



On the Line



Our Core Values: Pride, Respect, Duty, Unity, Integrity and Compassion.

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Upcoming Events

Sept 10

0815 Breakfast—Illahee Hills
 1700 City Employee Appreciation Dinner—American Legion

September 11

0700 9/11 Breakfast—Machine Shed
 9/11 Steel Memorial Dedication—Clear Lake FD

October 7-13

Fire Prevention Week: Please contact Fire Marshal Rech if you are interested in helping plan and coordinating FPW!
 Be sure to check the pub-ed calendars for upcoming events!

UFD statistics for August

Calls for service: 232 YTD: 1,491
 Average response Time – All incidents: **6 minutes and 21seconds**

Average response Time – **Emergency** incidents: **6 minutes and 12 seconds**

Emergency Medical Service calls: 175

Average Response Time EMS: 6 minutes and 15 seconds

Emergency: 6 minutes and 7 seconds

Non-Emergency: 6 minutes and 20 seconds

Fire related calls: 57

Average Response Time Fire: 6 minutes and 41 seconds

Average turnout per fire incident: 6 people

We **received mutual aid seven times**— three times for fire calls and four times for EMS calls.

We **provide mutual aid five times**— four times for fire calls and once for an EMS call.

Types of Fire Calls

The 57 fire calls we had in August fall into the following categories:

Fire / Explosion:	10
Hazardous Condition:	5
Service Call:	3
Good Intent Calls:	12
False Calls:	26
Over Heat/Press.	1



Birthdays:

Aldin Ramic Sept 14
 Kyle Bissell Sept 19
 Jerry Holt Sept 25





I was walking the other night when a skunk crossed the bike path just ahead of me. If you have ever ran across a skunk, you know how bad they can smell...not just the little smell that you smell going down the road when one had been hit by a car but the strong, pungent, overbearing smell of being there when a skunk sprays. That smell burns your nose. I recalled a time when I was a teenager and a spotted skunk found its way into a fish trap left on the shore of the creek. Long story short, my dad found what it was like to be sprayed full force. It was awful. He had to ride in the back of the truck to get home and we had to throw out all of his clothes. The smell was so bad my dad became ill and lost his breakfast! It would be good for a lot of laughs for years to come but while it was going on, it was no laughing matter or at least I knew better than to laugh at him.

The skunk I was looking at the other day was different. There was no smell, no hint of the potential of an aromatic assault on anyone or anything that dared to venture too close. In fact, the skunk was beautiful. The beautiful white stripes provide a pleasing contrast to the midnight black coat. His coat was clean and he looked as if he was just bathed and blown-dry. He was busy with an obvious mission as he walked with a purpose taking the time to look at me as he made his way to wherever he was going. I've heard that they make great pets if they have been descended and looking at this one, I could see how one would find him pretty.

As I watched him disappear into the weeds beside the bike trail, I couldn't help but think how that skunk could represent many situations we face every day. Situations and things that look beautiful and harmless on the surface but hold the potential to be very unpleasant with a simple misstep or misspoken word. There are many examples in nature: the skunk, a tempting ledge overlooking a breathing-taking mountain view, or any cute animal that perceives a threat to its baby. All of these can ruin your day.

I think a lot of how we view those things has to do with what kind of attitude we have. Some people always see the positive side, the beauty that lies in a situation or in an object. Others always see the potential and never get close enough to enjoy the view. I am naturally a pessimistic person when it comes to our job but I tend to see the beauty and good in nature.

In people, there are a lot of skunks out there. Even though not all skunks will spray like the one I enjoyed the other night but if you ask people, most will still avoid all skunks. I think that can parallel what is going on today as government employees are vilified. Sure, some government employees, even firefighters ARE skunks but to paint us all with the same broad brush as stinky government employees is just unfair. I guess it has to do with the attitude of those who are looking at us.

It reminds me of a story I heard a long time ago on how different pessimistic and optimistic people see things. As the story goes, there are twin boys about six years old. One boy was an optimist and the other a pessimist. This difference was stark and the two boys saw their world very differently. The difference worried the parents, so they took the boys to a therapist to see if there was a way to create an even temperament in both boys. The therapist put the pessimist in a room full of toys and video games and the optimist in a room full of horse manure to see if that would turn their temperaments around. After several hours, the therapist went into the room full of toys and found the pessimistic boy in tears. Asked what the problem was, the boy said, "I don't know what to play with first, and I'm afraid I'll break something."



