



# HOT TOPICS

Oshkosh Fire Department



## CHIEF'S CORNER



As 2020 draws to a close, we look back on a year like no other. Oshkosh, the U.S. and the world have never encountered times like we have in this past year. How we have been able to endure so much and persevere is remarkable.

What is most impressive is how Oshkosh has managed. In 2020, many of us have struggled, many have suffered, and we have not always agreed on everything. But one constant has been that we are Oshkosh! In times of trouble so many have stepped forward, put a hand out and lifted others up. There is no other community like ours. We take care of each other when times are good and we take even better care of each other when times are bad.

I am incredibly proud of how our firefighters have faced this crisis. They still tirelessly respond to the sick and injured -- to those in peril, protecting lives and property. They provide crucial services to those we serve. Look high and low and you will not find better firefighters and paramedics across the country.

As we move into 2021, we have hopes that we can soon go back to "normal." There would be no better gift this holiday season. I wish you all well. Be safe, be healthy, and enjoy time with your loved ones.

Happy holidays and a happy new year!

---Chief Mike Stanley

## HANDWASHING WEEK

by **Chuck Hable, Battalion Chief EMS**

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and others around us from spreading germs and even carcinogens. The key to maximizing the effects of handwashing is to do it appropriately!

Hand washing should be done multiple times during the day. When your hands are soiled, wash your hands as soon as you are able. There are other times during the day in which you don't feel like your hands are dirty, but you should wash them. They include after checking equipment in the fire station, when removing PPE following any type of call, before eating or drinking anything, before performing daily hygiene rituals like brushing your teeth, working with contact lenses, or after using the bathroom, etc. ALWAYS wash your hands when you remove gloves, either firefighting or EMS.

Hand washing often uses anti-microbial soap, especially at medical facilities. The idea of this type of soap is to kill most germs that may be on your hands. In order to work, you must work the lather in your hands for 20-30 seconds before rinsing them. Anti-microbial soap is not a requirement to successful hand washing. The use of soap in any setting, whether washing your hands, your vehicle or your clothes, is to create a lather that emulsifies the 'dirt' you are trying to remove. To create this lather and encapsulate the 'dirt' takes time. How long? About 20-30 seconds.

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# MEDICAL DIRECTOR MINUTE

by Dr. Kerry Ahrens

Did you know that 'Wash your hands' was once controversial medical advice that cost an 1840s medical doctor his career? Dr Semmelweis worked in Vienna General Hospital, Austria and noticed that women delivering babies were dying 2x more when under the care of male doctors and students than those in the ward served by female midwives. After multiple investigations Semmelweis discovered that the physicians and their students would do cadaveric learning in the morning, not wash their hands then attend to female laboring patients in the afternoon.



In 1847 Semmelweis implemented mandatory hand washing among students and doctors at Vienna General Hospital using a chlorinated lime solution. This resulted in a plummet in the mortality rate of the physician-run maternity ward. Semmelweis presented his findings at the 1850 Vienna Medical Society and was widely rejected by the medical community; faulting both his science and logic and thus hand washing was abandoned by the Vienna Hospital despite its huge improvement on maternity ward mortality rates. Semmelweis published articles on hand washing in 1858 and 1860, then a book in 1861 - his theories were still not embraced by the medical establishment until 2 years after his death when Scottish surgeon, Joseph Lister, spread the idea of sanitizing hands and surgical instruments to halt infectious disease leading to regular scrubbing up before surgery and patient care in the 1870s. Soon after came Pasteur and Koch's development of Germ Theory.

Fast forward 150 years later...and we are still having some challenges implementing hand washing. Doc, does it really work? Aiello et al found that improvements in hand hygiene resulted in reductions in gastrointestinal illness of 31% and reductions of respiratory illness (non-aerosolized) of 21% - the most beneficial intervention was hand-hygiene education with use of non-antibacterial soap (anti-bacterial soap showed little added benefit). So it works!

How successful are EMS personnel at implementing hand washing? in 2011, a study identified that patients who were treated and transported by ALS paramedics had a higher rate of nosocomial infection than patients not transported by ALS. There is plenty of bias involved in that retrospective study; however, when added into a study performed by Teter et al found that 77% of EMS providers had heavy bacterial load on their hands after patient care. Teter also found that only 34% of providers performed hand hygiene BEFORE or even fewer, a horrendous 24%, in between patients. Thus, we as EMS providers can be the potential vectors of disease especially when hand hygiene is missed or forgotten.

