

24th Annual Firefighter of the Year Heroic Awards

December 19, 2013

2013 “Firefighter of the Year” Award Recipients

The Governor and the Secretary will present 16 awards: the Norman Knight Award for Excellence in Community Service, 6 Individual Awards for Meritorious Conduct; 4 Group Awards for Meritorious Conduct to teams of firefighters; and 5 Medals of Valor to individual firefighters. The Fire Marshal’s Award will be presented to three fire departments and to 24 individual firefighters for their responses to the Marathon bombings and the events that followed.

Norman Knight Award for Excellence in Community Service

Lynn Fire Department

Lt. Jose Israel Gonzalez

Since September 2006, Israel Gonzalez has been the Lieutenant in charge of the Lynn Fire Prevention Unit. In this role, he is responsible for fire code enforcement and public fire education. As the fire code enforcement officer, he has developed relationships with other city departments, the business community, and property owners, to promote safer living conditions in Lynn. He also works closely with the schools implementing the Student Awareness of Fire Education or S.A.F.E. Program.

Lynn is a city of immigrants including Lt. Gonzalez himself who was born in Mexico and is completely bi-lingual. He uses his language skills and cultural competency to reach deeply into the community with fire safety messages. With the assistance of the local cable provider, he has developed bi-lingual television programs.

Lt. Gonzalez was instrumental in attaining a grant this year that provides funding for line firefighters to install smoke alarms in 1,000 homes and to conduct an extensive public awareness campaign. In the first six weeks they installed alarms in 400 homes and found that many of the smoke alarms they replaced did not work. Many were older than 10-years, the expected life span of a smoke alarm, and some were 40 years old. Key to his successful outreach was building trust with a large network of community agencies to encourage people to request the smoke alarms. The public awareness campaign utilizes billboards, newspaper ads, and television spots to promote safety messages.

Individual Citations of Meritorious Conduct

Acushnet Fire Department

FF Thomas Farland

FF Paul Frysinger

House Fire w/ Rescue

FF Adam Hebert

On January 6, 2013 at 23:05, Firefighter Thomas Farland, as the only firefighter on duty, paged for off-duty and call members of the department to respond to a reported structure fire. Farland then drove the first due engine to the scene. Upon arrival, he was met by Firefighters Paul Frysinger and Adam Hebert. Thick smoke was showing from a second floor bedroom window. The three firefighters forced their way into the house and up to the top of the stairs while knocking down the fire. Hearing cries for help, they moved off line to conduct a search and found the victim in the bathroom. She had suffered burns to her feet and lower legs. Firefighters Frysinger and Hebert removed the woman from the bathroom, and with Firefighter Farland providing protection with the hose line, carried her out to safety and medical transport to Rhode Island Hospital by Boston Med Flight.

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Firefighter Adam Hebert, 19, was responding to this fire as the youngest member of the Acushnet Fire Department. This is only the second time in 21 years that someone was rescued from a burning house in Acushnet, and it was from the same house. Alfred Robichaud, who recently retired as a captain, rescued a woman in that same house in 1994.

Holden Fire Department
Lt. David Chapin

Lt. Barry Tupper

Man Trapped in Cement Silo
FF/Medic Paul Pierce

On July 12, 2012 at 8:38 p.m., the Holden Fire Department was dispatched to RJ Paquette Concrete where a worker was trapped in a cement silo. Emergency personnel found the victim surrounded by cement powder up to his chest, situated about 30 feet from the bottom of the 50-foot silo. The Holden tower ladder was raised to the top of the silo, allowing two firefighters to enter the silo and reach the victim. They gave him oxygen and began to stabilize his situation in order to keep him from being buried further. The silo was cut open using acetylene torches so that material surrounding the trapped worker could be removed. The rescue was done very methodically for the safety of both the victim and the rescuers as the confined space and extreme July heat made for a very hazardous environment. The fine cement dust made the risk of further collapse imminent. The victim was safely raised from the silo, placed in a transport basket and lowered to waiting paramedics on the ground.

