Email Updates
The State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD) has recently migrated to a new email update system and the use of Gov.Delivery. If you were a subscriber to our email updates in the past and have not been receiving them recently, you will need to sign up again to be included in the Gov.Delivery updates from our office. You can subscribe using this link.

Fire Code Inquiries
SFMD code teams continue to average about 230 phone calls, emails and text messages per month from fire departments, contractors, architects, building owners and the general public. And this underrepresents the real number of inquiries, because many of our field staff receive questions directly. The code teams pride themselves on same-day or at least 24-hour response to questions. However, some calls require code research and could take a week, but we will let you know if there will be a delay.

We have two email addresses for code questions (new format): fire.code@state.mn.us for code questions and fm.fire.sprinklers@state.mn.us for fire sprinkler code questions. You can also call the fire code specialist, Tom Jenson, at 651-201-7221.

When sending a question by email, it helps to include as much information as possible about your question. Most important is to include your name (not all email addresses contain your name) and a phone number where we can reach you. Some questions are better answered over the phone, and sometimes we need more information and talking is easier than emailing back and forth. So please include some kind of signature line with your name, department and phone number.

Fire Code Adoption
As the next step in the code adoption process, the rule draft and SONAR (statement of need and reasonableness) for the 2020 Minnesota State Fire Code (MSFC) is now being reviewed by attorneys at the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI). SFMD code staff will be meeting weekly with DLI to answer any questions and resolve issues that arise during the legal review process.

The goal is to have both the new fire code and building code rules published by the State Register sometime in the summer of 2019. The proposed effective date of both the 2020 MSFC and the 2020 MN State Building Code would be approximately nine months following publication, perhaps as early as March 2020.
**Basic Fire Code Academy**
- Week-long class
- May 13-17, 2019
- Camp Ripley
- Combination of classroom and hands-on skills (includes outside assignments and research)
- Pilot class
- SFMD is covering many of the expenses: instructors, materials, meals (student or department covers travel and lodging costs)
- Class is currently full but vacancies may occur as class start date nears

**Fire in Minnesota Report**
- Has been released
- Mailed to every fire department in Minnesota
- Handed out at last month’s MSFCA Conference

**Fire Marshal Conference**
- April 16-17, 2019
- Joint with the Fire Marshals Association of Minnesota (FMAM)
- NFPA President Jim Pauley will be the keynote speaker

**Minnesota Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS)**
- Our fire data is critical.
- Lot of requests from media, legislature, and fire associations for data.
- Historically, Minnesota has done a great job with reporting.
- Need to be better with accuracy.
- Have developed some “cheat sheets” to assist with common coding questions:
  - Property use codes.
  - Common incident types.
- Estimating building fire loss: $200 per sq. ft. damaged ($125 for structure; $75 for contents).
- Causes: MFIRS data is intended to represent the most likely cause and effect as determined by the incident commander who was at the scene. If additional information is obtained later through an investigation, the cause can be changed. Please don’t put “Undetermined” on every fire just to finalize the report; that does not provide accurate data. The cause of fires is one of the most commonly requested pieces of data we receive.

**Process to develop and build a wedding event center**
A recent caller to SFMD asked what the steps are to construct a new building, or convert an existing building, such as a barn, for use as an event center for weddings and other gatherings. In a community with a building code official, this is fairly simple: Make a phone call to determine their plan review and permit process. In communities without a building code official, which is true in the majority of cases, it can be more of a challenge.

In July of 2017 this step was clarified with a new statute §326B.108 for places of public accommodation. If the occupant load, as determined by the building code, exceeds 200, and the local jurisdiction does not have a building code official, plans must be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) for review and approval. It’s important to note that the occupant load cannot be set artificially low in order to avoid the DLI review process or any other code provision that’s based on the number of occupants. Instead,
occupant loads must be calculated based on use and area as prescribed in the state building code. Minnesota rules also require that design plans be prepared by a licensed design professional.

