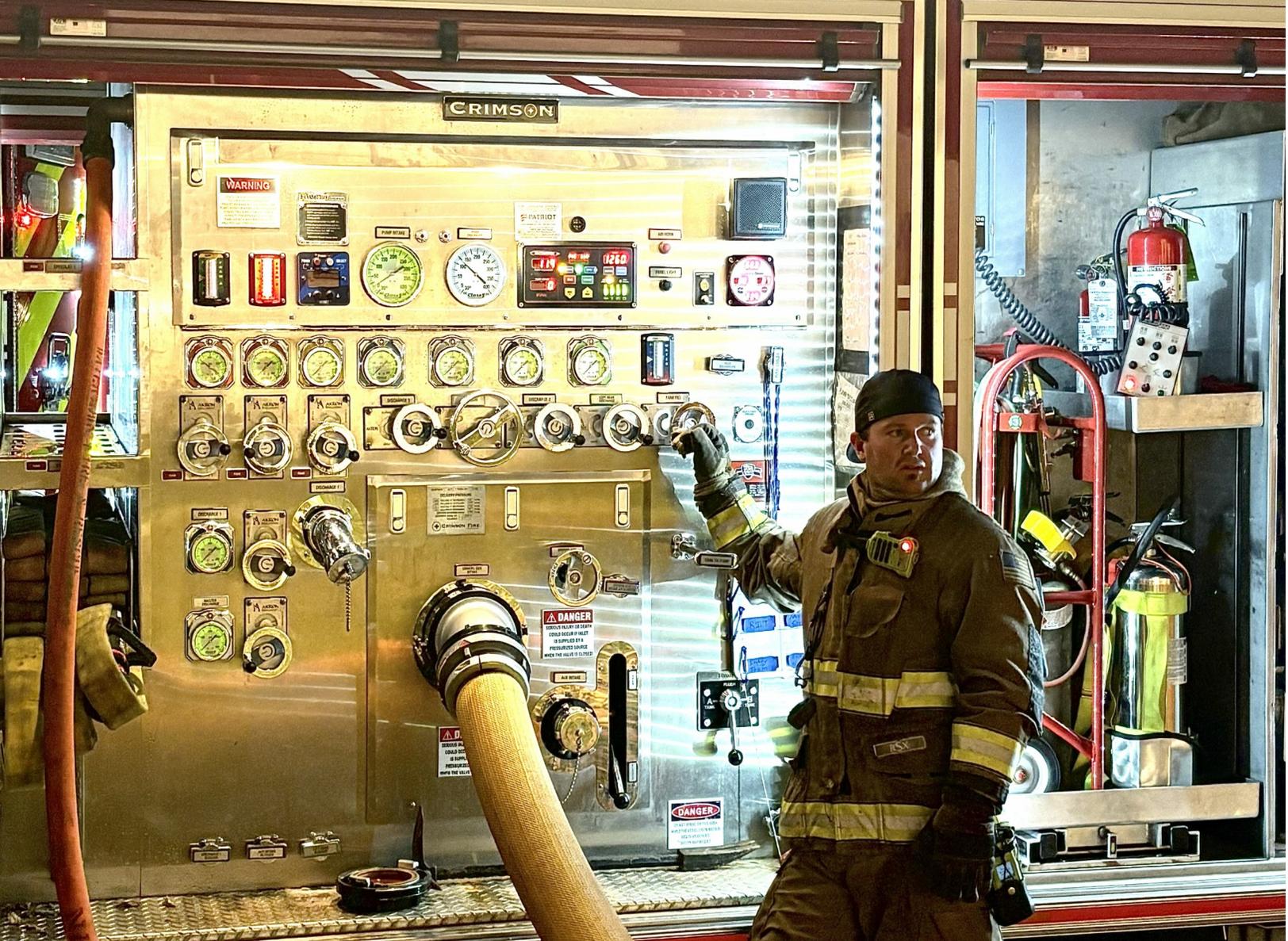


ENG 3

# ENGINE

WAT



***Watertown Fire Rescue***

***2025 Annual Report***

# *Table of Contents*

<i>Mission Statement.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Message from the Chief.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Accomplishments.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Operations Overview.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Fire Prevention Overview.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Public Education.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Training Overview.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Message from the Chaplain.....</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>EMS Overview.....</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>Hazmat Overview.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Organizational Chart.....</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Faces of Watertown Fire Rescue.....</i>	<i>17</i>

## **Mission Statement**

Watertown Fire Rescue is devoted to the preservation of life and property. Proudly serving our community by providing excellence in Emergency Medical Services, Fire Suppression, Rescue and Education. Always Ready!