Now, imagine if your mother, brother or child were being picked up by an ALS service that practiced poor hand hygiene. Would you want that paramedic touching your family member? I am guessing not. Act as though every patient you are picking up is your family and be sure to start with the first, most basic tenant of care: wash your hands for 20-30 seconds with running water and soap or use hand sanitizer frequently.

Ok, history lesson over. Again, thank you all for everything you do for our community, and please have a very safe and happy holiday season!

#### References:

1. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/2020/03/handwashing-once-controversial-medical-advice/#close>. Accessed 12/9/2020.
2. Aiello et al. Effect of Hand Hygiene on Infectious Disease Risk in the Community Setting: A Meta-Analysis. American Journal of Public Health. 2008. 98(8): 1372-1381.
3. Alter and Merlin. Nosocomial and community-acquired infection rates of patients treated by prehospital advanced life support compared with other admitted patients. Am J Emerg Med. 2011. 29(1): 57-64.
4. Teter et al. Hand hygiene in emergency medical services. Prehosp Emerg Care. 2015. 19(2): 313-9.

# EVERYONE GOES HOME

by Drew Jager

Life Safety Initiative 8 deals with technology. Specifically, it states that we should “utilize existing technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety”.

In the last few years, the Oshkosh Fire Department has upgraded our use of technology in several ways that improve the health and safety of our firefighters and citizens:

- We purchased and installed **4 gas monitors and gas tracker** on all front line fire apparatus. This allows for quicker recognition of potentially flammable or toxic environments during initial investigation. We no longer have to wait for meters to arrive on scene.
- **Wireless headsets** are now available in all front line fire apparatus. This reduces siren noise exposure and provides clear communications with company members while enroute to calls.
- **Station alerting tones, CAD display monitors** in the stations and daytime radio muting: No more surprising “pop” of the speakers, with the accompanying adrenaline dump to our bodies. I believe that although maintaining situational awareness of city unit status still requires diligence by the duty chief and company officers, that the reduction in number of times that we are interrupted by dispatches for other units, has resulted in a more peaceful living environment for our crews.
- **New training software:** This enables a makeup option for members who were on vacation or leave, something that our EMS division has done for years, but now is improved for fire topics.
- On the horizon for 2021, we will be implementing **new vehicle maintenance software**, and new **preplanning software**.



Check out the link below for how one manufacturer is leaning forward with technology that would allow firefighters to communicate the location of firefighters within buildings, including the ability to vector RIT members in the direction of someone who is trapped or disoriented. [Click here to see more](#)

While these and other changes that are tied to process improvements such as tablet MDCs and electronic signatures for patient care reports have benefits, some individuals are challenged to adopt to what has become an exponential pace of change. Our newer personnel, having grown up in what some refer to as being “digitally native”, that is, only knowing a world where such technology is normal, are probably our greatest resource for helping more senior personnel in adapting and learning.

These changes along with others such as shift scheduling software that allows immediate confirmation of shift trades, while not necessarily safety related, contribute to what remain challenging yet rewarding times to be a firefighter with the Oshkosh Fire Department.

***“Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future”***

**-John F. Kennedy**

# WHAT'S NEW

We took delivery of two new custom fire engines from Pierce Manufacturing on November 18. In the next few weeks they will have radios installed, new equipment placed on them, and then they will go in service. Several of our firefighters did an exceptional job in helping in the design. Our community should be very proud when they see them go by on the streets of Oshkosh. They will help protect property and save lives for many years to come.



The Oshkosh Fire Department was very proud to be recently recognized as a recipient of a 2019 Firehouse Michael O. McNamee Valor Award. A Unit Citation was issued to the Town of Neenah Fire Department, Fox Crossing Fire Department, Vinland Fire Department, Town of Algoma Fire Department, Town of Oshkosh Fire Department, Oshkosh Fire Department and Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue for their response to a multi-car accident on I-41 which is the largest accident in the history of Wisconsin.



Crew members from Station 15 were recognized by Aurora Medical Center Oshkosh STEMI Committee for their outstanding work in recognizing and treating a patient on Saturday, December 6. Jose Arce, Eric Shea, Brian Burns and Greg Stelter alerted the hospital Emergency Department to a STEMI patient. Between the work of the paramedics and hospital care team, the patient was treated in 43 minutes! This beats the national goal time of 90 minutes. Time is muscle and survival. Way to go on your excellent patient care!



