



In this Edition:

Around Montana

[Winifred Fire Gets Hands On With Extrication](#)

[Victor Fire Crew Rescues Bog-Bound Horse](#)

[Miles City Fire/Rescue Pursues Grants For More Staff](#)

[Montana Mutual Aid Agenda For February 28th – March 1st](#)

[IAAI Training Opportunity Coming to Great Falls](#)

Around the Nation

[Fallen Ga. Firefighter's Colleagues Fought Hard to Save Him](#)

[State Probe Shows No Violations in Ind. LODD](#)

[Fired Ala. EMS Worker Charged with Torching Station](#)

[Funds for SAFER, AFG, USFA Stalled in Senate](#)



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Around Montana

Winifred Fire Gets Hands On With Extrication



Over 20 Winifred Emergency Responders gathered Thursday evening at the Winifred Tire Shop for a vehicle extrication overview presented by FSTS staff. Responsibilities and expectations of the agencies interactions with each other was a focus in addition to safe and practical usage of their equipment in extrication situations.

[Top of the Document](#)

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Victor Fire Crew Rescues Bog-Bound Horse

http://ravallirepublic.com/news/local/article_c7725100-b326-11e4-9747-c374d9d44fbe.html



VICTOR – When members of the Victor Volunteer Fire Department were called out Wednesday to a nearby ranch for a horse stuck in the mud, none of them could have imagined the challenge they'd soon face.

"When we arrived, all you could see sticking out of the ground was the horse's head," said Fire Capt. Mason Kay.

The horse had stepped into a natural spring and apparently began to struggle when its hooves slipped in the mud.

"We're not really sure how the horse got itself in that situation," Kay said. "The spring wasn't that big to begin with. When the horse began to struggle, it apparently made it bigger."

Getting it out of the bog wasn't going to be easy.

The firefighters attempted to dig around the horse, but the amount of water and mud at the site made that challenging. On top of that, there was some barb wire from an old fence buried in the mud.

"Between that and all the rocks, it made digging hard on us," Kay said. "There really wasn't enough room to get a shovel there."

The firefighters couldn't just start pulling on a rope attached to a halter. They knew they needed to figure out some way to get something around the horse's chest to help ease it out of the muck.

Kay decided to try fashioning a makeshift sling out of a firehose.

"A firehose is wide and flat and kind of soft," he said. "We started to see-saw it down under the horse, one inch at a time, pushing and pulling."

Eventually, they were able to get the fire hose under the horse's chest cavity. They attached the hose to some ropes that were then hooked to a winch on the fire truck.

Once they were able to get the horse's front legs free and on solid ground, they tied another hose a little further back and pulled the rest of the animal out.

It took the six firefighters nearly an hour to free the horse.

"It was exhausted," Kay said. "It was quite cold from being in the water for that long. It wasn't able to stand on its own. Three of us stood on either side to keep it upright. It kept wanting to go down."

The horse was transported to a local veterinarian, where it will stay for a few days.

Kay heard Wednesday night that other than a couple of cuts and scrapes, it appeared like the horse was doing pretty well.

"The owner was super appreciative that we managed to get it out in such little time," he said. A horse rescue isn't something that happens often for the volunteer crew.

"You never know what's going to happen one day to the next on the fire department," Kay said. "Rescuing an animal of that size without it being able to use its own muscles was pretty complicated, but it worked out just fine."

[Top of the Document](#)

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Miles City Fire/Rescue Pursues Grants For More Staff

<http://www.milescitystar.com/content/city-firerescue-pursues-grants-more-staff>

Miles City Fire and Rescue is looking at applying for grants to hire more firefighters. The firefighter safety grants from the Federal Emergency Management Agency require no match from the City of Miles City and will fund the new hires for two years.

Interim Fire Chief Cameron Duffin told the Miles City Council Tuesday that the increasing number of calls they receive, the high turnover and the stress level of the firefighters makes additional firefighters important.

The city's grant administrator, Connie Muggli, is working with Duffin.

He asked the council if they could give Muggli and him some idea if they were in favor of pursuing the grants.

At the end of the discussion, the council members said they supported it.

The grant deadline is March 6.

Duffin said he recently gave the firefighters a stress survey and they all were either at burn-out level or close to it.

He said the department used to have five people on shift and now they have three, which results in calling in people. He'd like to see five people on a shift, which he feels would really help.