Group Citations for Meritorious Conduct

Chelmsford Fire Department
Capt. Daniel Manley
FF Daniel Ubele
FF William Keohane
FF Edward Casey

FF/TRS Jessie Foster
FF John Reid
FF Joshua Turner
FF Evan Boudreau

Fatal Fire and Multiple Rescues
FF Leo Manley
FF Michael Chiasson
FF Patrick Daley
FF Chhunly Prak

January 5, 2013 was a freezing and snowy night when the Chelmsford Fire Department was dispatched to a fire at a three-story apartment building at 11:08 p.m.. Arriving at the 21-unit complex, the first responding engine reported nothing showing. Upon further investigation, they discovered smoke coming from the third floor in the rear of the building. The crew from Engine 1 pulled one unresponsive victim out of the burning unit and started CPR. Unaware that the fire had traveled through an open attic the ceiling collapsed onto the rescuers and victim.

At the same time, two residents were discovered trapped on the 3rd floor balcony next to the unit where the fire started. Firefighters repositioned the ladder truck and rescued them. Firefighters continued to evacuate multiple residents, as several people thought this was a false alarm. More residents were found stranded on another third floor balcony on the opposite side of the building, also unable to escape the fast-moving fire. A ladder rescue reached all of the victims. The investigation, revealed that several occupants had tried to put out the fire themselves before calling to report it. Sadly, they became trapped by the flames and two perished.

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Gloucester Fire Department

Capt. Joseph Aiello

FF Jonathon Sanger

FF James Hannon

FF Robert Rivas

FF Frank LeClerc

FF James Burke

Fatal Fire, Victim Rescue

FF Charles Scola

FF Paul Hudson

On April 9, 2013 at 20:38, the Gloucester Fire Department responded to a two-family house fire. Police officers on scene had attempted to enter the second floor without success due to the extreme heat and thick smoke. A 17-year-old youth was found on the front stairs of the house and reported that his 15-year-old sister was trapped in a rear bedroom.

Capt. Aiello, and firefighters Scola, Burke, and Sanger of Engine 1 stretched a hose line through the front door. In full personal protective gear, they ascended the stairs to the second floor and they encountered extreme heat, heavy smoke and fire conditions extending from the room of origin. Simultaneously, the ladder crew raised a 24-foot ladder to the second floor rear bedroom window where the girl was reported to be trapped. Firefighter Rivas, without the benefit of a hose line, entered the bedroom through the window and was met by thick smoke and high heat. Almost immediately upon entering the rear bedroom, Firefighter Sanger found the unconscious and unresponsive girl. With the assistance of Captain Aiello, Firefighters Rivas and Burke removed her from the building. Sadly, she did not survive.

Marshfield Fire Department

Capt. Anthony Buccuzzo

FF Tobin Williams

Lt. Craig Robinson

Rescue of Trapped Firefighter

FF John Taylor

Scituate Fire Department

FF John Bulman

Capt. Alfred Elliot

FF Robert McDonough

FF Raymond Sanborn

FF Eric Norlin

On November 6, 2012 at 1:25 p.m., Marshfield Fire received a call for mutual aid from Scituate Fire for a building fire on Humarock Beach. The fire was clearly visible over two miles away from the Sea Street Bridge. The 2-1/2 story beachfront home was fully involved in fire upon arrival and within an hour the quick moving fire, fanned by strong winds, spread to two more homes. Firefighters were working on the second home, breaching the ceiling to gain access to the attic when, without warning, the roof collapsed knocking four firefighters to the floor. Three were able to scramble through void spaces from beneath the burning rafters and debris however, Lt. Joseph Kalinowski was unable to extricate himself from the collapse.

After the Mayday was sounded, Marshfield Capt Tony Buccuzzo, Firefighter Taylor and Scituate Firefighter Eric Norlin worked removing furniture and digging through flaming debris in the face of deteriorating conditions and the threat of another collapse. With great effort, the crew rolled back a section of burning roof rafter exposing Lt. Kalinowski's tank and personal flashlight. They were able to extract him and drag him to rescue personnel on the deck.

