



News/Updates from the WI Department of Safety and Professional Services

Secretary Dan Hereth receives a 2023 Council of State Governments 20 Under 40 Award – The awards recognize 20 up-and-coming elected and appointed leaders from across the United States who exemplify strong leadership and a passion for public service. Hereth is the first state leader from Wisconsin to win the award. Criteria for the award include the ability to engage officials across party, departments, branch and/or state lines in meaningful ways to advance the common good; provide exceptional leadership to a state project, committee, chamber, commission, or special group; and serve as a champion of change and seek to enhance the lives of all constituents within a specific policy area.

License review times extremely low – At the time of this draft, Wisconsin DPS is reviewing new license application submissions in 3.5 calendar days. That number is even more impressive when considering the department issued more licenses in the first three quarters of 2023 than it did in any of the past five full years. License review times are updated in real time. You can find average review times and more information on our data dashboards, *Occupational Licensing: By the Numbers*, on the DPS public website.

Plan review times remain low – More than 1,000 plan reviews are submitted to Wisconsin DPS every month. The department has worked tirelessly to bring down plan review times, which were taking between 14 and 22 days at the end of last month, depending on the type of project. For comparison, in 2017-18, plan reviews consistently took 60-80 days. As part of the Evers Administration's commitment to transparency, DPS tracks plan review submissions and review times on its public website.

Investment in staff leads to drastically improved legal review times – In April 2022, DPS used American Rescue Plan Act funds to hire a project attorney. Later that year, the department hired two project paralegals. As a result, DPS reduced legal review times by 67% from a six-week average processing time in 2022 to a two-week average processing time in 2023.

New tool helps fire departments protect WI communities – Wisconsin DSPS launched a new tool in October that fire departments can use to identify and reduce fire risk in their respective communities. In addition to data on fire and EMS calls, the *Fire Safety Dashboards-Risk Reduction Tool* provides census-level data on housing conditions and demographics like age, number of people with disabilities, or number living in poverty. This information can help fire departments develop data-driven fire prevention programs that save lives. The dashboards are publicly available on the DSPS website.

DSPS distributes millions in fire dues funding - The department distributed more than \$28 million to Wisconsin fire departments this year through the Fire Dues program, which requires insurers to pay 2% of premiums collected for insurance against loss from fires. The Wisconsin Office of the Commissioner of Insurance collects the dues, and DSPS distributes the dues to cities, towns, and villages across the state according to a prescribed formula. The Fire Dues program is a significant source of funding for state fire departments, which use the money to buy and replace equipment, operate fire prevention programming, train crews and more. DSPS is proud to distribute the funding as part its mission to protect public safety.



DSPS Secretary-designee Dan Hereth presents ceremonial checks to Hartford Fire & Rescue and Southern Door Volunteer Fire Department, which received \$110,000 and \$23,000 respectively through the Fire Dues program this year.

DSPS updates Prescription Drug Monitoring Program - An updated version of the Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (WI ePDMP) launched on October 15. The multi-year enhancement project incorporated feedback from groups that use the tool, like prescribers, health care systems, law enforcement, pharmacies, and dispensers. Users should notice faster processing times, upgraded patient matching capacities and an enhanced user interface. The WI ePDMP helps combat the ongoing prescription drug abuse epidemic in Wisconsin by providing valuable information about monitored prescription drugs that are dispensed in the state, aiding healthcare professionals in prescribing and dispensing decisions.

DSPS increasing access to trades exams - In the latest example of the department seeking partnerships that expedite licensing in the state, DSPS announced an agreement with computer-based testing company Pearson

VUE. The partnership will increase trade testing locations in Wisconsin from four to 58. The partnership provides more flexibility, with test takers able to choose a location, date, and time that is more convenient for their schedule. That means more qualified professionals can take their exams and become credentialed more quickly.