## **Vision Statement**

Watertown Fire Rescue will strive to exceed the expectations of our community while aspiring to be a positive example for all Fire and EMS organizations.

## **Core Values**

### **Service Excellence**

Members of the Watertown Fire Rescue value a positive attitude, being friendly and personal in daily interactions with the public at all times to include emergency calls for service. Members will strive to meet all of our community's needs and to go beyond the call of duty.

### **Integrity and Honesty**

Members of the Watertown Fire Rescue value integrity and honesty and abide by our moral values. Members can be trusted to do the right thing, to make the best possible decisions in any situation encountered, even when no one is watching.

### **Professionalism**

Members of the Watertown Fire Rescue will always be ready to use and apply good judgment and their professional skills when conducting routine duties or when assisting the public.

### **Tradition and Pride**

Members of the Watertown Fire Rescue recognize their chosen occupation to be a noble and honorable calling—an opportunity to serve and help our friends and neighbors in their greatest time of need. Members will always strive to do their jobs properly and to the best of their abilities—knowing there is nothing more noble one could do with their life than to serve as a member of the Watertown Fire Rescue.

### **Brotherhood**

Members of the Watertown Fire Rescue will face danger and fear and even give their lives, if necessary, for their brother. Members will always accept responsibility for each other, will always hold each other accountable, and will continuously strive to live up to the standards of honor required to be a member of the brotherhood.



## **Message from the Chief**

### **City Manager, Mayor, City Council, and our community**

It is my pleasure to present our 2025 annual report for Watertown Fire Rescue. This past year brought both challenges and opportunities that tested our department and reinforced the importance of preparedness, professionalism, and community partnership. I am extremely proud of the men and women of Watertown Fire Rescue who continue to serve with dedication, courage, and integrity.

Throughout 2025, our department remained steadfast in its mission to protect life, property, and the environment. Watertown Fire Rescue responded to a wide range of emergencies, including fire suppression incidents, emergency medical calls, rescue operations, and hazardous conditions. Each response reflected our commitment to providing reliable, high-quality emergency services to the community we serve.

Community risk reduction and public education continued to be a vital part of our mission. Fire inspections, school programs, smoke detector initiatives, and public safety outreach efforts helped reduce risk and strengthen our relationship with the citizens of Watertown. Prevention remains one of the most effective ways to protect lives and property.

Above all, our success in 2025 is a direct result of our people. The members of Watertown Fire Rescue are our greatest asset. This year, we continued to emphasize firefighter health, safety, and wellness while fostering a positive and professional workplace culture. I am grateful for the teamwork, dedication, and pride demonstrated by every member of this department.

Looking ahead to 2026, Watertown Fire Rescue remains focused on enhancing training opportunities, continuing equipment and apparatus modernization, expanding community risk reduction initiatives, and strengthening regional partnerships. We are committed to continuous improvement and responsible stewardship of public resources.

I would like to thank the City Manager, Mayor and City Council for their continued support, our regional partners for their cooperation, and the citizens of Watertown for the trust you place in our department. It is a privilege and honor to serve this community while leading Watertown Fire Rescue.

Respectfully,

**Don Rowland**  
Fire Chief  
Watertown Fire Rescue



## Remember

*A goal without a plan  
is just a wish.*

## 2025 accomplishments

1. The City of Watertown purchased 2.59 acres of land in September for our future East Fire station.
2. Watertown Fire Rescue completed its 3<sup>rd</sup> SWOT in June, and has been able to move forward some of the short-term goals already.
3. In August we took delivery of a new 2025 Type 1 ambulance. In addition, the department also purchased a 2025 Wildland Brush Fire truck Rescue/Pumper Fire truck.
4. Watertown hosted its third State Fire School in June, in conjunction with LATC and Watertown Visitors Bureau. More than, 525 registered students.
5. WFR's 3rd annual retiree dinner was held again last summer, with more than 25 retired WFR members attending the event at the Elks.
6. The Smoke Detector Program was highly successful while installing more 318 detectors in October during the month of the Fire Prevention.