The therapist then went into the room full of manure, where he found the optimistic child singing and dancing with joy. Asked why he was so happy about being in horse manure, the boy said, "With all this manure, there must be a pony here somewhere!"

The story illustrates a winning attitude: No matter how stinky things get, there's a gift in it somewhere, somehow. Not all skunks stink even though all skunks **CAN** stink. As we are judged by those who think all government employees are lazy, greedy, under-worked and over-paid people, let's not be guilty of the same thing. Although there is a lot of manure there, there are ponies out there if you keep looking for them!

Sick or Distressed Members:

- ◆ Firefighter/Paramedic Eric Ennen was involved in an MVC while visiting Atlantic City. Eric broke a vertebrae (C7) and will be on extended sick leave while he recovers. Eric is back home and doing well but please keep Eric and his family in your thoughts and prayers as he goes through the lengthy process of recuperating from such a serious injury.
- ◆ Firefighter/Paramedic John McCannon suffered an injury and could miss up to a month of work. John's injury was work related and he will be working a light duty assignment until he can return to full duty.

We are fortunate that both of these injuries were not more significant—we all know the possibilities of these injuries. We are blessed in that both Eric and John will make full recoveries. Please keep them both in your thoughts and prayers.

New Program – Lt. Michael Gentosi

There is soon to be a new program within the Urbandale Fire Department. It will be an internal near-miss reporting system. It is being chaired by AC Mitchell. There are four others of us on the committee: Stile, Boyle, Ramic, and myself (which is obvious since I am writing this article). I truly believe this is going to be a great endeavor that can bring great improvements to what we do.

First and foremost, let me describe what a near-miss will be. It is any situation where there is no malicious intent that did not result in damage or personal injury. Remember, if damage or personal injury occurs, that is a safety incident which is reported differently. The instances we will be looking at are situations that had the potential to cause damage or personal injury.

The reason reporting near-misses are so important is because it allows us to learn from our mistakes and prevent a worse situation from happening. According to the National Fire Fighter Near-Miss Reporting System (2012), there are 15,000 observed worker errors resulting in 300 near misses which correlate to fifteen (15) major accidents and one (1) serious accident. There is no doubt that is pretty significant. Just think, if just a few of those 300 reported a near miss, those specific situations could have been investigated that may have caused someone to not damage something or cause bodily injury. Pretty crazy!!!

There will be more information rolled out in the coming months regarding this program. The important thing is that it will be completely anonymous. You can report something, and we won't require you to give up any personal information if you choose not to do so. There will be no punishment for an instance that is a true near miss born with no malicious intent that did not result in damage or personal injury. We must study these cases to provide for a safer UFD.

Report Near Misses



Safety Matters...

Great Job...We had made it 432 days without a lost-time injury! We are starting over...let's make it to 860+ days this time!

Any injury is one too many!!!

Last Safety Incident:

As of September 1st

4 days without a safety incident

4 days without a lost time injury



Last safety incidents:



- **8/27: Back injury**—fell/struck back while preparing to suction unresponsive patient during transport. Incident occurred when driver applied brakes while the provider was standing to get the suction equipment.
- **8/25: Struck ambulance rub rail/light**—struck wall at the entrance at Methodist Hospital while maneuvering the ambulance.

Safety Tip: Beware of the Children

As we all know – school is back in session. When in school areas, please beware of the children around you. Also beware of the increase in children on the streets before and after school. Children are paying attention to their routes and not necessarily the traffic. If you are on a call in a school zone, children may also try congregating around the truck to see it. And don't forget the school buses – if the arm is down on the bus and the lights are flashing – **YOU MUST STOP AND WAIT**. This is even if you are responding emergent. School buses loading/unloading students take priority over emergency vehicles.