Firefighter Sarah Young, who was attending the meeting and is helping with the grant, has had 488 hours of overtime in less than six months.

The calls are increasing 8 percent per year.

Getting five people per shift would probably reduce 65 percent of the overtime currently worked.

In order to staff five people per shift, they would request a \$481,679 grant for two years.

They also are looking at possibly putting four people on a shift.

With a four-person shift, Duffin said they would not call in anyone extra to cover an extra vacation day or sick days; they would work that shift with three people temporarily.

Muggli said the department has turned down 20-25 calls for transfers in about a year's time, due to the staffing shortage.

"That's another reason why we started looking at this, is because Mayor Grenz was pushing for us to get these trips covered. We are flat out understaffed," Duffin said.

He explained that 22.3 percent of the calls in 2014 "came in on top of each other. That's pretty significant when we are trying to do this with three people."

"We keep putting these Band-aids on the bigger problems," he added.

Muggli said the two years time would give them some time to address other issues, like overtime.

She said if they were staffed with four people, the overtime is projected to go down to \$39,500 from \$108,000, which she called "a significant decrease."

After the two years the city has no obligation to keep those extra people, if the city doesn't find it sustainable, but with the high turnover and upcoming retirements, Duffin didn't believe there would be any problem finding a place for them.

Mayor Butch Grenz asked Duffin why, with the high burn-out rate, "Why are we in the business?"

"Because the city needs the service," Duffin answered.

"Well that might be, but there's other ways to provide it outside of the city," Grenz said. The mayor has been in favor of the city getting out of the ambulance business for a long time.

"Obviously, by the numbers you gave me, you don't leave us much choice except to do what you want us to do," he said.

"Honestly, this grant is a wonderful idea, I'm not arguing that. But I will have a problem in two years, if I'm still here, figuring out how you are going to pick up that extra paycheck," Grenz said.

"We may not be able to," Duffin said.

In other news, Grenz asked for a moment of silence for Susanne Galbraith's father to get healed up from recent health problems and for Sigrid Laird. Laird died the next day.

She had been very active in the community and was a long-time manager of the city pool. In her honor, they named the pool the Rivenes/Laird Aquatic Center.

[Top of the Document](#)

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Montana Mutual Aid Agenda For February 28th – March 1st

Meets Saturday, February 28, 2015 at 10:00am at Eastgate Fire, Lewis and Clark County, Montana

(note revised date – February 28th and March 1st, 2015)

Join Dan Madrzykowski (NIST Fire Dynamics) for a remarkable training opportunity on February 28th and March 1st at Eastgate Fire.

Montana Mutual Aid welcomes the leader in the fire dynamics research discussing the latest results of the recent NIST Fire Dynamics research, and the command strategy and tactics to put that research to real world use when fighting fires in structures. This session will be an interactive conversation about how the fire service fights fires in structures.

Please join Dan for an outstanding day and a half program that will shape the fire service for the next 30 years.

Also presenting will be Sonny Stiger - wildland fire behavior, and forecasts for the 2015 wildland fire season and invited speakers from Montana DES, the Montana Fire Services Training School, MT DNRC, Montana Fire Chiefs, Montana Volunteer Fire Fighters, Montana Fire Instructors, and other guests.

This program will be among the most valuable training opportunities in Montana in 2015. Registration is available on line at www.montanamutualaid.org or by calling 1-406-431-2458.

Cost is \$179 per person, including registration, course materials, including NIST training DVD, 1 dinner, 1 lunch, 1 breakfast and breaks.

Session starts at 10am, Saturday, February 28 and concludes Sunday, March 1 at 12 noon. Session is held at the Eastgate Fire Station in Lewis and Clark County.

[Top of the Document](#)

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IAAI Training Opportunity Coming to Great Falls

Electrical Aspects of Fire Investigation

Instructor: Dave Cusatis IAAI-CFI, IAAI-CI

Where: Great Falls Fire Rescue Charles C. Carrico Regional Training Facility, 1900 9th Street South Great Falls MT, 59405

When: Thursday March 12th, 2015 8am-5pm Lunch Provided

Description:

This course addresses the critical skills essential to the effective investigation and evaluation of fires involving potential electrical causes. This course utilizes state of the art techniques, practices, protocols and standards to assist investigators to properly and effectively evaluate electrical systems and associated components to ascertain their role in a fire.

Students will be provided with a basic knowledge of electrical faults and failures of electrical components and circuits, as well as a working knowledge of the National Electrical Code (NEC) and how it applies to the fire investigations.