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Medals of Valor

Boston Fire Department

FF Marc Hayhurst

Fire w/ Rescue

In the middle of a snowstorm on February 9, 2013 just before midnight, Ladder Company 6 responded to a call for heavy fire showing, with reports of a person trapped on the second floor. Responding firefighters immediately struck a second alarm then proceeded to the second floor, before hand lines could be placed into position, to search for the trapped person. Meanwhile, Firefighter Marc Hayhurst, driver of Ladder 6, positioned the truck to throw the aerial ladder to the roof. Firefighter Hayhurst, through limited visibility, noticed an arm hanging from the window of the third floor dormer. He positioned the ladder, and climbed it to find the nearly unconscious victim. Without the benefit of a hose line, Firefighter Hayhurst entered the building through the window, and positioned the man so he could pull him through the window and down the ladder to safety. The victim's pants were on fire, and had suffered burns to his lower extremities. It was later determined that this man was the same victim they had originally been searching for on the second floor.

Norwell Incident

Chelsea Fire Department

Motor Vehicle Fire w/ Rescue Off-Duty

Captain Edward McGarry

While commuting to work early on the morning of October 22, 2012, Chelsea Fire Capt. McGarry, came upon a vehicle in the median of Route 3 in Norwell that had crashed into several trees and was fully involved in fire. Grabbing his boots and throwing on his fire coat, Capt. McGarry jumped a fence and ran to investigate the wreck. Other bystanders told him there was no one in the car. Realizing that a woman was trapped inside with her legs stuck under the dashboard, Capt. McGarry quickly retrieved an axe from his car and without thinking about his own safety, went to work pulling back the door and window frame to carefully free her pinned legs. Capt. McGarry removed her through the window feet first, just as the car burst into flames. Even though he had suffered burns to his hands and significant smoke inhalation, Capt. McGarry continued to provide care for the victim until sufficient resources arrived on the scene.

Hull Incident

Weymouth FF John Higgins

Fire w/ Rescue Off-duty

Quincy FF Michael J. Eastwick

On February 11, 2013, the Northeast region was in the midst of recovering from a fierce blizzard that dumped more than 2-feet of snow on the area. It left, many roads impassable for days, fire hydrants buried under mountains of snow and ice, and more than 200,000 residents without power. While off duty this day, Weymouth Firefighter John Higgins Quincy Firefighter Mike Eastwick were traveling through Hingham when they observed a single family home with thick smoke pouring out of the basement. They both heard a person inside calling for help and there were no emergency vehicles at the scene yet. Using forcible entry techniques to penetrate the locked front door, they immediately encountered dense, toxic smoke. Instinctively, and in spite of extreme temperatures, low visibility, and no protective equipment, Firefighter Higgins

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crawled toward the terrified woman's voice, found her and ultimately pulled her to the safety of her front yard. Firefighters Higgins and Eastwick immediately provided first aid to the victim who became hysterical about the fact that her beloved dog was still in the home. The two men then made several unsuccessful attempts to re-enter the now heavily involved structure.

An explosion occurred only seconds after they had prevented the woman from re-entering the house herself, surely saving her life for the second time. Once the Hingham Fire Department arrived, Firefighters Higgins and Eastwick provided an accurate and first hand assessment of the smoke and fire conditions of the scene, and status of the occupants of the home. This information prevented unnecessary risk to fellow firefighters that additional re-entry attempts would have caused.

Watertown Fire and Rescue

Lt. Arthur Geswell

FF James Caruso

FF Patrick Menton

FF Douglas Wood

FF Timothy Donovan

In the early morning hours of Friday, April 19, 2013, the Tsarnaev brothers entered Watertown after allegedly murdering MIT Police Officer Sean Collier and car-jacking an occupied vehicle in Cambridge. Armed with a handgun and multiple improvised explosive devices, including a pressure cooker bomb similar to those detonated at the Marathon finish line, the two were encountered by Watertown Police patrol units. Several other law enforcements units arrived and responded to the gun battle. Among them were Massachusetts state police, Cambridge and Boston police, and the MBTA Transit police.

