



Firefighter of the Year

27th Annual Awards Ceremony

November 29, 2016

2016 “Firefighter of the Year” Award Recipients Alphabetically by Fire Department

The Governor and the Secretary presented 23 awards: two Norman Knight Awards for Excellence in Community Service, one Excellence in Leadership Award, two Individual Awards for Meritorious Conduct, five Group Awards for Meritorious Conduct to teams of firefighters, and 12 Medals of Valor to individual firefighters. The State Fire Marshal’s award was presented to retired State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan.

BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FIRE

Category: Group Citation for Meritorious Conduct

Nominee(s):

Ladder Company 28: Fire Captain Robert J. Counihan, Firefighter David R. Blaides, Firefighter Danny D. Ryan, Firefighter Anthony J. Vargas

On November 21, 2015, Ladder Company 28 responded to a building fire in Hyde Park with reports of people trapped inside. Upon arrival, they saw heavy smoke throughout the structure and rapidly deteriorating conditions. Multiple victims were calling for help from windows. Ladder 28 deployed ground ladders and with help from Ladder Company 16, rescued two women and two children over ground ladders. The rescues happened while the basement was fully involved with fire, fed by a breached natural gas line and prior to hose use.

BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

SUBMERGED VEHICLE RESCUE

Category: Individual Citation for Meritorious Conduct

Nominee(s):

Firefighter William G. Carey

A technical rescue response was dispatched on November 7, 2015 for occupants trapped in a vehicle in the water near Leverett Circle in Boston. Rescue Company 1 arrived on scene and Firefighter William Carey donned a survival suit. He swam about 50 yards and found two people inside a pickup truck that was lying on its side, completely submerged. Firefighter Carey dove below the surface and was able to break a window and pull a man out. He gave him several rescue breaths and handed him off to Cambridge firefighters in a rescue boat who continued first aid to the shore. Firefighter Carey then reentered the truck and with great difficulty was able to reach a woman who was strapped by a seat belt. He cut away the seat belt, extricated her, gave some rescue breaths and handed her off to Cambridge Fire. Both occupants were transported to Massachusetts General Hospital where they succumbed to their injuries several hours later.



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BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

TRAINING

Category: Norman Knight Award for Excellence in Community Service

Nominee(s):

Lieutenant Daniel D. Gomes

Lieutenant Daniel Gomes is a 20-year veteran of the Boston Fire Department. For the past nine years he has been assigned to the department's training academy where he has spent countless hours training firefighters from the greater Boston area. Gomes developed a pump operation program that has become part of all Boston Fire Academy recruit training. Some of the fire departments that have been trained by Lieutenant Gomes are Brookline, Quincy, Somerville, Wellesley and Weymouth.

When there are no recruit classes in session, Gomes teaches fire safety to various organizations. These include summer camps, future explorer programs and nurses from the burn unit at Shriners Hospital for Children- Boston. The nurses experience what it is like to be in a real fire, to better understand the experience of their traumatized patients.

In his off duty hours, Lieutenant Gomes can be found at home helping to raise his six-year-old triplets.

BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

OFF-DUTY WATER RESCUE

Category: Medal of Valor

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Christopher J. Flaherty

Boston Firefighter Christopher Flaherty was working out with other off-duty Boston firefighters in South Boston near the L Street Bath House. He noticed a person in the water, far from the shore who appeared to be in danger. Firefighter Flaherty immediately paddled out to the area on a board, keeping his eye on the victim. It was a windy day on the water, and not far from the victim Flaherty lost sight of him. Firefighter Flaherty waved down a passing boat with three people onboard. After a brief explanation, he climbed onto the boat and they searched the area. When Firefighter Flaherty located the victim, he dove into the water and with the help of the boaters was able to pull the victim into the boat. Firefighter Flaherty immediately began CPR as the boat landed and the other firefighters came to assist. Rescue efforts continued until on duty firefighters from Engine 2 and Ladder 19 arrived. The victim succumbed to his injuries at the hospital.



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BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLNESS DIVISION

Category: Excellence in Leadership Award

Nominee(s):

Deputy Fire Chief Gregory J. Mackin

Firefighters routinely run into danger to save others. It's an oath they take the first day on the job: protect the public you serve. But what about protecting themselves?