Now what about those where the design is 200 or less? Even though a plan review would not be required by DLI, Minnesota Rule 1305 (Commercial Building Code) would still require certification by an architect licensed in the state of Minnesota. The licensed design professional conducts a building code analysis and prepares a code review, drawings and specifications to demonstrate that the proposed project is compliant with the Minnesota Building Code.

In addition, an engineer licensed in the state of Minnesota is required to certify the building structural design and verifying that the building complies with structural requirements of the building code. The architect will also confirm fire sprinkler, fire alarm, energy code, accessibility, mechanical and plumbing requirements. With any new construction project, the fire chief should ensure that proper fire department access and water supply is provided in accordance with the MSFC. These fire service features are often overlooked in rural areas.

If you have questions about event center venues in your area, contact SFMD code specialist Tom Jenson at Thomas.Jenson@state.mn.us.

**Fire and Life Safety Education**

As we come into winter, please remember that the number of fires tends to increase. Remember that we have resources for your fire prevention efforts. [Click here](#) to find our fact sheets online. The [NFPA](https://www.nfpa.org) and [USFA](https://www.usfa.fema.gov) also have public education resources.

We now have two brand new Sparky costumes for departments to use. Please plan ahead and contact [Amanda Swenson](mailto:Amanda.Swenson@state.mn.us) if you would like to use them.

NFPA 1035, the Fire and Life Safety Educator, Public Information Officer and Youth Fire Intervention Specialist and Program Manager Standard, is now open for public comment until Jan. 3, 2019. The first draft should be posted by Sept. 5, 2019. The final revision is scheduled to be released in the fall of 2020. If you would like to review the document or submit a proposal, please [click here](#).

Please welcome our new Youth Fire Intervention Team (YFIT) program managers. Matt Grave, of the Willmar Fire Department, is the new program manager in the west central region. Matt recently delivered a very successful YFPI Specialist class in Willmar. Ten more specialists were certified after this class, Randy Giles, of St. Cloud Fire Department, is the new program manager for the new St. Cloud region, including Sterns, Sherburne and Benton counties. Randy has been an active YFPI specialist for several years and has a busy area with youth-set fires.

If you have a youth-set fire, please call the duty officer to activate YFIT. You can also contact [Kathi Osmonson](mailto:Kathi.Osmonson@state.mn.us) to coordinate services in southern Minnesota and [Amanda Swenson](mailto:Amanda.Swenson@state.mn.us) in the north.

The Red Cross is seeking nominations for their Hero Award. There are awards in 6 categories:

- Community Hero
- Give Life Hero
- Good Samaritan Hero
- First Responder Hero
- Military Hero
- Youth Hero (Under 21)
Nominations are due by Jan. 4, 2019. For more information please visit redcross.org/MNheroes

**School Inspection Team**
In addition to conducting inspections, SFMD school inspectors have recently been answering questions and consulting with school districts regarding security concerns. Unfortunately, schools are occasionally offered advice from well-intentioned consultants that is contrary to established fire safety practices and conflict with current statute and rules.

One such anecdote relayed to us on multiple occasions is a false statistic claiming there hasn’t been a school fire in over 50 years. This is being used as justification to advise schools that building evacuation is not necessary during a fire alarm activation. However this so-called fact could not be further from the truth.

Here are the actual statistics: According to data from the Minnesota Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS), a fire occurs somewhere in a Minnesota school, on average, once every eight days. The average fire loss from 1996 to 2015 was over $567,000 per year. And since 2004, school fires in Minnesota have resulted in 34 injuries and three deaths.

But the good news is, thanks in large part to the evolution and enforcement of fire and life safety codes, school fires these days typically result in minimal damage, and fatalities are rare. However, not all school fires are contained. As recently as 2014, a fire completely destroyed Roosevelt Elementary School in St. Cloud, resulting in a loss of over $5,000,000. Fortunately the fire occurred after-hours when students were not present.

