Minnesota Department of Public Safety

State Fire Marshal Division

2020 Annual Report
“Unprecedented.” “When will we return to normal?” “You’re on mute.” Everyone across the country will remember these three phrases from 2020.

Along with the rest of Minnesota, the fire service endured a lot over the past year: an increase in fire and EMS calls, an increase in large-loss fires, and worst of all, an increase in the number of fire fatalities. However, we will also remember 2020 as the year of unwavering dedication, the ability to adapt to and overcome any challenge, and most assuredly, the responsiveness of the fire service to the citizens of Minnesota.

Like most of you, our staff at the State Fire Marshal Division (SFMD) faced those challenges of 2020 by stepping up and responding to the needs of the state. Our group of professionals at SFMD are a true reflection of the Minnesota fire service and its perseverance, resiliency, and tenacity.

In this report, you will see the results of countless hours of dedicated work by our team members. It illustrates how each team, with its own unique qualities, works toward the overall mission of making Minnesota the safest place to work and live.

Jim Smith
Minnesota
State Fire Marshal

Amanda Swenson
Chief Deputy
State Fire Marshal
2020 at a Glance

The Fire Investigations Team assisted local officials and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives National Response Team following civil unrest in May.

Our Fire Service Specialists and Hazardous Materials Team worked with local officials in Becker during the fire at Northern Metals Recycling in February.

Staff coordinated and participated in training for fire departments to prepare them for potential protests or arson incidents during the construction of Enbridge Line 3.

The Fire Code Team released a report on the deadly 2019 high-rise fire. The report cited several factors that played a role in the size and severity of the fire.

The SFMD continued to move forward with implementing a drone program. The drones will be available to assist with large-scale incidents across the state.

The 2020 Minnesota State Fire Code was adopted and became effective March 31. Staff have been updating information sheets related to the adoption.
2020 at a Glance

Staff delivered the second week-long fire code academy at Camp Ripley in August. Approximately 30 people attended the academy.

The MBFTE helped establish clarifications of Executive Orders that allowed for continued hands-on training and testing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SFMD inspected a sample number of wedding barns and developed a report for the Minnesota Legislature.

The Public Education Team played a major role in the SFMD's five-year mission to reduce the number of smoking-related fire fatalities in Minnesota.

The Honor Guard worked closely with Minnesota Fallen Firefighters Memorial Association to support the fire service in honoring our own.

The Public Education Team worked on two major projects, including a tool to evaluate local risks and a media campaign to reduce smoking-related deaths.
SFMD adapts to doing business in a COVID-19 world

The Health Care Team worked with the Army Corps of Engineers, National Guard and Department of Health to ID, establish, and inspect alternate care sites for COVID-19 treatment.

SFMD staff worked closely with other agencies to provide consultation on their strategies for continuation of services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

School, health care, hotel/motel, foster care and child care facility inspections continued despite the pandemic. Staff quickly responded to increased precautions and safety protocols.

SFMD staff created a mapping tool to track the need for mutual aid in case departments were unable to respond for service due to a COVID-19 outbreak.

SFMD staff worked with the Governor’s Office and fire departments across the state to collect more than 137,000 cloth masks to donate to community organizations.

Fire Service Specialists worked with Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association to distribute personal protective equipment to Minnesota fire departments.
2020 by the Numbers

**Fire deaths**

- **53**
  - **66 percent** of fire deaths happened in residential/multi-family structures.
  - **10** smoking-related fire deaths.

**Fire investigations**

- **686**
  - 137 of these fire investigations were in coordination with ATF National Response Team following the civil unrest over the spring/summer.
  - **277 consultations**

**Fire investigations by year**

- 2016: 475
- 2017: 506
- 2018: 557
- 2019: 555
- 2020: 686
## 2020 by the Numbers

### Code interpretations
- **2,607**

### Gear washer/dryer grants
- **$400,000 to 56 fire departments**

### Fire inspections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Follow-ups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Care and Lodging</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Department of Corrections</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>272 health care facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>165 adult foster care facilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>86 DOC inspections</td>
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2020 by the Numbers

Sprinkler plan reviews & permits issued

375

Fire incident reporting
Incidents processed through the Minnesota Fire Incident Reporting System

2016 2017 2018 2019 2020
291,456 304,171 309,652 312,462 315,676

Contact us
You can find contact information for SFMD staff at sfm.dps.mn.gov. Don't forget to follow us on social media:
# SFMD Staff

**Jim Smith, State Fire Marshal**  
**Amanda Swenson, Chief Deputy State Fire Marshal**  
**Steven Flaherty – Executive Director (Board of Firefighter Training & Education)**

## Supervisors

- Jim Iammatteo – Investigations  
- Bill Abderhalden – Health Care & Correctional Inspections  
- Barb Lundberg – Support Staff  
- Jon Nisja – Codes, Fire Protection & Training  
- John Ehret – State Services & Response  
- Ryan Whiting – Residential Inspections  
- Forrest Williams – School Inspections

## Fire Investigators

- Andrea Bexell  
- Kevin Mahle  
- Toby McLain  
- Bruce McLaughlin  
- Brian Petersen  
- Ron Rahman  
- Jon Ray  
- Rich Sellman  
- John Steinbach  
- Casey Stotts  
- Steve Wolf

## Fire Service Specialists

- Tate Mills  
- Jared Rozeboom  
- Steve White  
- Bob Berg  
- John Kreuser  
- Tom McDonough

## Fire and Life Safety Education

- Kathi Osmonson  
- Bob Reif

## School Inspectors

- Kurt Kastella  
- Kevin McGinty  
- Tom Roessler  
- John Swanson

## Fire Protection and Codes

- Tom Jension  
- Dan Kaiser  
- Ryan Kunst  
- Jacob Lindquist  
- Ralph Peterson

## Data Team

- Nora Gierok  
- Joel Paylor  
- Scott Radke

## Residential Inspectors

- Travis Ahrens  
- Dan Beeson  
- Tony Clafton  
- Marvin Forbragd  
- Bob Rexeisen  
- Kevin Sedivy  
- George Shellum

## Health Care and Corrections

- James Anderson  
- Bob Baumann  
- Larry Gannon  
- Steve Jurrens  
- Roy Kingsley  
- Kerry Queen  
- Kimberly Swenson

## Support Staff

- Kathleen Donovan  
- Margaret Koele (MBFTE)  
- Nathan Le  
- Nolan Pasell (Fleet Mgr.)  
- Randi Samuelson  
- Becky Schmidt  
- Marian Whitney