

**2018 “Firefighter of the Year” Award Recipients
Alphabetically by Fire Department**

The Governor and the Secretary presented 23 awards: one Norman Knight Award for Excellence in Community Service, one Excellence in Leadership Award, one Individual Awards for Meritorious Conduct, seven Group Awards for Meritorious Conduct to teams of firefighters, 12 Medals of Valor to individual firefighters, and one Medal of Honor to Montgomery Fire Chief Stephen Frye, posthumously. The Stephen D. Coan Fire Marshal Award was presented to the Northwestern Youth Fire Intervention Response, Education and Safety Partnership (NoFires), a community response to youth-set fires.

ABINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FIRE, FATALITY

Nominee(s):

Captain Kevin Finch
Firefighter Matthew Croall

Firefighter Derek Haimaidi
Firefighter Robert Neumeister

Award(s): Group Citation

It was Christmas Eve, and members of the Abington Fire Department responded to a fire at the Chestnut Glen Senior Housing complex. Upon arrival, the incident quickly escalated from a working fire to a largescale search and rescue involving mutual aid from five neighboring communities. Firefighters encountered extreme heat and called for a second alarm and ambulances. Luckily, crews were able to evacuate 47 residents safely, including four forcible entries. A medical triage center was set up in an adjacent building to evaluate the mostly elderly residents who had been exposed to the smoke and cold weather. Four residents were taken to area hospitals, and one individual lost his life. The cause was the improper disposal of mini-cigars that ignited on an upholstered recliner.

AYER FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FIRE, FATALITY

Nominee(s):

Captain Jeremy Januskiewicz
Lieutenant John Bresnahan

Firefighter Brenton Bourne
Firefighter Tyler Schwabe

Award(s): Valor

On March 23, Engine 2, consisting of career and volunteer firefighters, responded to a call for an explosion at a commercial building housing a company that makes industrial vacuum furnaces. When Engine 2 arrived, they saw heavy smoke and were told a worker was still inside. Without hesitation, firefighters entered the burning building and stretched a 200-foot hand line through a door. They found the worker 200-feet inside the building, badly burned and tangled in debris. Firefighters used a Stokes basket to remove him and took him to Nashoba Valley Medical Center and then via medical flight to UMASS Medical Center. The crew re-entered the building and extinguished the fire. The explosion occurred during a test of

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a vacuum furnace. Although the fire reached four alarms and required mutual aid from surrounding towns, the rescue was executed within ten minutes of the alarm. Unfortunately, the worker succumbed to his injuries during the flight to UMASS Medical Center.

**CENTERVILLE-OSTERVILLE-MARSTON MILLS
FIRE DISTRICT**

TECHNICAL RESCUE

Nominee(s):

Captain Thomas J. Burchell
Lieutenant Eric Bengston
Lieutenant Thomas Goodearl
Firefighter David Gelinis
Firefighter Zachary Hunter
Firefighter John McGonigle

Firefighter Michael Perry
Firefighter Charles Riley
Firefighter Christopher Rogers
Firefighter Ryan Scott
Firefighter Jason Travis

Award(s): Citation, Valor (Burchell)

On the morning of January 27, Group 4 responded to Paddy’s Pond in Barnstable for a report of a person who had fallen through the ice. Captain Thomas Burchell was first to arrive and saw a woman 100-yards from shore struggling to keep her head afloat and panicking. With no back up in sight and a Barnstable police officer holding his rope, Captain Burchell donned a survival suit and started out on the ice. Due to recent warm weather, the ice was too weak to walk on, so he got there by repeatedly falling through the ice and hoisting himself up and out of the water dozens of times until he reached the woman. When the rest of group 4 arrived, Firefighter Michael Perry donned a survival suit and he and Captain Burchell held the woman’s head above water and loaded her onto a rescue board. When the three arrived onshore, the woman was hand carried to a waiting ambulance and brought to Cape Cod Hospital where she survived. Two firefighters were treated for mild hypothermia onsite.

