



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

Sixteen awards were presented to 76 firefighters in various categories. Listed in order of presentation. Firefighters know they are receiving an award but do not know which award they received until the launch date of the virtual ceremony.

Hanover Fire Department

Norman Knight Community Service Award: Deputy Chief Jason Cavallaro, Captain Fred Freeman, FF/EMT-P Shayne Blakeman, FF/EMT-P Joseph Centeio, FF/EMT-P Joseph Pacella, FF/EMT-P Sebastian Rivas, FF/EMT-P Richard Salvucci, and FF/EMT-P Kyle Stetler

In March of 2020, Deputy Chief Jason Cavallaro, Captain Fred Freeman, FF/EMT-P Shayne Blakeman, FF/EMT-P Joseph Centeio, FF/EMT-P Joseph Pacella, FF/EMT-P Sebastian Rivas, FF/EMT-P Richard Salvucci, and FF/EMT-P Kyle Stetler recognized the need to deliver COVID-19 testing directly to Hanover's most vulnerable residents, and developed a Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) program to accomplish it. As the pandemic was still emerging, this group of firefighters developed a mobile testing concept in collaboration with several other departments in their town, obtained the training necessary to conduct testing, applied successfully for a grant that provided equipment needed to deliver testing, and received a license to conduct the program from the MA Department of Public Health. Testing began on April 14, and by the end of June, the team had tested over 100 patients. In September, the program expanded to include testing of school teachers, staff, and symptomatic students. By the end of September, over 1,000 tests had been conducted. While a COVID-19 outbreak within the fire department caused significant illness and absence at one point during this time period, a sense of duty and service led them to press ahead with this important work as soon as it was safe to do so.



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

Hanson Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Chief Jerome A. Thompson Jr., Lieutenant Keith Wilson, FF Timothy Royer, FF Gary Somers, and FF Thomas White

On New Year's Eve 2019 at approximately 10:40 p.m., the Hanson Fire Department responded to two people who were in the water on an open section of Maquan Pond, which was partially covered in ice. When they arrived, they heard the victims shouting and learned they had fallen out of a kayak about 10 minutes prior. The men were clinging to the ice edge about 100 yards from shore, but unable to get out of the water and up onto the ice. FF Gary Somers and FF Thomas White donned rescue suits and began to cross the ice, while Chief Jerome Thompson Jr. and FF Timothy Royer launched a rescue boat. The ice was too thick for the rescue boat, but too thin to hold the weight of FF Somers and FF White. When the men said they could not hold on any longer and were going to slip underwater, FF Somers and FF White aggressively broke the ice with their elbows to create a path. With only seconds to spare, they reached the victims, securing the first to the rescue sled, and grabbing the second, who had just slipped below the surface, by hand. The two rescuers and two victims were pulled to shore by Lt. Wilson and four members of the Hanson Police Department who had arrived to assist.



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

Attleboro Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Captain David Hardman, FF Carl Aveiro, and FF Brian Sweeney.

At 3:00 a.m. on March 19, 2020, the Attleboro Fire Department was called to a fire in a 3-story residential structure with one victim trapped on the second floor. Using directions provided by dispatch, the crew of Ladder 1 was able to locate the man quickly. He was in imminent danger due to heavy smoke, but they quickly raised the ladder and removed him from the structure to safety.

Reading Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Captain Mark Dwyer, Lieutenant Scott Myette, FF Eric Bagby, FF Robert Beck, FF Paul Dalton, FF Steven DeBay, FF Robert Forsey, FF-P Derek Loftus, FF Thomas McCarthy, and FF Brian Roche.

On February 24, 2020 at 3:30 a.m., the Reading Fire Department was dispatched to a fire in a 12-unit apartment building. Immediately upon arrival, Capt. Dwyer began evacuating the building, FF McCarthy and FF Dalton began a transitional attack on the fire, and FF Bagby and FF DeBay entered the third floor apartment with a hand line. They found one bedroom fully involved and the whole apartment filled with smoke. They immediately located an unconscious man and removed him to the hallway with the assistance of Capt. Dwyer. At this time, Lt. Myette, FF Loftus, and FF Roche arrived at the third floor landing. Lt. Myette and FF Bagby re-entered the apartment and found an unconscious woman. They carried her down the stairs and found she was in cardiac arrest. FF Bagby began CPR, while Lt.



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

Myette returned to the third floor with a Stokes basket. There, FF Beck, FF Loftus, FF Forsey, and FF Roche carried the man down the stairs, after which FF Loftus, FF DeBay, and FF Bagby took over treatment and transported him to Lahey Hospital and Medical Center. A mutual aid ambulance transported the woman to the hospital shortly afterwards. While the male victim survived and was released from the hospital after 14 days of intensive care, the female victim passed away two days later.

Fitchburg Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Deputy Chief Anthony C. Marrama, Captain Chad M. Couretmanche, Lieutenant Andrew K. Roy, FF Jeffrey Boudreau, FF Kenneth Hollums, FF Skyler Kozloski, FF Dean P. Osgood, FF Kristy C. Pappas, FF Michael J. Pawlak, FF Yona Vaughan, and FF Bill R. Vautour.