Firefighters are being diagnosed with cancers at an alarming rate. Boston Fire Commissioner Joseph Finn estimates that a Boston firefighter is diagnosed with cancer every two-and-a-half weeks. Boston is not alone. Departments across Massachusetts and the country are dealing with many members diagnosed with cancer.

In 2013, Boston Fire Department established the Safety, Health and Wellness Division. Led by Deputy Chief Gregory Mackin, the division includes a captain, three lieutenants, and two firefighters. The goal is simple: educate firefighters about the link between cancer and the toxic fumes and carcinogens they breathe when they enter a burning building, and give them tools to fight back.

Deputy Chief Mackin has built the program from the ground up and started a much needed broader discussion about firefighter health and safety. Firefighters need to know how to protect themselves and what to look for in their health, but they also need to educate physicians about how to help. Firefighters can't cure cancer, but they can take simple steps to stay as healthy as possible.

All Boston firefighters now have two sets of turnout gear, at least three or four hoods, and it is against department policy to remove your breathing apparatus till you are outside a fire scene. All firehouses now have industrial strength washing machines to wash gear. A powerful video featuring 160 Boston firefighters that have died from cancer since 1990 has been viewed by thousands across the country. A company of former Navy SEALs called O2X train firefighters on nutrition, fitness, resilience, and how to best take care of themselves.

Deputy Chief Mackin has forged relationships with Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Joslin Diabetes Center and the National Fire Protection Association. The program has been recognized nationally as a leader in firefighter safety, health and wellness.



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FITCHBURG FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUILDING FIRE

**Category: Group Citation for Meritorious Conduct
Medal of Valor**

Nominee(s):

Chief Kevin D. Roy (Valor)
Lieutenant Anthony Castelli
Firefighter Samuel Garcia
Lieutenant John Gilmartin
Firefighter John Girouard
Firefighter Matthew Glenney
Firefighter Peter Gradito
Deputy Chief David Gravel
Lieutenant Patrick Haverty

Firefighter Martin Kukkula
Firefighter Jude Lambert
Firefighter Kevin Lopez
Captain Anthony Marrama
Firefighter James Nault
Firefighter Timothy O'Kane
Lieutenant Patrick Roy
Firefighter Shane Thomas

When Chief Roy heard the dispatch for a house fire at 1 a.m. on a cold February night, he could see the smoke from his own house, just one street away. At the scene, firefighters found heavy black smoke coming out of the entire second floor of the house. With two cars in the driveway, firefighters began search and rescue efforts. They entered the first floor apartment and determined it was empty. Chief Roy entered the house from the back and went upstairs where he found an unconscious man. Roy took the man down stairs and outside where he regained consciousness and said his two sisters were still inside the other side. Search and rescue efforts were made extremely difficult because of excessive clutter in the women's apartment. Engine 4 and Ladder 3 searched for the victims, without a hose line, due to a malfunction at the pump.

A second victim was found unconscious and CPR was performed outside. The third victim was deceased when she was found in the room where the fire originated. The fire required the resources of the entire Fitchburg Fire Department on duty that shift, as well as mutual aid from area companies. Due to crews venting the roof and pulling down ceilings, the fire was under control in less than 20 minutes. The second rescued sister lived for 18 hours before passing away.

HYANNIS FIRE DEPARTMENT

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Category: Norman Knight Award for Excellence in Community Service

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Barry Pina

Just like Norman Knight, the man for whom this award is named, Firefighter Barry Pina is often the first person to help, yet the last to accept praise. During his 32 years with the Hyannis Fire Department, FF Pina has been a tireless champion for causes that help



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children and promote safety. As the “Fill the Boot” coordinator for the last 20 years, he has helped raise \$300,000 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Pina helps coordinate an annual youth summer program in Barnstable County that teaches fire safety and includes fun and games. He has been a Barnstable County Critical Incident Stress Team member for 26 years. And during the holidays, he helps coordinate photos with Santa at the firehouse and volunteers for “Stuff a Bus,” delivering toys to needy children.

