



## CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION DEPARTMENT REPORT

**TO:** Matthew R. Schmitz, MPA - City Manager

**FROM:** Blake Hayward – Fire Chief

**DATE OF MEETING:** November 03, 2025

**ITEM TITLE:** Department Report – Fire Department

The Independence Fire Department has been extremely busy over the past couple of months! October is always one of our busiest times of the year with Fire Prevention Week, our Open House, station tours, and several community programs.

On top of that, our crews have remained active with emergency responses and ongoing training, ensuring we're ready to serve whenever the call comes in.

We're also excited to welcome a new member to our department — Firefighter Cooper McCurdy-Savago. Cooper joins us with prior fire experience and brings a great attitude and a strong desire to learn and serve. Please join us in welcoming her to the Independence Fire family!



K9 Shakespeare has been keeping busy this month, too! He's been an important part of our fire station tours and recently teamed up with the Independence Public Library for their Tales to Tails program — a reading event where kids can sign up to read to Shakespeare for 15 minutes at a time.

This partnership has been a great way to support young readers, promote fire safety education, and strengthen our connection with the community.

A big thank you to Laura, her staff, and the Library Board for inviting us to be part of such a great program and allowing us to work together to make a difference!



As we move toward the end of the year, we're winding down our 2025 training season with just a few sessions left on the calendar. Planning for our 2026 training schedule is already underway, and our members have shared some great ideas to keep training both engaging and practical — focused on the types of calls we respond to every day.

One key goal for next year is to include more business and community walk-throughs. This has been a request from both our members and local business owners, and it's a great opportunity to strengthen our knowledge of the community while improving our preparedness and response capabilities.

Finally, the Independence Fire Department currently has three grants pending review, and we're hoping to hear back by the end of November.

#### High-Pressure Air Bags:

We've applied for funding to purchase new high-pressure air bags, a critical tool used during vehicle extrications and rescue operations when heavy objects need to be lifted safely to remove a victim. These would complement our new battery-powered extrication tools and further enhance our rescue capabilities.



## Iowa DNR Fire Hose & Nozzle Grant:

We've also submitted a grant to the Iowa DNR for replacement fire hose and nozzles. These are some of our most frequently used tools, and the DNR's annual grant program helps fire departments across Iowa maintain safe, reliable firefighting equipment.

## Ballistic PPE Vests:

Our third grant request is for Ballistic PPE Vests. Earlier this year, our crews assisted on several law enforcement calls and quickly realized we were the only responders on scene without proper protective gear. These vests would help ensure firefighter safety during active shooter or hostile incident responses. The grant request includes eight vests, each equipped with medical supplies and rescue tools to support emergency operations in those high-risk situations.