The use of 'Arc Mapping' will also be discussed and how it can be effectively used to assist in fire origin determination. Participants will also be able to demonstrate a general knowledge of electricity, electrical circuits, systems and arc mapping principles through a series of instructor led 'hands-on' practical exercises.

Register online at firearson .com

Click on training and certifications.

Scroll down to classes and events.

Click on Electrical Aspects of Fire Investigation

Or to register by phone call 1-410-451-3473

Cost:

Montana Chapter Members: \$100.

Montana Non-Members: \$200.

[Top of the Document](#)

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Around the Nation

Fallen Ga. Firefighter's Colleagues Fought Hard to Save Him

<http://www.firehouse.com/news/11843098/fallen-ga-firefighters-colleagues-fought-hard-to-save-him>



Lt. Randy Parker

Photo credit: Courtesy photo

Haunted by images of flames, cries for help and the hopelessness of a firefighter trapped in a burning house, colleagues are now coping the best they can with the death of Lt. Randy Parker.

Crews suffering from burns and smoke inhalation fought valiantly to save the 46-year-old firefighter, who fell into the home's basement when a floor collapsed Wednesday night.

"He was in a very horrific environment," said Macon-Bibb County fire Chief Marvin Riggins, who described Parker as strong, courageous, computer savvy and witty.

"I thought a lot of Randy," an emotional Riggins said. "Randy was a great leader, always a team player. ... His faith was very strong."

Funeral arrangements were pending Thursday.

Parker's firefighting brethren deeply share the pain of grief and loss that spread throughout the community.

Passer-by Sandy Mathews Burney, who drove up on the fire at 2320 Fairview Drive, was so touched by what she witnessed Wednesday night, she returned Thursday.

"Just endless work, people, you know, the firemen, I guess holding their composure being that they had a man trapped inside of the house," Mathews Burney said. "Some hurt, you know, they worked at it to the end. They didn't give up."

After losing two family members in a 2006 blaze, she could not tear herself away from the scene.

She brought a folding chair from her car for one of the injured men and listened as others reassured him the firefighters did all they could to try to save Parker.

Off-duty firefighters, who rushed to the scene, joined crews pulling on a rope to free Parker from the debris. Five firefighters were hospitalized.

Glum faces fit the somber mood at Parker's Fire Station No. 7, where the flag flew at half-staff as the men gathered for breakfast Thursday morning.

"I think everybody is in a tailspin right now," said Sgt. Travis Veronee, who worked the opposite shift from Parker but saw him regularly at shift change. "He was a really good guy, hard working."

Investigators are still sorting out what happened, and a review of the incident will likely determine if any mistakes were made.

"They had some of the best trained guys out there," Veronee said. "I don't think there was anything anybody did wrong. It just happened."

District Chief Nathaniel Hall said the impact of the tragedy will linger.

"This is just a terrible thing," Hall said as he arrived at the scene Thursday morning. "We're just trying to come to grips with it."

Parker is the first firefighter to die fighting a fire in 2015 nationwide, according to the U.S. Fire Administration.

The last Macon-Bibb firefighter killed on duty was Capt. Will Rowe, who was crushed by a falling tree in Shirley Hills in 1997.

Fallen firefighters are listed on the Peace Officers Memorial on Mulberry Street.

Parker's name will be added to the list as a lasting reminder of his sacrifice.

People are invited to keep their porch light burning in Parker's memory.

He is survived by his wife, Sandi, and two sons, Andrew and Chandler.

Family members asked for some time to privately grieve before speaking publicly about Parker.

Parker joined the department in 1990, but Riggins really got to know him a couple years later.

Parker had been severely injured when he was hit by a vehicle while running. Riggins was impressed by the young firefighter's determination to heal.

In 2000, while still a private in the fire department, Parker's former wife was killed in a car accident on Interstate 75 in Monroe County.

He continued to rise through the ranks.

"I remember when he first came on, and he matured up to be a great firefighter, a great leader," Hall said.

Two years ago, Riggins tapped Parker to represent the department for United Way's fundraising efforts.

It was a role he relished.

The fire department's administrative assistant, Carlene Howard, said Parker was instrumental in raising money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

"He was my right-hand man for the golf tournament. He would beg for stuff," said Howard, who called him to catch up just days ago.

"We'll just have all our good memories of him. I know we have an angel looking down on us," she said.