**CENTERVILLE-OSTERVILLE-MARSTON MILLS
FIRE DISTRICT**

TECHNICAL RESCUE

Nominee(s):

Captain Richard Sargent
Lieutenant Christopher Adams
Lieutenant Enrique Arrascue
Lieutenant Jason Davern
Lieutenant Eric Sabatinelli
Firefighter Richard Anderson
Firefighter Michael Carney
Firefighter Edward Dalbec

Firefighter David Ferola
Firefighter Zachary Hunter
Firefighter Shawn Lehane
Firefighter Tom Long
Firefighter Matthew Malone
Firefighter Scott Mullin
Firefighter Michael Simmons
Firefighter Adam Travers
FPO Michael Grossman

Award(s): Citation, Valor (Arrascue, Davern)

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On April 12, 2018, members of Centerville-Osterville-Marston Mills Fire District Group 1 responded to 109 Blueberry Lane in Marston Mills to a report of “a police officer down”. Sadly, responding to scenes of violence is the new normal and firefighters are now training and prepared for these events.

Lt. Davern arrived first and faced a chaotic, still unfolding scene. Yarmouth Sergeant Gannon and his dog, Nero, had both been shot, and were still in the house with the suspect. With no protective ballistic gear and limited EMS equipment, Lt. Davern entered the home protected by a Barnstable police officer. He tried but was unable to remove Sergeant Gannon from the house alone. When Lt. Arrascue arrived on the ambulance, together they removed the wounded officer from the so-called “hot zone” – while the suspect was still in the house with his whereabouts unknown.

COMM firefighters met them at the front door with a longboard and removed Sgt. Gannon and his wounded dog from the home and into the ambulance. Firefighters treated and transported the mortally wounded Officer Gannon in an attempt to save his life, while the suspect was still barricaded in the building. They remained on scene throughout the evening continuing to provide EMS coverage to dozens of responding police officers and tactical teams and keeping the surrounding area safe, which included evacuating a daycare.

Unfortunately, Sergeant Gannon did not survive and died in the line of duty on April 12, 2018. He leaves behind a wife and his canine partner Nero.

CHICOPEE FIRE DEPARTMENT

OFF-DUTY ICE RESCUE

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Michael A. Croteau
Firefighter Matthew J. Turgeon

Award(s): Citation

It was a cold wintry morning on February 7 when off-duty Firefighter’s Michael Croteau and Matthew Turgeon were ice fishing at Nashawannuck Pond in Easthampton. Nearby, a man was pulling his young child on a sled when the man fell through the ice. Firefighters Croteau and Turgeon immediately jumped into action and were within feet of reaching the child, when he too fell into the water. Firefighter Turgeon, with no lifesaving gear, jumped into the freezing cold water and was able to pull the child to safety. A bystander helped the child, and both firefighters rescued the man out of the water. This entire rescue was completed before the Easthampton Fire Department arrived on scene from their station that is approximately 400 feet from the incident. Both the father and child were released from the hospital later that day.

FALL RIVER FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FIRE

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Jason Campbell

Award(s): Valor

On June 26, Fire Inspector Jason Campbell arrived to inspect a building for which that the Fall River building department had received a complaint. The 3-story building had a vacant storefront and two apartments above. Firefighters Jason Campbell and Todd Young discovered many violations during their inspection including non-working smoke alarms. Firefighter Campbell was with a third floor tenant when they smelled smoke and noticed a haze coming from the door that led to the attic. Almost immediately, this escalated into a fire, filling the hallway with smoke. He rushed the tenant down three flights of stairs to safety before going back inside to look for the tenant's brother, still in the 3rd floor apartment. With no protective gear or helmet and fire overhead, Firefighter Campbell raced up to the third floor and rescued the brother. Then he went to the second floor and helped Firefighter Young evacuate two adults, a child and a dog.