Support the Oshkosh Fire Department Charitable Trust by buying your Captain Blaze t-shirt. Deadlines to purchase are Monday, December 14, 11:59 CST. Shirts are available in navy, red or white and are estimated to ship by January 8, 2021. To place your order: <https://oshkoshfdcaptblaze.itemorder.com>

## Our Mission

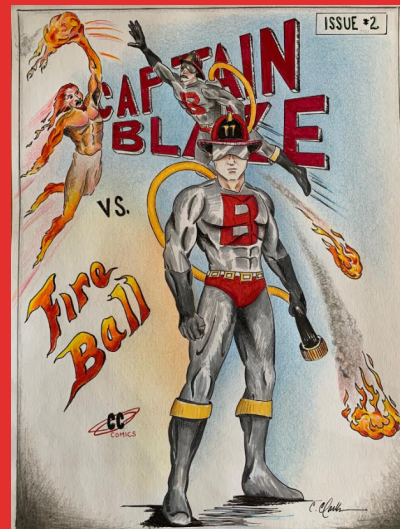
The mission of the City of Oshkosh Fire Department is to prevent, respond to, and to minimize harmful situations to the people we serve.



New engines for Station 15 & Station 19



Brian Burns, Greg Stelter, Eric Shea, Jose Arce



Captain Blaze was designed by our own Chris Clark

# FIRE FIGHTER HERO AWARD PRESENTED TO CHIEF STANLEY

Wednesday, October 28 was a special day at Station 15. When Chief Mike Stanley walked into the bay he was surprised to see the City Manager, a room of masked and socially distanced firefighters, cake, balloons and some unfamiliar faces.

Chief Stanley was honored in a ceremony by MAGLITE® and the NFFF for his leadership in addressing the root causes of falls among older adults. According to the Centers for Disease Control, "Falls are the leading cause of injury-related death among adults age 65 and older, and the age-adjusted fall death rate is increasing. The age-adjusted fall death rate is 64 deaths per 100,000 older adults. Fall death rates among adults age 65 and older increased about 30% from 2009 to 2018."

According to Jennifer Skolaski, who consulted with Chief Stanley on a falls prevention initiative, "Based on a large increase in falls, we created a grant-funded community collaborative effort under the direction of Chief Stanley, that aimed to understand how older adult falls could be prevented. Our multidisciplinary team conducted research to understand the experience and advice of older adults, services providers, and community change agents. Our results led to an action plan that only happened due to his leadership."

"Chief Stanley represents the finest in fire service and service to the community. He has a passion for service," said Oshkosh City Manager Mark Rohloff. "His work with fall prevention and helping people to live independent lifestyles is worthy of this recognition." Some of his other accomplishments have included: helping reopen the local homeless shelter during the pandemic; with community support, equipping firefighters with body armor; initiating a peer support team in the fire department to improve mental health; creating an agreement to create an intergovernmental agreement between six fire departments as needed for pandemic response; creating a multi-partner Recruitment Task Force of community stakeholders to improve diversity and inclusion within the fire department; as well as numerous initiatives to decrease the risk of cancer for firefighters and improve health and safety within the department.

"As a senior myself, I understand the importance of programs like this and appreciate Chief Stanley's efforts to protect our elder citizens," said Anthony Maglica, Founder and CEO of Mag Instrument Inc. "This is why we are committed to supporting this program and the National Fallen Firefighters foundation. I am very happy to honor this true hero with this award and a donation to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation in his name which will be permanently displayed on a brick at the National Fallen Firefighters Walk of Honor."



Oshkosh City Manager Mark Rohloff, Fire Chief Mike Stanley, Community & Nonprofit Leadership Consulting, Jennifer Skolaski

The National Firefighter Hero program is a joint effort between MAGLITE® and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. The program periodically honors single firefighters, groups or whole departments for extraordinary commitment to upholding excellence in firefighting and related activities. [Watch the ceremony here.](#)

# PREVENT, PREPARE, PRACTICE

by John Holland, Public Information

The winter holidays are typically a time of happiness and cheer. But according to the National Fire Protection Association they are also the busiest time of the year for fire departments in the US. The holidays come with their own set of hazards: candles, trees, etc. Following a few simple tips will ensure a safe and happy holiday season.