For schools interested in implementing some form of alternative evacuation strategy, the SFMD has a guideline available on our website: [Delayed and Staged Evacuation Strategies for Schools](#).

**Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM)**
- The bid announcement for the new state hazardous materials response team trucks (medium rescue, without pump) will go out this month. We plan to buy four trucks this fiscal year, hopefully entering into purchase agreements in January 2019. Thanks to the fire safety account for providing 50 percent of the funding for this first round of modernization.
- We are also in the process of upgrading the teams’ ancillary equipment, such as radios and monitors. We are spending $1.5 million on that project this year.
- Railroad and pipeline safety account funds are still available for local exercises, evacuation planning, etc. If you have a request, please contact Joe Neuberger at 651-201-7408 or joe.neuberger@state.mn.us.
- It has been a very active summer for state and federal disasters. So far in 2018, the governor has declared six state disasters, and two more are pending. The president declared a federal disaster for the flooding and windstorms across the state in June and July for 28 counties and one tribal nation. We are working on a potential second major federal disaster declaration for the gale force winds and storm surge flooding at Duluth and St. Louis County in October. We estimate the total dollar value of uninsured damage to public infrastructure and other eligible response costs for incidents in 56 counties and four tribal nations since last April at more than $48 million.
- Please save the date for the 54th annual Governor’s Homeland Security and Emergency Management Conference on Feb. 12-14, 2019, at the Earle Brown Center. We anticipate the new governor making general session remarks during the conference.

**Residential Care and Lodging Team**
The Residential Care and Lodging Team has 307 hotels scheduled for inspection in fiscal year 2019. The team is on schedule to complete these inspections by May 15, 2019. The RC&L inspectors have been finding many newly constructed hotels are not in compliance with the requirement for low-frequency alarm notification
devices. NFPA 72 requires hotels to have low-frequency notification devices in all guestrooms for both the building fire alarm system and the rooms’ single station smoke alarms. This is usually accomplished by having addressable in room smoke detection triggering a low-frequency sounder base in the room. This system, when installed correctly, will initiate at the fire alarm panel and sound the guestroom of origin’s notification device but will not sound a general evacuation alarm in the building.

The RC&L Team is already working on scheduling DHS licensor and local inspector training opportunities, which will likely be held in May at Camp Ripley. The team is continuously working on updating and improving the training. Any staff changes involving local inspectors should be reported to either supervisor Whiting or Deputy Sedivy as soon as is practical so the list can be updated.

The RC&L Team responds to many complaints and requests for assistance from local fire departments. Our policy is to refer all complaints to the local fire department with an offer to help the department if they request our assistance. If the request involves facilities that are inspected by the SFMD the request should be made to the supervisor of the team assigned to inspect the facility. All requests for facilities that are not generally inspected by the SFMD can be directed to supervisor Whiting.

In the coming months, the RC&L Team will be renewing its efforts to establish closer relationships with local jurisdictions. Our goal is to do our best to keep local jurisdictions informed as well as involved with our inspections in their jurisdictions to the extent they desire. We will be reaching out to local jurisdictions in an effort to determine how we can best meet the local jurisdictions’ expectations.

RC&L Team supervisor Whiting has been working with DHS in an effort to create two standardized forms for requesting fire inspections with more of the information the inspector needs. A new form for facilities licensed by counties is nearly complete and should be available for use very soon. The new form for facilities licensed by state DHS is still being designed.

The RC&L Team is very proud to report that our newest deputy, Travis Cole, was recently appointed to the position of fire chief for the Grand Rapids Fire Departments. Congratulations to Travis.

**Fire Service Specialists**

It is again that time of year when local communities are entering into contracts talks with your local townships and cities. Each year we receive many phone calls and attend many meetings assisting fire departments and townships with contract talks. We are also available to assist in your proactive measures in working with cities and townships. We would like to remind you that we are a resource that stands ready for assistance.