What's Really Going On? - Fire Marshal Jon Rech

As we approach another change of season we can be assured that there will still be one constant – the continued demonizing of government employees like firefighters and our “role” in the community. Some of you may have already tuned out the constant barrage of political ads that are dominating the TV and radio airwaves. If you visit Firehouse.com you see on a daily basis how fire departments across the country continue to struggle to provide services, let alone survive. From a local perspective, things are a little rosier on the surface. Urbandale is on pace for 230 residential construction permits this year which far exceeds yearly totals from the last several years. Several of these are large homes, including two of which are a little less than 12,000 square feet each. The amount of commercial construction has certainly increased as well. Yet, local special interest groups feel that our Fire Code continues to drive businesses and residents out of Urbandale. These organizations can provide a wealth of information on the economics of the community, but for some reason they still have not been able to provide any data to us that supports their claims about the commercial and residential exodus from Urbandale. What's really going on?

The battle with residential fire sprinklers continues at the local and national levels. We have recently watched the Executive Director of the Homebuilders Association of Greater Des Moines (who also happens to be Urbandale City Councilman Creighton Cox) try and pit the communities of Ankeny, Waukee, Johnston, and Des Moines against each other as these cities updated their Fire Codes. When we attempt to update ours later this year it will be interesting to see what fire sprinkler provisions will be removed. Unfortunately, there are a number of States that have passed legislation that mandates that communities cannot have fire sprinklers as part of their codes for residential construction. What's really going on?

At the national level, powerful and well-funded organizations are working hard to try and remove the Fire Service from involvement in the development of Building and Fire Codes. Their consensus is that we have no business being involved in codes until after a building is built. Interesting view on prevention, isn't it? There are also other like-minded groups pushing to get all Fire Code provisions for existing buildings removed out of the body of the Fire Code and put into the appendix section of the code which would then have to be adopted separate from the code, thus making it more difficult to get adopted. What's really going on?

It's been amazing to watch how the Fire Service has gone from “Heroes” after the events of 9-11-01 to “Zeroes” today. So, what is going on? I think it can be summarized like this:

We've taken ourselves for granted - the Fire Service has become complacent in defining who we are and what we do in the community. If you feel your job is to stay

nestled in the station until a call comes in, guess what, you're the problem! Plus, look at the overall percent of the Urbandale population that actually uses our services each year. We are by some definitions considered a low use – high cost city service. We don't “lobby” our interests to the community like the other special interest groups do. As the saying goes: “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.”

Money + Politics = Influence & Results – local, State, or Federal it doesn't matter. The sad fact is that most people are apathetic about government issues unless it is something that impacts them directly. Look at the makeup of the Urbandale City Council. How many are in the home building and real estate business? What are the “day jobs” of the elected officials in the community where you live? It's not by accident that they're in an elected official position. Money + Politics = Influence & Results.

Disposable Attitudes/Disposable Society – “It's o.k., I have insurance. The important thing is no one got hurt.” How many times have you heard this? But why is it o.k. to treat the built environment as disposable? Lightweight construction, synthetic home furnishings, large floor plans, no fire sprinklers – pretty predictable outcome. Why do we not “lobby” the public more and tell them that this is not acceptable? Not solely because of the loss of property, but for the potential loss of life and injuries (especially firefighters)! Are we creating an appearance that it is acceptable to lose a firefighters' life because the job is “dangerous,” thus making us disposable? As efforts continue to chip away at building and fire codes this appearance will only become more apparent if we don't educate the public on what really happens in a structure fire.

Today's fire service finds itself in a position that it is neither used to nor comfortable with – on the defensive. With the emphasis today on running a government like a business we find ourselves no longer being defined as employees, but as expenses. We must recognize this and do what we can to show our value to the taxpayers. For the amount of tax dollars the citizens are willing to spend on us in Urbandale I would say we're doing a pretty good job. It is equally as important to highlight our deficiencies and needs as a city service when the opportunity allows, especially since such a small percentage of our community actually uses our services.

The key for all of you is to make the effort to stay informed and be an informer. All the things I've discussed are not part of some secret fire marshal website or secret newsletter. These are all things readily available through a variety of websites and news outlets. If we as a fire service do not make the effort to protect our interests than who will? Do you know what's really going on?

Other programs/training/projects completed by UFD in August

Training Report: 638 hours of training were completed in August.