## **Strategic goals: 2026**

- ◆ Strive to meet NFPA 1710
- ◆ Adopt Strategic goals from SWOT analysis for the next 5 years
- ◆ Continue Improving on Training and Firefighter safety
- ◆ Improve Health and Wellness
- ◆ Maintain or improve on current ISO Rating



## WFR Operations Overview 2025

Watertown Fire Rescue: Always ready!

As I begin writing my portion of the annual report, I am reminded of a saying that reflects the dedication and perseverance of our staff: *“Excellence is never an accident. It is the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution.”* In other words, excellence does not come from wearing a department patch—it comes from holding ourselves and each other accountable to the highest standards. As you review this report, you will see another year of deliberate effort toward that excellence.

Over the past year, the department placed significant focus on addressing the findings of the 2025 SWOT analysis and identifying opportunities for continued improvement. One key area of focus was the Fire Apparatus Operator (FAO) position and its role in the promotional process for Lieutenant. A formal team was established to evaluate the qualifications, functions, and responsibilities of the FAO position. This comprehensive review took several months to complete and resulted in a set of recommendations that are currently being evaluated by the Chief Officers to determine the most effective path for implementation.

Watertown Fire Rescue continues to research and implement new strategies, equipment, and operational processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the services provided to the community. In 2025, the ambulance operating budget totaled \$3,852,536 while the fire operating budget was \$1,472,135, for a combined operating budget of \$5,324,671. During the year, the department generated \$359,501 in fire-related revenue and \$1,543,107 in ambulance revenue. This represented an increase of \$188,608 over the combined projected revenue for the two budgets.

Thank you for your time and consideration as you review the 2025 year Annual Report.

Respectively,

Scott Jongbloed  
Assistant Chief

# Statistics

Watertown Fire Rescue Responded to 4345 Fire and Ambulance calls for service in 2025.