Shortly after 9:00 a.m. on October 14, 2019, the Fitchburg Fire Department was dispatched to a call for smoke in a 3-story residential structure on Holt Street. They found heavy smoke venting from the second story windows, and a frightened woman trapped on the third floor. While two members of Engine 4 brought a hose line to the seat of the fire on the second floor, a third climbed a ladder that had been put in place by nearby contractors to the third floor window from where the trapped victim could be heard yelling. As the window the woman needed to exit was very small, two firefighters from Tower Ladder 3 climbed a second ladder and entered an adjoining room in the third floor apartment. From there, they battled through heavy smoke to locate her and help her out the window. She was helped down the ladder by the waiting member of Engine 4. A second hose



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

line brought to the third floor apartment by the Rescue 3 crew held the fire back long enough for the woman to be rescued successfully.

Chicopee Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Deputy Chief Wayne Lemay, Captain Peter Jerusik, Lieutenant Nicholas Lacasse, Lieutenant Daniel Sousa, FF Jon Fisher, FF Donald Grey, FF Steven Laurin, FF Zachary Pirog, and FF Stephan Willett.

At 2:45 p.m. on December 28, 2019, the Chicopee Fire Department assisted with a search for two missing children. The frantic parents provided firefighters with a social media video the children had posted just before they went missing, showing that they were on the ice above the Chicopee River. Capt. Peter Jerusik was able to use landmarks in the video to approximate the location it was taken and identify a coinciding break in the ice shelf. As this information was being developed, FF Stephan Willett and FF Zachary Pirog were already searching the shoreline; Lt. Daniel Sousa and FF Steven Laurin were donning rescue suits; and Lt. Nicholas Lacasse, FF Donald Grey, and FF Jon Fisher were launching a rescue boat. Despite tenuous ice conditions and dangerous moving water beneath them, Lt. Sousa and FF Laurin carefully pushed out towards the suspected entry point at the edge of the ice shelf. Lt. Sousa entered the 10-foot deep water, battling the current and avoiding entanglement in numerous tree limbs. He was able to locate the first victim quickly and transferred the child to the crew on the rescue boat. The boat crew began CPR while speeding back to an awaiting ambulance at the boat ramp. Due to river conditions, Lt. Lacasse had to exit the boat and enter the freezing water on several occasions to push it through sand bars to return to the boat ramp. The search for the second



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

child continued at a torrid pace throughout the rest of the day, with members rotating through time in the water looking for him. Unfortunately, the first victim passed away at the hospital the following day. Divers recovered the second victim from beneath the ice several days later.

Attleboro Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Deputy Chief Dennis Perkins, Lieutenant Timothy Infante, Lieutenant Bruce Tondreau, FF Marcio Barcelos, FF/EMT-P Ryan Bielawa, FF Brian Dubuc, FF/EMT-P Cameron Eames, FF/EMT-P Matthew Ethier, FF/EMT-P Justin Jackson, FF Russell Sanford, FF Brian Sweeney, and FF/EMT-P Nicholas Walker.

Just after 2:30 a.m. on August 24, 2019, the Attleboro Fire Department responded to a fire involving an overturned vehicle on South Main Street with one person trapped. They found the vehicle on its side against a concrete wall, fully involved in fire. With no time to spare, Engine 5 began fighting the fire; Ladder 1 stabilized and ventilated the vehicle; Rescue 1 began providing medical care to the unconscious and critically injured patient. After extinguishing the fire, the group was able to remove the windshield, cut the roof off the vehicle, and extricate the victim to an awaiting ambulance. From the time the call was received to the time the victim was put into the ambulance was just 16 minutes.

New Bedford Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Captain Kurt Houghton, Lieutenant Michael Dillon, Lieutenant Robert Ferreira, FF Joshua Charbonneau, FF Robert Kirby, and FF Stephen Mourao.



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

Late in the afternoon on December 28, 2019, a driver on Route 195 in New Bedford reported a fire in a two-family home. Firefighters found the fire was already burning out of control, with flames venting from windows on three sides of the second story apartment. Neighbors reported that an elderly man was trapped inside. Lt. Michael Dillon and FF Stephen Mourao immediately advanced a hand line to the front door of the 2nd floor apartment, while Lt. Robert Ferreira, FF Joshua Charbonneau, and FF Robert Kirby from Ladder 8 rushed to begin search and rescue operations. Despite encountering heavy fire conditions, they advanced further into the apartment and located and extricated the man who was delivered to awaiting EMS. Though in cardiac arrest when rescued, the elderly man was resuscitated by paramedics but later succumbed to his injuries. Captain Kurt Houghton, commanding the first fire of his career, led and coordinated this challenging but well-executed rescue.

New Bedford Fire Department

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct (Group): Lieutenant Derek DaCosta, Lieutenant Antonio Miraglia, and FF Richard McCue, and FF Matthew Perry.