Fire Training: 362 hours

EMS Training: 276 hours

Prevention & Inspection Activities:

- ◆ Completed 47 Inspections
- ◆ Completed 27 re-inspections
- ◆ Completed 2 Preliminary Walk-thru/meetings
- ◆ Completed 7 preplans
- ◆ Conducted 20 plan reviews
- ◆ Conducted 4 Car Seat checks
- ◆ Conducted a CPR class for 2 people
- ◆ Conducted public education for 1,442 people – 848 children and 594 adults



WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND THE DEPARTMENT...

- ◆ Our process for filling the open FT position was completed in August and a list has been established. A job offer was made to one of our PT staffers—Michael Kaduce has accepted the position and will begin his full-time employment in September. He will remain on a 40-hour work week for a short orientation and then will be assigned a shift assignment.
- ◆ FT Shift assignment will likely be made in September. This may result in the moving of personnel to accommodate shift request. We will strive to move the least number of personnel necessary to meet the needs of our department.
- ◆ The process for testing for open PT position is in full-swing. Testing and interviews will be conducted in early September. We hope to get these new people on board as soon as possible and we anticipate filling four to six positions.
- ◆ Replacement chairs have been ordered for the training room. This is a two year process to replace all of the chairs in that room.
- ◆ We are in the process of upgrading our VHF radios to meet the narrowbanding requirements of the FCC. All of our storm sirens have been addressed and the next step is to upgrade our station paging system at Sta. 42, upgrade a limited number of pagers, upgrade/replace VHF radios in the units that will have the tactical bridges and upgrade our VHF transmitter. This project must be completed by Jan. 1, 2013.
- ◆ The City's Multi-Hazard Emergency Operations Plan has been updated. Michael Morlan has headed up the effort to update that plan and has worked with all the departments within the city to develop a workable plan to guide our city in the event of a disaster. City-wide training is the next step with table top exercises as well as a full scale disaster drill in the near future.
- This is an on-going process and the plan will be adjusted following the exercises as needed. Expect more training/drills on disaster preparedness in the future.
- Fire Marshal Rech is preparing for Fire Prevention Week. Please contact him immediately if you are interested in helping him plan this year's programs in this most important prevention activity.
- The Window replacement project is underway and there is nothing new to report. We are in the process of preparing the bid specification to solicit the repairs.
- Road construction remains "wide-open." Be sure to check the maps each shift you work so that you are aware of the open routes. Expect the construction to continue until winter sets in.
- The SCBA replacement project is in full swing. Bids were let and are due back in September. We should have more to report soon.
- The AED project is ready to go to bid. This project will add AEDs to all of our units. In year two of this project, we will be updating our 12-Lead capabilities.
- The new Fire Attack SOG will be released in September. Training will be conducted and we will begin the era of transitional attacks when they are appropriate.

“YOU’VE BEEN CAUGHT DOING AN OUTSTANDING JOB” LETTERS...

We continue to recognize your efforts. Whenever we receive a thank you letter, card or a phone call, we pass that along to the people involved in the form of a “You’ve Been Caught Doing An Outstanding Job” letter. As of August 30th we have sent 76 letters to our personnel. The following people received “You’ve Been Caught” letters since our last newsletter:

Derek Manser, John McCannon, Nick Heuer, Lt. Macumber and Rob Zahnd. We received a thank you note for an EMS call. The card reads: I wanted to thank your men who took such great and careful care of me last Thursday! My shoulder is doing much better now. I have to wear a sling but thank God I didn’t break it! Everyone was so careful about keeping me comfortable managing my pain. Your thoughtful attention to details meant SO much to me. God bless you for all your service & kindness. Sincerely, Mabel Donahue”

Eric Ennen, Nick Heuer, Lt. Wilson, Bryce Landers and John Ouverson: We received a thank you card for an EMS call. The patient wrote in her card that our “prompt and efficient service played a valuable role in my recovery”. She went on to say that “Everyone involved was so helpful and kind to me. I will be forever grateful”.