Hall said the fire department is like a family. Grief will linger.

"With God's will, we'll get over this," Hall said. "We'll hurt for a while, but we will go on, but right now, we're going to come together."

[Top of the Document](#)

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State Probe Shows No Violations in Ind. LODD

<http://www.firehouse.com/news/11843097/probe-shows-no-safety-violations-in-new-carlisle-lodd>

State labor officials say an investigation did not uncover any safety violations in a New Carlisle firefighter's 2014 death.

Jamie Middlebrook, 41, died Aug. 5 after part of a ceiling collapsed on him while he was fighting an industrial fire at K-Fex Excavating & Trucking, just west of New Carlisle in LaPorte County.

The Indiana Occupational Safety and Health Administration did not uncover any violations, Robert Dittmer, a spokesman for the state Department of Labor, said in a statement. "The IOSHA investigation found all training records and training for all involved fully up to date," he said. "Further, inspectors confirmed all appropriate procedures were followed during the conduct of fighting the fire." Middlebrook and another New Carlisle firefighter, Matt O'Donnell, were trying to set up a large hose inside the burning industrial barn when the ceiling collapsed. O'Donnell suffered a broken ankle.

[Top of the Document](#)

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Fired Ala. EMS Worker Charged with Torching Station

<http://www.firehouse.com/news/11843141/fired-ala-ems-worker-charged-with-torching-station>

A suspect in a Madison County arson admitted to setting three suspicious fires in Clements and has been charged in a fourth Limestone County fire, authorities said Thursday.

On Tuesday, the Madison County Sheriff's Department arrested Eric Mitchell Hall, 25, of 14741 Chris Way, Athens, in connection with burning down an ambulance service station on Jeff Road in Madison.

Hall admitted during interrogation by a deputy state fire marshal to setting three fires Dec. 14-15 in the Chris Way Trailer Park where he lives, Capt. Stanley McNatt of the Limestone County Sheriff's Department said.

Hall is accused of setting a fire that destroyed a home on nearby Bell Road on the same night.

He denied setting that fire, McNatt said.

Limestone County issued warrants for Hall's arrest on two counts of first-degree arson and two counts of second-degree arson.

Hall is also charged with arson, third-degree burglary and breaking and entering a vehicle in Madison County, Sgt. Brian Coffman of the Madison County Sheriff's Department said.

Fired from his job with the Huntsville Emergency Medical Services Inc., Hall broke into a HEMS I ambulance Jan. 25 at its Jeff Road station and stole a medical bag with supplies, Coffman said.

The sergeant said Hall broke into the ambulance station on Feb. 7 while emergency responders were at a vehicle wreck and set the station on fire.

Hall is in the Madison County Detention Facility.

The HEMS I crew is temporarily working out of the Monrovia Volunteer Fire Station on Douglass Road.

[Top of the Document](#)

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Funds for SAFER, AFG, USFA Stalled in Senate

<http://www.firehouse.com/news/12044750/funds-for-safer-afg-usfa-stalled-in-senate>

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- As Congress prepares to head out of town for Presidents' Day recess, funding for fire grant programs remains in limbo.

Included in the DHS bill that is stalled in the Senate is money for SAFER and AFG as well as the USFA.

The proposal calls for \$680M, evenly split between SAFER and AFG, while the USFA is slated to receive \$44M.

Delays in funding the programs are not new, said David Finger, chief of legislative and regulatory affairs at the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC).

"Right now, we're about nine months behind in the 2014 program," he said, adding that stalls are commonplace.

A peer review committee -- comprised of firefighters from across the nation -- wrapped up work on reviewing AFG applications in January. So, awards won't be announced for a few months.

"Firefighters depend on the funds to help upgrade their equipment to enhance their readiness," Finger said.

The SAFER application period -- for 2014 grants -- is open now through 5 p.m. March 6.

While the House has passed its version of the DHS funding plan, the Senate has not. In the past few days, there has been talk of a continuing resolution that would prevent a shutdown of homeland security agencies.

"We're advocating for full year funding as everyone else is..."

President Obama's new budget -- released last week -- calls for reducing SAFER and AFG by \$5M each, while the USFA would see a \$2.5M cut.

Finger said the fire service organizations will be lobbying the need for the funds with the Congressional Fire Service Caucus. But, their work at present is to get the Senate to pass the current bill.

As the impasse continues, he added for departments that need the money it's making a difficult situation worse.

[Top of the Document](#)

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