- **Christmas Trees:** If you buy a freshly cut tree, be sure to tap it on the ground before you buy it. If it drops a lot of needles, the tree is not fresh. Keep your real tree watered. Make sure you place the tree at least three feet from any heat sources or vents. A heat source too close to a tree is responsible for 25% of all Christmas tree fires (NFPA 2019). Artificial trees are safer, but the lights can still cause safety issues. Make sure the tree or any other decoration are not blocking an exit. Turn off any holiday lights when leaving home or going to bed.
- **Lights:** Holiday lighting is responsible for 500 fires every year (NFPA 2019). Inspect and replace any light sets that have cracked, frayed wires or broken bulbs. Do not connect more than 3 sets of lights together unless the manufacturer's directions allow it. Lights are designated for either indoor or outdoor use. Make sure any lights that you use to decorate outside are outdoor lights. Today's LED lights are much safer. They hardly give off any heat and they are more energy efficient and therefore cheaper to use. Again, turn off any holiday lights when leaving home or going to bed.
- **Candles:** Avoid using lit candles if at all possible. Never put lit candles on a Christmas tree. If you must use them, place them away from decorations. Never leave a lit candle unattended and watch children and pets around them. Again, just like holiday lights, there are now LED, battery-operated candles that are much safer to use.
- **Parties:** With the pandemic still going strong, limit your get together to immediate household family members only. If you must have a larger gathering, please follow the COVID guidelines of social distancing and wearing a face mask.

As always, make sure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home.



## HANDWASHING WEEK

*(Continued from page 1)*

Once the 'dirt' is captured by the soap, rinsing carries the dirt away in the soap suds. It doesn't have to 'kill' the germ to be successful. It just needs to remove it from whatever you are washing.

**Where** you wash your hands is important! The germs you are washing away in many instances may not die; they are just washed down the drain. At the recommendation of the Safety Committee, signs are placed at each fire station kitchen sinks alerting you to not wash your hands in sinks in which food is prepared. The germs that don't make it down the drain may still be present and be ingested. The same holds true for carcinogens or other dangerous invisible 'stuff'.

# RECREATIONAL BURNING

by Brian Bending, Fire Marshall

Beginning January 1, 2021 the City of Oshkosh Fire Department will be implementing a new policy for recreational burning. Outdoor fires will be prohibited unless you have a Recreational Fire Permit which must be purchased prior to burning. Grilling out? No need for a permit. However, you must use a gas or charcoal grill to cook. The intent of the new policy is to give citizens the opportunity to have recreational fires at a single family or 2-family dwelling, provided that the fire is in strict compliance with restrictions relating to recreational fires.

## Burning Hours:

Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 12 a.m.

## Rules for Outdoor Burning:

- You must have your permit available for anyone who wishes to see it. If you cannot produce your permit the fire will be extinguished immediately.
- Burn permits are non-transferable to any person or address.
- The outdoor fireplace shall be an assembly that includes a bowl for holding the wood, a screen to contain the embers/sparks, and supports to assure clearances to combustibles.
- Recreational fires must be attended at all times by at least one responsible person of 18 years or older.
- A method of extinguishment shall be readily available, such as a garden hose or a fire extinguisher with a minimum 4A rating.
- The fire shall be completely extinguished prior to leaving the fireplace unsupervised.
- The fireplace cannot be used within 15 feet of buildings, combustibles, or lot lines.
- Only dry wood is to be burned. The burning of trash, garbage, building construction materials or other waste is prohibited.
- No recreational fire shall be started when wind direction or speed will cause embers or other burning material to be carried onto any building or combustible material.
- Burning shall not produce smoke that causes a public nuisance.
- The City of Oshkosh Fire Department reserves the right to extinguish the fire for any reason deemed necessary.

The City of Oshkosh Police Department and Fire Department will enforce these restrictions to ensure that fires do not compromise safety or cause neighborhood concerns. Year to date 2020, the City of Oshkosh has had 55 cases of unauthorized burning.

Permits may be purchased on the City of Oshkosh website or at Fire Station 15, 101 Court Street between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The cost of the permit is \$15 and is good for one year running from January 1 to December 31. You must obtain a permit every calendar year. The burn permit will give permission to burn only under prescribed conditions and in no way will it relieve an individual from potential personal liability. Any person responsible for the existence or spread of fire is liable for the payments of costs incurred.

More information will be coming available to OFD personnel in the next few weeks.

## NOVEMBER 2020



713 EMS Calls



99 Fire Calls



270 Inspections