As part of our duties, we attend a wide variety of meetings, including attending local county chief meetings. There, we can provide you with current and relevant information and disseminate information on programs, SFMD and MBFTE updates, and fire service information. If you’re interested in our attendance at your county chiefs meeting, please contact your FSS. We are just a phone call or email away.

As far as AFG, we reviewed dozens of applications and answered questions on the application by phone and on occasions too numerous to count. We can also help with questions on managing the grants that have been awarded this past year. If you were one of the lucky fire departments we stand ready to assist you as your roll out your grant.

Currently we are working with numerous FD’s as they navigate sharing service waters. Many organizations are finding themselves in a position of not being able to quickly put an engine on the road, causing very tough discussions about continued service. Typically we offer to you as a fire department a presentation outlining a
better understanding of the Minnesota Fire Service challenges and offer a few ideas for solutions or discussion points. These are very tough times for the Minnesota Fire Service, and a highly challenging future. If you are finding yourself and organization as being highly challenged in preparing competent crews for rapid deployment and rapidly getting equipment on the road, please contact us so we can give you a hand and offer a few ideas for solution or simply help start the dialog for service delivery in the future. We are in this together.

As a team we welcome Steve White for the NW Region of our State as your Fire Service Specialist. Also, click for our updated maps and contact information.

**ImageTrend Elite Update**

Migration to the new ImageTrend Elite Fire Incident Reporting is well underway with 400 agencies converted. Next on the schedule for November are Capital City and South Central regions, which account for 77 departments.

Washington and Ramsey County are CAD users, which will require a new contract between ImageTrend and the fire departments having the service. ImageTrend is in the process of sending out the new contract. When the contact arrives, please review, sign and return it to ImageTrend, as this is required to have the CAD capabilities in the Elite system. There are no additional costs associated with the new contract. Basically it authorizes ImageTrend to push the dispatch information to the new Elite system.

Training for the Elite system is online, and when migration has occurred, a welcome letter is sent out with directions on how to access training.

Just announced: There will be ImageTrend Elite training at the MSFDA conference being held in North Mankato next year. The tentative scheduled is for eight hours on April 26, 2019 at the Verizon Center.

**Fire Investigation Team**

The Fire Investigation Team continues to be extremely busy, with over 565 case files pulled already in 2018. Even though the staff is busy, do not hesitate to call for assistance. Please call the duty officer to contact a fire investigator for a new case. MN statute 299F.04 puts the responsibility of determining the origin and cause of fires on the local fire chief. However, with changes in the fire investigation industry in the past few years (namely NFPA 921 and 1033), any fire of any consequence should be investigated by a properly credentialed fire investigator.

Our fire investigation team is here to be a resource to the local fire chiefs to provide that properly credentialed fire investigator. As we say, “Call early and call often”. There is no way we can make every fire, but we are available 24/7 to at least consult with you on the phone. Please see our fire response priority list in the Fire, Arson and Explosion Investigation Services Handbook on our website. If in doubt, call the MN Duty Officer at 651-649-5451 or 800-422-0798. We will respond to calls from the fire service, as well as any MN law enforcement agency. If you have any questions for the Fire Investigation Team, please contact Jim Iammatteo at james.iammatteo@state.mn.us

**Minnesota Board of Firefighter Training and Education**

Between our fiscal year 2019 base budget, some fiscal year 2018 carryover funds, and nearly $2.5 million in one-time funding from the Fire Safety Account, the MBFTE has $6.9 million available to the fire service this fiscal year! Back in fiscal year 2017, the MBFTE had $8 million available for the fire service’s training needs, and there were a lot of fire departments who were able to take advantage of their award plus receive a healthy redistribution after the August 1 deadline. Training reimbursements for fiscal year 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019) are at record amount of $205/firefighter.
The MBFTE’s Qualified Instructor Program has been revamped, and because of that, the MBFTE is offering separate reimbursement in fiscal year 2019 for more than 400 Fire Instructor I and/or Fire Instructor II students (with certification).