**Fire: 64**

**Rupture, Explosion, Overheating: 2**

**Rescue & EMS: 3844**

**Hazardous Condition (No Fire): 99**

**Service Calls: 19**

**Good Intent Calls: 154**

**False Alarms: 156**

**Other: 2**



**Fire**

**Structure: 16**

**Vehicle: 14**

**Grass/Vegetation: 11**

**Dumpster/outside rubbish  
trash or waste: 17**

**Other: 6**



**EMS**

**Medical: 1836**

**Trauma: 520**

**Cardiac/Stroke: 316**

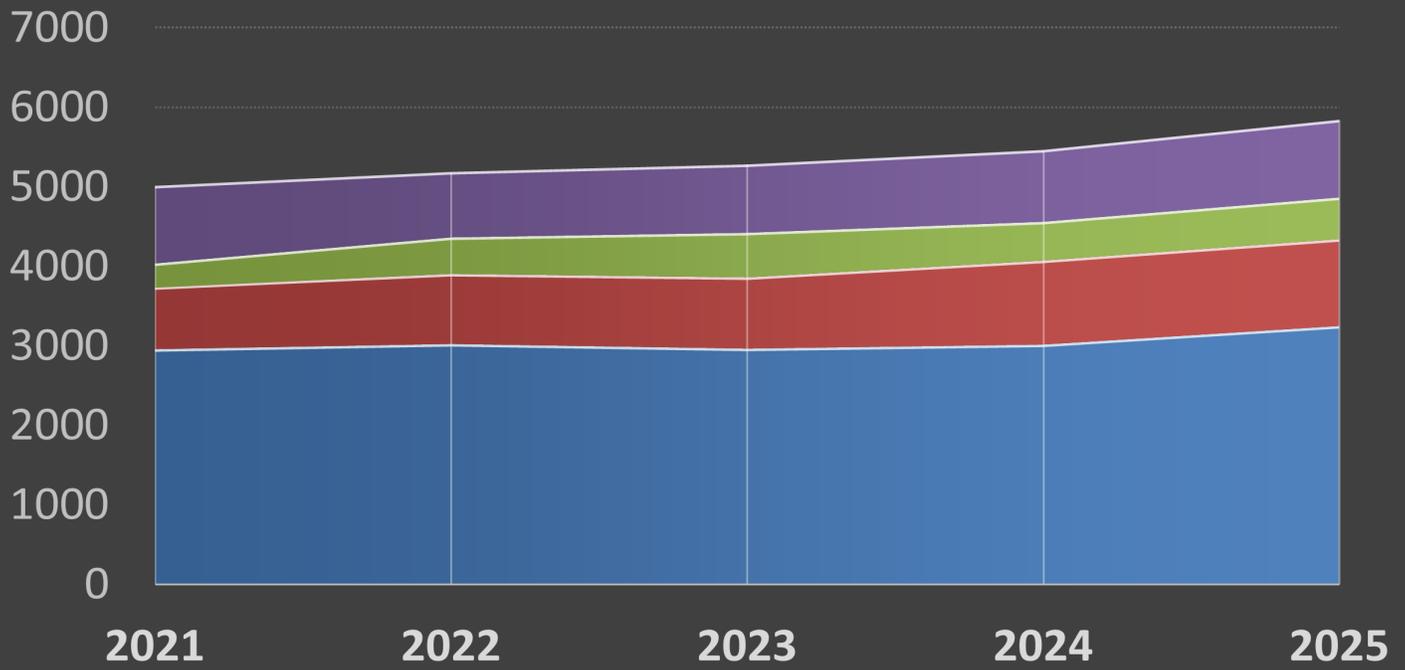
**Respiratory: 140**

**Behavioral: 439**

Below you will find a chart that shows Watertown Fire Rescue's calls for service over a 5 year period. Calls for service were up 6.9% compared to 2024 and up 16.6% over the course of 5 years

# Calls for service 2021-2025

■ Ambulance Calls ■ Fire Calls ■ Fire Inspections ■ Airport Coverage





## 2025 Fire Prevention Division Year-End Report

In 2025, the Fire Prevention Division focused on reducing fire risk through inspections, plan reviews, and public education. Fire inspections were conducted in businesses, apartment buildings, and schools throughout the community. Inspections reviewed key life-safety areas, including building exteriors, fire extinguishers, fire alarm and sprinkler systems, electrical systems, exits, storage areas, commercial kitchens, and the handling of flammable and hazardous materials. The goal of these inspections is to complete annual inspections of all businesses to improve safety, reduce fire risk, and promote fire prevention.

Additionally, the Fire Prevention Division also completed plan reviews for all new apartment buildings, residential housing projects, commercial construction, and commercial remodels within the city. Reviews were conducted using the 2018 International Fire Code and applicable NFPA standards. Key items reviewed included fire alarm and suppression systems, commercial kitchen protections, and water supply to ensure new buildings are constructed with proper fire protection features in place.

Public education remained an important part of fire prevention efforts. Lieutenant Jake Jorgenson led youth fire safety education by visiting schools and conducting classroom presentations. Firefighter/Paramedic Mike Sackmann coordinated the Smoke Detector Program in partnership with the American Red Cross and United Way. In October, Watertown Fire Rescue staff, Red Cross volunteers, and community members worked together to install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in targeted areas of Watertown. During this effort, 288 homes were contacted, resulting in the installation of 153 smoke detectors and 30 carbon monoxide detectors. Additionally, FF Sackmann partnered with Nyborgs Ace Hardware for the October Round-Up Program, raising \$1,000 to support the Smoke Detector Program.

Throughout 2025, Watertown Fire Rescue visited 113 homes and installed a total of 338 smoke detectors and 56 carbon monoxide detectors. One bed shaker alarm was replaced for a resident with a hearing impairment. These efforts improve early warning and life safety, particularly for residents who are most vulnerable.

### **Calls for Service – 2025**

- 523 Fire safety inspections
- 458 Building plan and project consultations
- 128 Public education events and fire extinguisher classes
- 72 Fire investigations
- 15 burn permits issued
- 1 arson-related training course
- 1 National Fire Academy course

*Fire as a Weapon*

Adam Bloom

Fire Marshal



## Watertown Fire Rescue Public Education Program – 2025 Summary

2025 was a busy and successful year for the Watertown Fire Rescue Public Education Program. This year’s Fire Prevention Week theme was “Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home.” Because we are constantly surrounded by lithium-ion batteries—found in phones, bikes, scooters, toys, toothbrushes, tools, and vehicles—it is critical that the public understands the potential hazards associated with these items. Watertown Fire Rescue partnered with landfill personnel and the City Public Information Officer to promote safe lithium-ion battery use and proper disposal.

During the month of October, Watertown Fire Rescue brought the Children’s Safety House to local elementary schools to educate third-grade students on fire safety and what to do in the event of a house fire. Students were able to practice the skills they learned in a simulated environment using theatrical smoke. The Children’s Safety House is always a highlight for students, and this year we reached approximately 300 local third graders.