Just after midnight on May 20, 2020, Engine 7 and Engine 9 of the New Bedford Fire Department responded to a structure fire in a 2-story multi-family dwelling. Upon arrival, they were informed that a single occupant was trapped on the first floor. Lt. Derek CaCosta and FF Richard McCue initiated an interior attack on the fire, while Lt. Antono Miraglia and FF Matthew Perry began searching for the victim. They located a woman near the rear door of the apartment suffering from significant 2nd degree burns and severe smoke inhalation. Lt. Miraglia and FF Perry removed her from the apartment and



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

immediately initiated CPR, before her care was transitioned to New Bedford EMS Paramedics. She later made a full recovery.

Rockland Fire Department

Medal of Valor: *Capt. Jason Fricker and FF Michael Tracy*

Governor's Citation for Meritorious Conduct: *FF Richard Furlong Sr.*

Just after midnight on January 2, 2020, the Rockland Fire Department received multiple calls for a residential building fire on East Water Street. With half of the six-person shift of firefighters at a separate medical call, just Capt. Jason Fricker, FF Michael Tracy, and FF Richard Furlong Sr. responded. They found a 3-story building showing smoke, with interior conditions rapidly deteriorating. Capt. Fricker and FF Tracy entered the building and encountered heavy smoke at the second floor landing. As they were about to enter the second floor apartment where fire was heaviest, they heard a moaning above them. FF Tracy climbed the stairs, and found a victim who lost consciousness. With Capt. Fricker holding back the fire to preserve an escape route, FF Tracy was able to extricate the woman down the stairs to the entry landing, where FF Furlong and Rockland Police Officers gave her oxygen and emergency medical care. Though exhausted from the rescue, Capt. Fricker and FF Tracy immediately re-entered the building to search for additional victims. As they again reached the second floor landing, they encountered impassable smoke and heat conditions, and were ordered out of the building by the fire chief who had just arrived. The fire eventually reached five alarms and displaced 20 residents, but all survived. The victim rescued by Capt. Fricker and FF Tracy was discharged from the hospital within hours and made a full recovery.



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

New Bedford Fire Department

Medal of Valor: Lieutenant Kevin Cormier and FF Christopher Mount

On the afternoon of October 22, 2019, Lt. Kevin Cormier and FF Christopher Mount of the New Bedford Fire Department responded to a working fire in a 3-family dwelling fire on Coffin Avenue. Recognizing that there was no time to wait for more help to arrive, they began a search of the building despite not having a hose line available. Upon reaching the third floor, they overcame heavy smoke and fire conditions to rescue an elderly woman who was trapped in the building. They carried her down the stairs to safety to the arriving engine crew, and returned to the third floor to extinguish the fire. Unfortunately, she succumbed to her injuries the following day at the hospital.

Fitchburg Fire Department

Medal of Valor: FF Roger Ortiz

At 5:40 p.m. on September 22, 2019, the Fitchburg Fire Department was dispatched to a fire caused by a series of explosions in a 22-unit condo building on Beekman Street. Upon arrival, they found heavy fire conditions, and were alerted by dispatch to a woman who was trapped on the third floor. She told firefighters that she was about to jump from the window due to intolerable heat and smoke conditions. The only ladder immediately available was 3 or 4 feet too short, and had to be placed several feet to the side of the window due to ground terrain. Recognizing that there was no time to wait for a longer ladder to arrive, FF Roger climbed it anyways. Once he reached the window, he was able to persuade the woman to stand on his



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

shoulders while he slowly lowered her down so that her feet could reach the top rung of the ladder. Once her feet were on the ladder, he climbed back up and assisted her down to safety.

Worcester Fire Department

Medal of Honor: Lieutenant Jason Menard

On November 13, 2019 at approximately 12:58 a.m., the Worcester Fire Department was dispatched to a three-story residential structure fire at 7 Stockholm Street. The temperature was 12° Fahrenheit, with winds gusting to 40 m.p.h. Firefighters learned a third floor been able to escape, but that her infant remained in the apartment, unconscious. Lt. Jason Menard, responding as the company officer on Ladder 5, led a primary search of the second and third floors, with no results. After changing air bottles, Lt. Menard and four firefighters re-entered the structure to clear the second and third floor rear exits of debris. As the group climbed the stairwell, tremendous heat from below trapped them between the second and third floors. Three of the firefighters were able to escape directly through the rising fire, though all received first and second degree burns. Lt. Menard and one additional firefighter were trapped above the fire. After initially seeking shelter while awaiting rescue, intolerable heat conditions led the two to attempt to escape onto the roof. In the process of this attempt, Lt. Menard forced the other firefighter out a third floor window, saving his life. Ultimately, Lt. Menard was unable to get himself out of the building before the heat from the fire overcame him.

Lt. Menard was hired by the Worcester Fire Department on October 25, 2010, and promoted to Lieutenant on October 14, 2018. He passed away on



2020 Firefighter of the Year Award Honorees

November 13, 2019 at the age of 39, leaving behind his wife Tina and three children, Joshua, Hailee, and Morgan.

In recognition that he sacrificed his own life and demonstrated uncommon bravery by using his final moments to save the life of a fellow firefighter, Lt. Jason Menard was awarded the Medal of Honor, posthumously.