Fraternal Order of Fire Fighter Military Veterans

EDUCATION

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Michael Jefferson

Award(s): Excellence in Leadership

When Michael Jefferson became a Somerville Firefighter in 2008, post-traumatic stress disorder was rarely, if ever, discussed. Firefighter Jefferson had seen his share of tragedy in the military as a combat veteran who had served two tours of duty in Afghanistan and Iraq. He retired from the U.S. Marines as a Sergeant in 2007, The Fraternal Order of Fire Fighter Military Veterans, Inc. (FFMV) was born out of a series of conversations among first responders who had also served in the military. Firefighter Jefferson was a leader in founding the organization in 2014. He and small group of firefighters all donate their time to help their fellow firefighter veterans, act as a resource for those who have given so much for us by serving in the military and those who serve every day at the firehouse. Whether they need help navigating through administrative red tape or a safe place to discuss any topic with a peer. Over the last four years, the FFMV has helped hundreds of firefighters, both veterans and non-veterans dealing with issues pertaining to mental health, suicide, and substance abuse.

**MARION FIRE DEPARTMENT
MATTAPOISETT FIRE DEPARTMENT
ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT**

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Nominee(s):

Captain Jeff Eldridge, Rochester FD
Lieutenant Justin Dubois, Mattapoisett FD
Lieutenant Ross Macedo, Mattapoisett FD

Firefighter Tracey Eldridge, Rochester FD
Firefighter Joshua Fardy, Marion FD

Award(s): Norman Knight Community Service Award

Volunteer and call firefighters with the Marion, Mattapoisett and Rochester Fire Departments have teamed up to develop a unique and fun way to engage young adults in fire safety. The Explorer Program began in 2017, graduated 11 students in 2018 and currently has 10 students enrolled this year. Called the MMR Hose Co., the students, all aged 14-18, meet a few times a week and learn many of the same skills recruits learn in the fire academy. The curriculum includes ice and boat rescues, structure fires and ventilation, field trips to museums, Otis Air Force, several fire stations and earning their certificates for CPR, AED and first aid. Four of the 2018 graduates have gone on to work within these departments.

MONTGOMERY FIRE DEPARTMENT

LINE OF DUTY

Nominee(s): Chief Stephen P. Frye

Award(s): Medal of Honor (posthumously)

It was early December and Chief Stephen Frye was returning home after a full day of his full-time job as an electrician and a weekly meeting at the Montgomery Fire Department. At approximately 10:30 p.m. on December 5, Chief Frye responded to a chimney fire that escalated to a 2-alarm fire with flames showing through the roof. Mutual aid was requested. Soon the entire house was a structure fire and members started an external hose attack and were making progress until they ran out of water. Flames engulfed the house once again before more water arrived. Chief Frye was running operations on the rear side of the house with two hose teams and was pulling hose when he collapsed. CPR was immediately started en route to the hospital where he succumbed to his injuries about an hour later. Chief Frye, 59, was a 24-year veteran of the department. He is survived by his wife, and two adult children, all of whom live in Montgomery. His son is also a member of the volunteer Montgomery Fire Department and was working at the fire that evening.

NoFIRES, INC.: NORTHWESTERN YOUTH FIRE INTERVENTION RESPONSE, EDUCATION AND SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

Nominee(s): Executive Board of NoFIRES, Inc.

- Loren Davine, Executive Director, NoFIRES
- Chief David Hewes, Chesterfield Fire Department
- Deputy Chief Wayne Hennemann, Easthampton Fire Department
- Ellen Brower Gately, Greenfield Juvenile Court Clinic
- Chief John Ingram, Leverett Fire Department
- Martha Murphy Kane, Northwestern District Attorney's Office
- Detective Michael Briggs, Northampton Police Department
- Chief Robert Authier, South Hadley Fire District #1

Award(s): Stephen D. Coan Fire Marshal's Award

The Northwestern Youth Fire Intervention Response, Education and Safety Partnership, known as NoFIRES, works to protect youth, their families and their communities from the dangerous and sometimes fatal act of setting fires. Serving Hampshire and Franklin counties, the North Quabbin area and Holyoke, and with support from the Northwestern District Attorney's office, this collaboration of fire, law enforcement, mental healthcare providers and social service agencies provides a consistent, coordinated and appropriate approach to helping these children and their families. Their goal is to treat firesetting behavior before it escalates. Developed in 2012, NoFires has received nearly 350 referral for youth that have misused fire. The group shares their experience with others looking to build similar programs, and through an annual training conference open to everyone statewide.