The bombing suspects detonated several IEDs during the gun battle, yet several others remained undetonated in the street. One suspect sustained multiple gunshot wounds in the intense shootout and was then struck by the second suspect when attempting to flee the scene in their vehicle. Watertown Fire and Rescue responded to the call for medical assistance. Lt. Geswell, Firefighters Wood and Donovan were unable to access the scene by ambulance, so gathered their EMS gear and walked to the patient, some 100 yards away.

In order to reach the downed suspect, these EMTs had to pass unexploded IEDs. They advanced without body armor or weapons for self-protection while the whereabouts of the second suspect was still unknown, to treat the victim. Firefighters Patrick Menton and James Caruso were responding to the scene in Rescue 1 when they heard radio chatter indicating a police officer was down. They too decided to access the scene on foot, without protective armor or weapons. They met up with police officers who were carrying the critically wounded Transit Officer Richard Donohue.

Officer Donohue had sustained a gunshot wound, causing massive bleeding. Menton and Caruso moved quickly to transport Officer Donohue, who was without a pulse and had lost a lot of blood, to Mount Auburn Hospital, performing CPR en route. The fast actions and quick thinking of Firefighters Menton and Caruso were paramount in the survival of Officer Donohue.

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State Fire Marshal's Award

Entire Boston, Cambridge and Watertown Fire Departments

April 15-19, 2013

Chief John Hasson, Chief Gerald R. Reardon, Chief Mario Orangio

These fire departments were honored for their heroic on-duty responses to extraordinarily horrific events in Boston on April 15, Cambridge on April 18, and Watertown April 19, 2013.

Beverly Fire Department

April 15, 2013

Deputy Peter O'Connor

Lt. Eric Fowler

Lt. Ryan W. Laracy

Lt. Mathew J. Kowalski

Lt. Donald B. Philpot

FF Michael D. Halloran

FF Jonathan M. Palm

FF Scott A. Perkins

Beverly firefighters were engaged in volunteer work near the finish line. They assisted the injured and removed security fence allowing access to the injured.

Brockton Fire Department

April 15, 2013

FF/EMT Donald Gazerro

Brockton FF/EMT Donald Gazerro was off-duty watching the finish of race and treated victims of the bombing on Boylston Street.

Cambridge Fire Department

Lt./Medic Jeremy Walsh

April 15-19, 2013

Lt. Walsh was dispatched to finish line on mutual aid to assist with triage of patients. Later responded to Officer Collier shooting in Cambridge and again to Watertown with Cambridge Police Department's Special Response team.

Cambridge Fire Department

April 15, 2013

Lt. Michael Francis

Lt. Christopher Haynes

FF Todd Koen

FF David Croak

FF Peter Melo

FF Matthew McDonald

FF Darryn DeGrace

FF Howard Smith

FF Richard Feliciano

FF David Puopolo

Cambridge firefighters volunteer each year at the Boston Marathon finish line and were first to respond to the explosions, tearing down fencing and rendering immediate response to victims

Lynn Fire Department

FF/Medic Mathew Patterson

April 15, 2013

Lynn FF/Medic Mathew Patterson was off duty in Abe & Louis restaurant and steered patrons out back of restaurant. He assisted bombing victim Jane Richards.

Salem Fire Department

Capt Dennis Levasseur

April 15, 2013

Capt Dennis Levasseur was off-duty watching the Marathon from the bleachers. After the explosions he assisted clearing spectators off the stands and out of the area, before tearing barricades and assisting first responders with patient care.

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Stoughton Fire Department

Capt. Robert O'Donnell

April 15, 2013

Capt. Robert O'Donnell was off-duty waiting for his son to finish the Marathon. He jumped the fence to assist victims and applied tourniquets. He is also an emergency room nurse.

Massport Fire Department

Lt. Michael Ward

April 15, 2013

Lt. Michael Ward was off-duty watching the Marathon near the location of the second explosion. He assisted with caring for the critically injured.