Additional events and programs in which the Watertown Fire Rescue Public Education Program participated included:

- ◆ High Five Fridays at local schools
- ◆ Cub Scout tours
- ◆ Career days for regional schools
- ◆ A mock accident for Watertown High School
- ◆ School field trips
- ◆ Staffing a booth at the South Dakota State Fire School
- ◆ Eighth-grade career talks at Watertown Middle School
- ◆ Multiple job shadow opportunities
- ◆ Hosting several paramedic students completing their clinical hours

In closing, 2025 was a significant year for our Public Education Program. We educated the community on lithium-ion battery safety, taught children essential fire safety skills, sparked interest among local high school students who may pursue careers in public safety, and supported the next generation of firefighter-paramedics as they completed their education.

Respectfully,

Jake Jorgenson

Lieutenant

## WFR TRAINING 2025



In 2025, Watertown Fire Rescue sustained a comprehensive and well-documented training program consistent with ISO Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) criteria. Department personnel completed over 9,000 hours of structured training, directly supporting the department’s mission and ensuring a high level of operational readiness.

Firefighting training addressed core ISO-recognized competencies including fire suppression operations, incident command, water supply, apparatus operations, firefighter safety, search and rescue, ventilation, and mayday procedures. Training was conducted through classroom instruction, hands-on skills evolutions, and scenario-based exercises to verify proficiency and promote safe, effective fireground operations.

EMS training focused on maintaining required certifications and advancing patient care capabilities. Instruction included patient assessment, cardiac and trauma care, airway management, and medical emergency response. Integrated fire and EMS training reinforced coordinated response operations and ensured personnel readiness for multi-function incidents.

All training activities were documented, tracked, and evaluated to meet departmental policy, state requirements, and applicable ISO standards. Through this structured and comprehensive training program, Watertown Fire Rescue ensures its members are prepared to protect life and property at the highest level. Continued investment in firefighter and EMS training directly supports the delivery of professional Emergency Medical Services, Fire Suppression, Rescue, and Public Education. These efforts maintain operational readiness, reinforce safety, and promote excellence in service, ensuring the department remains “Always Ready” to respond to the needs of the community and fulfill its mission statement.

Respectfully,

Craig Kruse  
Battalion Chief

## *Training Center*



Preparedness is a vital responsibility of the fire service. Training is one of the tried-and-true ways of showing preparedness when it is time to answer the call. Watertown Fire Rescue's (WFR) training center was a common place to make that happen this past year.

The facility, which is shared with Lake Area Technical College (LATC), offered many training opportunities throughout the year. WFR firefighters spent countless hours on and off duty honing their skills. Local instructors were able to host state certified firefighter testing to regional firefighters. The South Dakota State Fire School utilized the space and props for multiple courses again this year, drawing firefighters from across the state to our facility. LATC's Med Fire Rescue program continues to prepare aspiring firefighters. We were also able to accommodate multiple facility requests from many of the area law enforcement agencies.

There were a few facility improvement projects completed in 2025. The burn tower had an additional "burn room" added to help maintain the longevity of the current structure and gives more options for firefighting scenarios while training. The additional 160 square feet of space acts as a burn cell to provide the rest of the structure with heat and smoke. The space outside the current setup, and within the fenced area, was worked over by LATC's heavy equipment operators to create 71,928 sq ft or 1.65 acres of usable space. Most of this space was levelled and built up with asphalt millings. Drain tile was included in areas to help with run off in low areas and draining the sump pump from the SCBA house. This expansion of outdoor space will create the room needed for new props that are in the works such as the urban search and rescue technical response prop. We will continue to improve the grounds and props in 2026. More dirt work, millings, and asphalt are in the plans to upgrade the foundation and create more usable space.

We look forward to hosting the 2026 South Dakota State Fire School and are proud to have them back at our training center for the third year in a row.

Adam Heinrich  
Battalion Chief



**Message from the Chaplain**

It is with a humble and grateful heart that I submit this report of my activities in 2025.

Being a part of Watertown Fire Rescue as the Chaplain has made such an impact on me. I have grown to appreciate not only the work you do, but in who you are. I am grateful that God has blessed us with such a department that we can depend on to be “always ready” no matter the crisis. I have come to realize that every time a crew member “suits up,” they’re not just putting on gear, but putting on purpose, courage and strength, and an immeasurable commitment to protect others, and each other. In short – each one of you are an inspiration.