We received three “department wide” thank you notes in the last couple of weeks:

1. **From Yost Family Chiropractic:** Thank you for all you do for our community! From protecting us to offering things like National Night Out, opportunities @ the library for kids to see the trucks & station tours, etc., etc. Thank you from all of us @ YFC – Dr. Heather, Dr. Laura, Dr. Jessa, Meghan, Katie, Kristen and Rachel
2. **From UCan:** (This was addressed to Fire Marshal Rech and he deserves the credit for spearheading this effort – a “You’ve Been Caught” letter for FM Rech – all of the rest of you helped in approving the financial support of this project and several of you helped with the backpacks)

On behalf of the board, staff and volunteers of the Urbandale Community Action Network/Caring Corps, I would like to thank your organization for providing school supplies for the backpacks.

All of us appreciate your willingness to volunteer your time and resources to partner with us to make this program a success. I wish you could see the expression on the children’s faces when they receive their backpacks. As you know when we approach challenges as a community, what appear to be obstacle often become opportunities. Thanks for the generosity of Urbandale Fire Department.

3. **From Chief McCarty and Officer Randy Peterson at UPD:** While this goes out to the entire department – again, it was spearheaded by Fire Marshal Rech and those attending this year were: **Lt. Routson, Jamie Erie, Ross Frank and Aldin Ramic.**

A thank you for attending the National Night Out event. They write “I wanted to take the time and tell you how much I appreciate your support for the National Night Out. This event was designed to bring the community together and to show the world Urbandale will not stand by and let crime go unnoticed. With your help the community responded, with well over 1,000 in attendance this was by far our most successful event. We would like to thank you for your support and participation. Your commitment to this program will truly make a difference.

MEMORIAL DONATIONS: We have received approximately \$1,185 in memorial contributions in memory of Ruth Alexander. The family send a note: I do want you to know that words are not adequate to thank your Department for the outstanding care they gave our Mother on the occasions when she needed Urbandale’s EMS services. Your EMS personnel were always extremely timely at arriving, and always treated our Mother with great dignity and respect. They were always calm and reassuring which was critical to her care, and provided outstanding medical support during the transport to the hospital.

It was her personal request that her memorial go to the Urbandale Fire and Rescue. Our parents had lived in Urbandale for 67 years so they had seen the metamorphosis of the fire department, from the tiny fire station on 70th with the volunteer fire force to the well deserved new facility where your Department is housed today. Both of our parents were amazed and very proud of the growth and commitment of your Department professionals. Our Mother was proud to tell people that Urbandale had the best Fire and EMS anywhere. The citizens of Urbandale are truly blessed to have access to your dedicated and highly skilled staff.—Truly kind words from a very appreciative family. Shows just what kind of service we provide!!

Thanks to all of you for providing outstanding service!!

Member Profile...

Member Profile: Marcus Van Scoy

Length of time with UFD: Officially certified Fire Fighter I & II with Urbandale Fire since December 2011

Why I became interested in UFD: I lived on Monroe Court right down the street from Station 41 since I was in first grade. I remember as a kid thinking how cool it would be to be one of “those guys.” It wasn’t until after college that I finally decided to give it a shot and apply with Urbandale.

Previous Fire or EMS Experience: None

Family Life: Single. I have a miniature schnauzer named Mia

Current Profession: I have worked for Glenn Oaks as well as Hyperion golf courses maintaining the courses since I was 18.

Activities or hobbies I enjoy: I enjoy wakeboarding, snowboarding, hunting, fishing or anything that involves being outside.

Favorite TV programs: Anything on the history channel.

Favorite movies: Top Gun, Fight Club and the HBO series Band of Brothers.

Last book that I read: “All But My Life: A Memoir” by Gerda Weissmann Klein

Personal goals: Passing my EMT national written test first try.

What I enjoy about UFD: I really enjoy the brotherhood that the guys share with one another. I can’t wait to be a part of this department.



Fire Prevention and Fire Safety Education is the responsibility of all firefighters!

If you are serious about reducing firefighter injuries and deaths, you ***have*** to support the efforts of educating the public on the benefits of home fire sprinklers. This fire safety tool addresses several of the Firefighters Life Safety Initiatives and certainly applies to initiative # 8—*Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety*, # 14—*Public education must receive more resources and be championed as a critical fire and life safety program* and # 15—*Advocacy must be strengthened for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers*. **Do your part...your safety and the safety of those we serve depend on it!**