DSPS, professional groups tackle long-overdue changes to plumbing code - The department worked with Wisconsin plumbers and the state Plumbing Code Advisory Committee to approve the first updates to Wisconsin plumbing code since 2009. DSPS Secretary-designee Dan Hereth touted it as a great example of the private sector and government working together to promote standards that protect public health. The code updates include increased bacterial control options in healthcare facilities, adoption of nationally recognized standards for water reuse, energy efficiency enhancements, and the addition of tankless water heaters.



Wisconsin DSPS Secretary-designee Dan Hereth joins representatives from Plumbers Local 75 and the Plumbing Mechanical Sheet Metal Contractors' Alliance after signing the first update to state plumbing code in nearly 15 years

Wisconsin leading collaborative efforts among Midwest states - Wisconsin DSPS hosted the first ever Midwest Occupational Licensing Summit in August, welcoming licensing leaders from across the region. The group spent two days exploring current and emerging issues in the regulation of occupational licenses. The collaborative conversations bore fruit in the form of a recent data-sharing agreement with Michigan. The review of license

applications can involve acquiring documents from other states. Agreements like this automate the secure exchange of required documentation, eliminate associated manual tasks, and speed up the collection of materials and approval of licenses.

DSPS opens applicants for Wisconsin Fund - The Wisconsin Fund is a program that provides financial assistance to homeowners and small businesses with a failing private onsite wastewater treatment system (POWTS), commonly called a septic system. Failing POWTS, even if still operating, are a health concern because they contaminate well and ground water with disease-causing bacteria and other microbes. Repairing or replacing these systems can easily cost several thousand dollars, a large financial burden for many homeowners and small businesses. Wisconsin Fund applications are now open and close on January 31, 2024. Anyone interested in this funding should contact their county or tribal government to find out if they are eligible and for help preparing grant applications.

****For more information about any of the projects/initiatives detailed above, please reach out to DSPS Legislative Liaison Michael Tierney at Michael.Tierney1@wisconsin.gov or 608-267-9794.*

Overview of Wisconsin DSPS

DSPS Mission: The mission of DSPS is to promote economic growth and stability while protecting the citizens of Wisconsin.

Description of Work: The Department of Safety and Professional Services (DSPS) provides policy coordination and administrative services to boards, committees, and councils. DSPS also oversees the regulation of credential holders, professional and industry standards, and safe construction of public and private buildings. DSPS includes five divisions:

- **The Division of Management Services** provides budget and finance, technology, and facilities management services to DSPS, which includes four field offices.
- **The Division of Policy Development** provides administrative support and policy guidance to professional regulatory boards, as well as consultation about continuing education and examination requirements for regulated professions. The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program and the Educational Approval Program are housed in this division.
- **The Division of Industry Services** performs inspections of commercial buildings, amusement rides, boilers, elevators, pressurized gas systems, and electrical systems. It also performs plan reviews of elevators, boilers, and private onsite wastewater treatment systems. In addition, this division is responsible for:
 - Auditing third-party and municipal inspection agencies.
 - Performing commercial building, plumbing, and fire suppression plan reviews

- Administering the Uniform Dwelling Code program and the federal HUD Manufactured Housing program
- Providing consultations and training to local building officials, as well as commercial and residential contractors.

Industry Services also administers the 2% Fire Dues program and provides consultation, support, and training to more than 800 fire departments throughout the state.

- **The Division of Professional Credential Processing** is responsible for all credential application processing, including determination of credential eligibility and credential renewal.
- **The Division of Legal Services and Compliance** is responsible for the complaint intake process, compliance monitoring, and a confidential program for impaired professionals. In addition, the Division conducts business compliance inspections and financial audits.

Funding: DSPS and board operations are funded through application, renewal, and examination fees, as well as fees associated with required reviews of building plans and other items regulated under the law. A fee schedule for the application and renewal of professional credentials is set by DSPS with legislative oversight. Examination and other DSPS fees are set by statute and administrative rule. DSPS is self-sustaining through the fees it generates and also directs some of its fee revenue annually to the general fund. The department needs legislative approval to spend any surplus generated from fee collection.