Although the calls, events and responsibilities of Watertown Fire Rescue seem to have increased greatly in this past year, it has been a quiet one for me.

Some of the highlights in my role has been hanging out at “The Deuce” on Saturday mornings, and at Station One on Tuesdays. I treasure dropping by on other days, whether it’s just to walk through the building, visiting with the busy crew, or being a listening ear following a critical incident.

My training in 2025 was limited to ACE training through the Human Service Agency.

I continue to hold credentials with the following organizations:

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Member Since</b>	<b>Title</b>
American Association Christian Counselors	2003	Pastoral Counselor
Federation of Fire Chaplains	2007	Master Chaplain
International Critical Incident Stress Foundation	2006	CISM Team

**My 2025 Activities included:**

- Actively serving with the local CISM team, participating with 4 debriefings and 4 defusings.
- Responded to the Hosanna Lutheran Church fire on May 19, providing support to the church staff.
- Participated in the South Dakota State Fire School Memorial Service on June 13.
- Participated in the Community Patriots Day Ceremony at WFR on September 11.
- Responded to a house fire on November 4 in Northwest Watertown. I assisted the family on the scene and provided support for them during the following few days.

I want to express my desire to be available as a listening ear, and to provide counsel, encouragement, and support to each of our staff in a discreet and professional setting.

With commitment and respect,

Rev. HANK KUSU, D. Div. CISM



## 2025 EMS Summary



Emergency Medical Services (EMS) in the State of South Dakota continues to evolve and make significant strides, and Watertown Fire Rescue is no exception. We continually evaluate new equipment and pre-hospital procedures while striving to meet and exceed national standards.

This is an exciting time to be in EMS as the profession continues to grow and strengthen. In September, Watertown Fire Rescue took delivery of a new ambulance mounted on a Ford F-550 4x4 chassis, replacing a 2015 ambulance with 163,500 miles. Designated as Medic 3, this new ambulance will serve as our primary 911 response unit. In early 2026, Medic 3 will be equipped with Telemedicine in Motion technology through Avel eCare, allowing our personnel to connect directly with emergency room physicians and nurses. This will be our second ambulance outfitted with Avel eCare

telemedicine technology.

In November 2024, Watertown Fire Rescue was awarded a \$45,847 grant through the South Dakota Department of Health to implement two projects. 2025 marked our first full year utilizing Handtevy, a software program and mobile application that provides rapid access to protocols, lifesaving medication dosing, equipment guidance, drip information, and checklists to enhance patient outcomes. Additionally, six of our paramedics became certified Community Health Workers (CHWs) through Lake Area Technical College. A CHW is a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of the community and serves as a liaison between health and social services, improving access to care and enhancing the quality and cultural competence of service delivery.

Watertown Fire Rescue has also partnered with Faber Analytics through a grant from the South Dakota Department of Health. This partnership provides valuable data, including monthly call volume with 12-month projections, daily and hourly call volume, response times, incident types, interventions, and response counts by geographic area.

Training remains a high priority and enables our personnel to deliver a high level of care to the residents of Watertown and surrounding communities. Watertown Fire Rescue sponsored recertification classes with local physicians and medical professionals, completed Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) recertification, and conducted monthly training sessions with our Medical Director, Dr. William Devine. These sessions emphasize continuous quality improvement, adherence to medical protocols, and updates to treatment procedures. All Watertown Fire Rescue paramedics are certified through the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT) and licensed biennially through the South Dakota Board of Medical and Osteopathic Examiners (SDBMOE).

In closing, Watertown Fire Rescue paramedics remain committed to serving our community by providing excellence in Emergency Medical Services. Our paramedics take pride in service excellence, integrity, honesty, and professionalism.

Gary Langerock

EMS Chief

## 2025 All Hazards



### USAR

WFR had a busy year in the rescue disciplines of the fire service. From updating new gear, to training, to using it out in the real world WFR members were able to get a little taste of everything. In total, WFR completed 835 hours of rescue training in 2025.

In April, two of our South Dakota Task Force 1 members were sent to Rapid City to recertify their rope rescue instructor statuses. These members are certified by a third party, Rescue 3, that ensures instructors stay up to date with the latest rescue standards put forward by NFPA 1006. This was followed by a Rescue 3 Rope Rescue Course in September taught by these instructors at Station 2. This course certified seven new WFR members in rope rescue. It also brought three of WFR's members of the South Dakota Task Force up to the Rescue 3 standard for a total of 10 class participants.

