
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Bob Donovan
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Public Safety Threatened by Pending Fire Department "Brownouts"

*Public Safety Chair Alderman Bob Donovan Knocks Plan to Shelve Fire Crews, says
Barrett Administration also Culpable*

Alderman Bob Donovan said Milwaukee's interim fire chief is now backing away from a plan to "brownout" or shelve as many as six Milwaukee Fire Department crews for certain shifts starting later this month – a move the alderman said is akin to playing "Russian Roulette" with the safety of city residents.

The unprecedented move – crafted by MFD administration and ready to go into effect as early as December 27 – has been put aside after inquiries this week from Alderman Donovan and other Common Council members. "All I want for Christmas in our next fire chief is someone whose sole intent is fulfilling his or her sworn obligation to protect the health and safety of Milwaukee's citizens and firefighters – and not kissing the behind of the temporary occupant of the Mayor's Office," he said.

In this case the term "brownout" refers to eliminating a shift of a ladder company or engine company from a fire house that houses more than one company. In the event of an emergency medical call or structure fire in a brownout fire house's area, crews from an adjacent area or areas would need to respond to handle the call, Alderman Donovan said. "Imagine a call like a fire, or like a heart attack or stroke when mere seconds can mean the difference between life and death," he said. "Do you want those crews coming from a mile or two miles away – or do you want them coming from just several blocks away?"

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MFD Brownouts Drama/ADD ONE

Alderman Donovan said Council members adopted a 2010 city budget understanding that MFD would be subject to only two brownouts on certain shifts. This week, interim Chief Michael Jones confirmed that he was planning to institute six brownouts, Alderman Donovan said, but quickly backtracked after Barrett Administration officials indicated “no more than three” brownouts would occur. Neither the chief nor the city’s Budget Office would put the three brownouts plan in writing for him, the alderman said.

“It’s discouraging to me that the Council’s actions are apparently up for ‘interpretation’ by the administration and the fire department’s interim chief,” he said. “It’s essentially like playing ‘Russian Roulette’ with the safety of our citizens, with the acting chief hoping there are no house fires in a given area during a certain shift and during the height of the fire season.”

In the end, three brownouts is “three too many,” Alderman Donovan said. “And all of this brownout drama is coming from our mayor who has repeatedly said that public safety is his number one priority,” he said.

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