fire safety efforts is to protect building occupants from injury and to prevent loss of life. The secondary goal of fire safety is to prevent property damage. By preventing fires and limiting damage we can assure that work operations will continue.

This past December Muscatine Fire completed 19 fire inspections (176 in 2022), six fire re-inspections (128 in 2022), and eight educational events (52 in 2022) while also conducting four plan reviews/site visits (236 in 2022).

“When we inspect buildings, we are not only looking for potential fire code violations, we are also observing the layout for potential safety issues should we be called to a fire in the building,”



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Hillard said. “The safety of the building occupants (owners, staff, customers, and/or residents), has a high priority as well as the safety of our fire firefighters.”

The Public Safety Open House, held each October, has been a good venue for children and their caregivers to visit the firehouse, learn what a firefighter does, and learn about fire prevention. MFD also hosts school groups in the firehouse for interactive learning with Freddy, a remotely controlled child sized fire engine.

MFD is also planning to resume educational programs for youth in kindergarten through the fourth grade, as well as educational programs for adults.

“We have had many occasions where what we have taught young children about fire safety has come back to them leading their family to safety during a home fire,” Hillard said. “The more we can educate, the more we can prevent fires from occurring.”

Part of that education is an emphasis on the three P’s of fire prevention ... prepare, prevent, and practice. Preparing your home or business by installing smoke alarms, checking electrical wiring, and having fire extinguishers available. Home owners should also have an escape plan should a fire occur that includes having a predetermined spot to meet outside.

“One of the things we talk about is the need to have an identified gathering spot for the family to meet,” Hillard said. “This needs to be practiced so everyone in the house knows what to do. The last thing we want is for someone to go back into a structure that is on fire in search of a family member.”

If you have questions or would like more information about Community Risk Reduction, contact the Muscatine Fire Department 563-263-9233.



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About the Muscatine Fire Department:

The Muscatine Fire Department provides fire and emergency medical services, rescues (high angle, rope, water, etc.), building inspections, and public education for the City of Muscatine, and the surrounding unincorporated areas of Muscatine County with a combined population of 43,000 across 145 square miles while also providing HAZMAT for Muscatine, Louisa, Washington, Keokuk, and Henry counties. MFD firefighters and paramedics responded to 5,909 calls in 2022. The Muscatine Fire Department began as a volunteer fire company on January 7, 1875 and was established as a full-time department in January 1916. The Muscatine Fire Department ambulance service received the 2012 Career Ambulance service of the Year Award from Iowa Emergency Medical Services.

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