In 2026 WFR will continue these members' training building off this rope instruction by putting on a Confined Space Rescue Course.

In June WFR Task Force members participated in a South Dakota Task Force Operational Readiness drill in Sioux Falls. WFR sent four of our members to participate in this multi-operational period drill. The drill focused heavily on structural collapse rescue by utilizing Sioux Falls Fire Rescue's old multi-story concrete burn tower to simulate shoring and breaching and breaking training. The burn tower was scheduled for demolition and was able to be used one last time to train firefighters from across the state. This drill brought rescue team members from Watertown, Sioux Falls, Aberdeen, and Rapid City together for some invaluable cooperative training.

In August WFR received our new trench rescue cart. This cart was built through a cooperative effort of Macksteel and Lake Area Technical College's welding program. It was designed based off Rapid City Fire's trench rescue cart and is intended to increase efficiency in transporting equipment to a trench rescue scene.

### Haz Mat

Watertown Fire Rescue (WFR) responded to 83 hazardous materials-related calls in 2025. Many of these incidents involved natural gas leaks or odors, carbon monoxide detector activations, vehicle accidents resulting in fluid leaks, and other hazardous material situations.

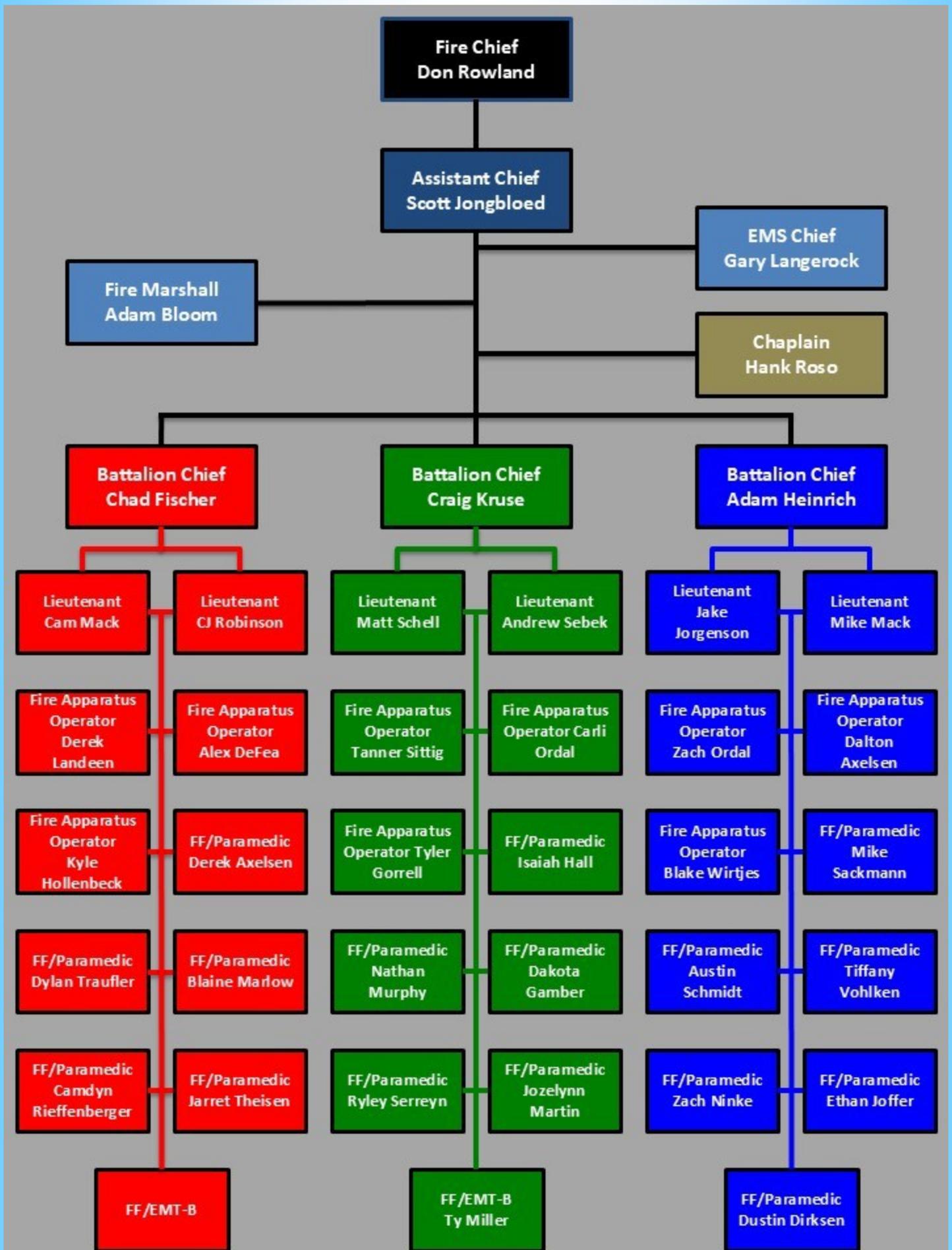
Hazardous materials are defined as substances or chemicals unintentionally released from their original or intended containers that pose a risk to health, safety, property, or the environment.