REVERE FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FIRE

Nominee(s):

Lieutenant William Brown
Deputy Chief Anthony Giampietro

Firefighter William Petrilli
Firefighter Patrick Roosa

Award(s): Group Citation

On May 29 in the evening, Revere firefighters responded to multiple calls for a mobile home fire on Revere Beach Parkway. Crews at the station closest to the fire were at Revere Beach on a water rescue. Upon arrival, Deputy Chief Giampietro reported smoke and fire showing from an 8 x 25-foot unit in the rear of the facility, and residents reported that the occupant was still inside.

Deputy Chief Anthony Giampietro forced entry in to the unit and encountered heavy fire and smoke. When Ladder 2 arrived – they too started searching for the victim with zero visibility, and without the protection of a charged hose line. Firefighters knocked down the heavy fire using just a two-gallon water extinguisher, forcible entry and overhauling tools as Deputy Chief Giampietro shattered windows, cross venting the trailer to alleviate the excessive heat and

smoke firefighters were dealing with The 60-year old man was rescued, barely breathing and unconscious and taken to Massachusetts General Hospital. After a long recovery, the man is now doing much better and stopped by the fire station earlier this month to say thank you.

WESTERN MA TECHNICAL RESCUE TEAM

FATALITY

Nominee(s):

Chief Ryan Brown, Lee FD
Chief John Zellman, Turners Falls FD
Deputy Chief David Beauregard,
Chicopee FD
Captain Todd Brunelle, Turners Falls FD
Captain Steve Chandler, Amherst FD
Captain Peter Jerusik, Chicopee FD
Captain Mitch Kellar, Pittsfield FD
Captain Brian McCarthy, Turners Falls FD
Captain Daniel Piretti, Lenox FD
Captain James Pula, South Hadley D1
Captain Jason Saunders, South
Hadley D1
Lieutenant Andrew Eisch, Greenfield FD
Firefighter Thomas Balardini,
Dalton and Agawam FD
Firefighter Justin Bona,
Great Barrington FD

Firefighter Robert Casucci, Lenox FD
Firefighter Rob Gaughran,
Great Barrington FD
Firefighter Josh Healy, Pittsfield FD
Firefighter David Holmes, Amherst FD
Firefighter Sandi Krauss,
Easthampton FD
Firefighter Walker Korby, Turners Falls FD
Firefighter Robert LaFrance, Agawam FD
Firefighter Scott McGinnis, Pittsfield FD
Firefighter Robert Pensivy, Agawam FD
Firefighter Lucas Perry,
Dalton/Pittsfield FD
Firefighter Michael Sherman, North
Adams FD
Firefighter Daryl Springman,
Northampton FD

Award(s): Group Citation

On July 28, 2017, the Western Massachusetts Technical Rescue Team began what became a 5-day operation to recover the remains of a 21-year old man who had fallen from the top of 80-foot Bash Bish Falls. The effort included several agencies from both Massachusetts and New York. The victim and his girlfriend had been hiking in a remote area of Mount Washington State Forest when the man fell off the top of waterfall and swept into a steep ravine. Initial search operations indicated that it was unlikely he had survived the fall. The MA Technical Rescue Team used high angle and swift water rescue techniques aided by a low angle rescue team from New York and underwater cameras to search for and eventually find the victim's body. A technically complicated recovery plan that included diverting the water was made that involved permissions from many agencies, but when the family was notified of the recovery plan, they requested that no further efforts take place. All active recovery efforts were suspended. Department of Conservation staff later recovered the body after it became dislodged naturally and caught in netting.

WILBRAHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT

WATER RESCUE

Nominee(s):

Firefighter/Paramedic Adam Hart

Award(s): Citation

Firefighter/Paramedic Adam Hart, returning to quarters from another incident, arrived first to find a very chaotic scene on the evening of June 29 at the Chicopee River. A woman and a child were struggling to stay afloat in the water and another adult and child were on the other side of the river, separated by the river's current "vortex". This site has been the scene of many drownings through the years. Two men in a boat who had attempted to rescue the people were missing. Firefighter/Paramedic Hart commandeered a kayak from a bystander and went out into the river with no water safety equipment. Paddling into the current, he was able to rescue the mother and child. Ludlow Fire Department arrived on scene and were able to rescue the other woman and child. All four were later released from the hospital without injuries. Unfortunately, the two would-be rescuers were both found deceased, one that evening and the other three days later downstream.

WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FIRE

Nominee(s):

Lieutenant Patrick Moran
Firefighter John Callahan
Firefighter Matthew Kane

Award(s): Citation

On June 21, Ladder 7 arrived to a fire at a 3-decker house with heavy fire coming out of the second floor windows. Lt. Patrick Moran and Firefighters John Callahan and Matthew Kane positioned the truck at the corner of the building and headed for the second floor to search for occupants. After forcing the door open, they encountered dense smoke, high heat and zero visibility. Firefighter Kane found the unconscious occupant. The fire had started in the bedroom and was rolling through the hallway over the firefighters' heads. They were able to get the man out of the building and begin CPR. He was in cardiac arrest and severely burned. He was transferred to UMASS Medical Center and was in critical condition for several days but remains alive.

WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT**BUILDING FIRE, FATALITY****Nominee(s):**

District Chief Adam Roche
Lieutenant Christopher Kelly
Firefighter Blake Perron

Award(s): Valor

In the early morning of March 5, Lt. Christopher Kelly was leaving home en route to work when he saw smoke coming from a neighboring home. He ran towards it and a neighbor said there were two residents inside. As he went to the rear of the house, a 64-year-old man told him he was trying to move his physically impaired 85-year-old mother out of the room. Lt. Kelly could see that the fire was in the hallway beyond the bedroom and was cutting off the interior escape route. With no protective gear, and heat and smoke increasing, he pushed his upper body through the small window and directed the man to bring his mother over to the window. Together they tried unsuccessfully to lift her up to the small window as conditions became worse. Finally, Lt. Kelly was forced to make the decision to risk losing both or to save the son. He was able to reach in and grab the man and pulled him through the window to safety. At this point, arriving crews were on scene and he directed them to the woman. Then Captain, now District Chief Adam Roche and Firefighter Blake Perron found her and rapidly removed her through the front door. Sadly, she succumbed to her injuries at the hospital. Captain Roche and Firefighter Perron both received minor first-degree burns when their turnout gear burned through from the heat estimated at 600 to 800 degrees.

WORCESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT**OFF-DUTY, BUILDING FIRE****Nominee(s):**

Lieutenant Timothy Ridick

Award(s): Valor

Lt. Timothy Ridick was off-duty February 28 and returning home from a funeral for a retired colleague when he stopped at a friend's house and heard the fire alarm at the house next door. Flames were coming from the second floor window. Still in his Class A uniform and with no protective gear, he entered the house and went upstairs. He opened the unlocked door to heavy smoke and began crawling on the floor, shouting out for possible occupants. Seeing two legs, he quickly found two disoriented people and was able to lead them safely out of the house. Lt. Ridick reentered the building and ran to the third floor in an attempt to save the couple's dog but the heat and smoke was just too much. Throughout the incident, Lt. Ridick was on his cell phone, relaying crucial information to fire alarm for the incoming companies.