A change was made to the NFPA 1001 program this year by the board: “Basic Firefighter Training” reimbursement is available for firefighters who want to complete Firefighter I only, or if they want to do NFPA 1001 in its entirety, or if they want to complete 1001 with Hazmat Ops 472. Students are required to complete the course(s) and pass the certification test(s) in order to be eligible for reimbursement by the MBFTE.

**FY19 Washer/Extractor/Dryer Program**
Since 2015, the first year of the Turnout Gear Washer/Extractor Program, the Department of Public Safety has awarded over $500,000 to more than 60 Minnesota fire departments for the purchase of turnout gear washers/extractors.

At the Aug. 8, 2018 meeting of the FSAC, $300,000 was awarded for washer/extractors and $300,000 was awarded for dryers. As a result, $600,000 of funding was available for the fiscal year 2019 Turnout Gear Washing/Drying Matching Award Program at the application deadline of Oct. 16, 2018. The SFMD received 166 applications from fire departments across the State of Minnesota with more than $1,706,000 in requested funds for washer/extractors and dryers.

The selection board is scheduled to meet on Nov. 7, 2018 to review the applications and determine which fire departments will be receiving these funds. In the weeks after the board has made their selections, the SFMD will send out the award/denial letters to all of the 166 departments.

For more information or if you have any questions regarding the fiscal year 2019 washer/extractor/dryer program, please contact Nolan Pasell at the SFMD at Nolan.pasell@state.mn.us

**MnFIRE**

The Minnesota Firefighter Initiative (MnFIRE) is dedicated to providing Minnesota's firefighters with the tools they need to prioritize and protect their health by focusing on the three health problems most commonly experienced by those in the fire service: cardiac, cancer and emotional wellness.

This initiative is designed to equip firefighters and their families with the resources they need to educate about, prevent and treat the common illnesses among firefighters, empowering them to make good decisions. MnFIRE has been awarded a grant from FSAC to train all 22,000 Minnesota firefighters to become “MnFIRE Aware” before June 30, 2019. To date, 60 departments have scheduled or already had their MnFIRE Aware training.

MnFIRE is currently recruiting instructors throughout the state to assist with delivery of the MnFIRE Aware message. If you are interested in becoming a MnFIRE instructor, train-the-trainer sessions will be held November 17 in Rochester, December 1 in Fergus Falls, and December 8 in Duluth. You must register in advance to participate.
Visit www.mnfireinitiative.com or contact DeeDee Jankovich, director of program delivery at djankovich@mnfireinitiative.com or 763-221-9329 to schedule your department’s free training or register for a train-the-trainer session.

2018 Fire Fatalities
2017 was a very tragic year for fire fatalities, with 68 in comparison to 43 for all of 2016. Once again in 2017, it appears careless smoking will be the leading cause of fire-related deaths in Minnesota. In 2018, as of November 15, we have had 34 fire fatalities in comparison to 54 fatalities in 2017. Please continue to challenge your communities with your fire and life safety messages throughout the year.

With your help and persistence in presenting fire prevention education in your communities, we can make a difference in the number of fire fatalities each and every year. One fire fatality is too many in any community, and we ask that you please continue to keep fire prevention at the forefront with your citizens. Thank you for your continued support of the SFMD.

Final Thoughts
The 2019 legislative session is right around the corner with the start of the session on Tuesday, Jan. 8, 2019. As a result of the recent elections, we will see a new governor and numerous changes in the state House of Representatives. BJ Jungmann, Burnsville fire chief and chair of the MSFCA Legislative Committee, is already working hard to put together the legislative agenda for the 2019 session.

It is never too early to start thinking about fire prevention around the upcoming holiday season from Thanksgiving until New Year’s Day. This time period has traditionally been our busiest time for structure fires and also the deadliest time period for fire fatalities. Please work with our fire and life safety educators, Amanda Swenson and Kathi Osmonson, on educating the citizens of your communities on fire prevention around the holiday season. Thank you all for your support of the State Fire Marshal Division.