In 2025, WFR completed a total of 631 hours of hazardous materials-related training. Multiple firefighters were sent to Pueblo, Colorado, to attend the Security and Emergency Response Training Center (SERTC) for a combined total of three weeks. At the conclusion of their training, they received their Hazardous Materials Technician-level certifications with two of them receiving their Highway Emergency Response Specialist certifications. This training was fully funded through FEMA grants. Additionally, WFR sent three members to the Cold Zone Conference in Minneapolis for three days, where they participated in a variety of hazardous materials training opportunities. These trainings help ensure the responders are prepared to safely respond and mitigate the emergency at hand and better protect our community.

To further enhance response capabilities, WFR purchased new hazardous materials suits along with additional equipment to help the department remain "Always Ready."

Chad Fischer

Battalion Chief



## Faces of Watertown Fire Rescue



**Don Rowland**  
Fire Chief  
33 Years of Service



**Scott Jongbloed**  
Assistant Chief  
26 Years of Service



**Hank Roso**  
Fire Chaplain



**Chad Fischer**  
Battalion Chief  
24 Years of Service



**Craig Kruse**  
Battalion Chief  
24 Years of Service



**Adam Heinrich**  
Battalion Chief  
18 Years of Service



**Gary Langerock**  
EMS Chief  
25 Years of Service



**Adam Bloom**  
Fire Marshal  
17 Years of Service



**Matt Schell**  
Lieutenant  
22 Years of Service

## Faces of Watertown Fire Rescue



**CJ Robinson**  
Lieutenant  
18 Years of Service



**Jake Jorgenson**  
Lieutenant  
16 Years of Service



**Mike Mack**  
Lieutenant  
12 Years of Service



**Andrew Sebek**  
Lieutenant  
12 Year of Service



**Cameron Mack**  
Lieutenant  
12 Years of Service



**Kyle Hollenbeck**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
14 Years of Service



**Mike Sackmann**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
13 Years of Service



**Tanner Sittig**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
13 Years of Service



**Zach Ordal**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
12 Years of Service

## Faces of Watertown Fire Rescue



**Derek Landeen**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
11 Years of Service



**Alex DeFea**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
11 Years of Service



**Carli Ordal**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
9 Years of Service



**Dalton Axelsen**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
8 Years of Service



**Derek Axelsen**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
8 Years of Service



**Tyler Gorrell**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
8 Years of Service



**Isaiah Hall**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
8 Years of Service



**Austin Schmidt**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
7 Years of Service



**Dylan Traufler**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
6 Years of Service

## Faces of Watertown Fire Rescue



**Blake Wirtjes**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
5 Years of Service



**Nathan Murphy**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
5 Years of Service



**Tiffany Vohlken**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
4 Years of Service



**Blaine Marlow II**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
4 Years of Service



**Kaleb Haase**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
3 Years of Service



**Dakota Gamber**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
2 years of Service



**Zach Ninke**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
2 years of Service



**Camdyn Rieffenberger**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
1 year of Service



**Ryley Serreyn**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
1 year of Service

## Faces of Watertown Fire Rescue



**Jozelynn Martin**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
Probationary Employee



**Jarrett Theisen**  
Firefighter/Paramedic  
Probationary Employee



**Ethan Joffer**  
Firefighter/EMT-B  
Probationary Employee



**Ty Miller**  
Firefighter/EMT-B  
Probationary Employee



**Dustin Dirksen**  
Firefighter/EMT-B  
Probationary Employee