Firefighter Pina has taught CPR to hundreds of firefighters, police officers and civilians. If there is no class scheduled and someone needs to get recertified in CPR, he goes to their home. Known as the “mayor of Cape Cod,” Firefighter Barry Pina leads by example. He exemplifies the impact a firefighter can have in their community and is a role model to new recruits and seasoned firefighters.

LYNN FIRE DEPARTMENT

Category: Medal of Valor

BUILDING FIRE, MULTIPLE FATALITIES

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Joseph Fannon
Lieutenant William Fritz

Firefighter Brett Johnson
Lieutenant David Stanley

A fast moving fire quickly escalated to three alarms in the early morning hours of December 4, 2015. When Lynn firefighters arrived on the scene, a woman was jumping out of a second floor window onto the roof of a car to escape while other residents were evacuating. Flames were blowing out the windows and bystanders reported that people were trapped on the second and third floors.

Lieutenant William Fritz was one of the first on the scene and entered the building from the rear. Without a second to lose, he started a search of the area while the water and hose lines were being set-up. The crew was knocked to the floor by the smoke and intense heat as they entered. They were forced to crawl through the rooms with zero visibility. Lieutenant Fritz heard muffled noises and encountered an unconscious woman trapped under furniture. Lieutenant David Stanley helped Lieutenant Fritz remove her from the apartment and down the stairs.

Lieutenant Stanley re-entered the kitchen area to continue the search. Conditions were rapidly deteriorating. Firefighters Joseph Fannon and Brett Johnson had found a second unconscious victim with burn injuries and the three brought her down the rear staircase and outside to EMS, saving her life.

This fire was the single deadliest fire in the state in 2015 with four victims, all under the age of 40, including a pregnant woman. More than 35 firefighters battled the blaze at the house where reportedly more than 20 people lived. The house was demolished after the fire and it was undetermined if all three units had working smoke alarms.



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LYNN FIRE DEPARTMENT

DROWNING

Category: Individual Citation for Meritorious Conduct

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Estarło Abreu

It was a warm Sunday in June and a group of teens were swimming in a pond at the Lynn Woods Reservation, a large park with a reservoir. When one boy jumped in and did not immediately surface, the teens knew he was in danger. Crews from Lynn and Saugus Fire Departments, and Lynn Police responded to the 911 call and began loading apparatus into the water while others started a line search. The 13-year old victim had been swimming about 25 feet from shore. Firefighters searched, often stopping to submerge underwater to look for the boy. In 12-15 foot deep water, Firefighter Estarło Abreu spotted the victim, dove to the bottom and carried him to the surface. Abreu pinned the boy to the side of a Saugus fire boat and held him while the boat towed them to shore. Firefighter Abreu's aggressive and physically exhausting effort to get the boy out of the water meant that onshore medical efforts began quickly. Unfortunately, the boy was pronounced dead later that afternoon.

MALDEN AND SAUGUS FIRE DEPARTMENTS

HOUSE FIRE

Category: Medals of Valor

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Gregory Jean (Malden)

Captain Christopher Rizza (Saugus)

Firefighters risk their personal safety to save the lives of others all the time. Sometimes the lives they save are their own.

Firefighters from the Saugus and Malden Fire Departments responded to a house fire at a single family home in Saugus on January 1, 2016. Excessive clutter and the unique layout of the home made for extremely difficult conditions. Thankfully, residents had escaped and met arriving firefighters.

The fire began in the basement and quickly rose to the eaves of the attic. As Saugus firefighters worked to ventilate the exterior, back-up arrived from Wakefield and Malden. However, ventilation efforts led to a flash fire on the second floor, then on the first floor. Mayday was called, but firefighters were still in the house. Captain Christopher Rizza and his crew were separated and after he pushed part of the crew outside to safety, he re-entered the house without a hose to look for the missing crew members. Rizza found two firefighters and brought them out to safety.



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One crew member was still missing. He was alone and, out of air, so he removed his helmet and used it to smash the front window. Malden Firefighter Gregory Jean was outside ventilating that area and pulled him to safety.

Rescues of the three firefighters were made almost simultaneously and seconds before the house became totally engulfed in flames.

SCITUATE FIRE DEPARTMENT

HOUSE FIRE ON AN ISLAND

Category: Group Citation for Meritorious Conduct

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Richard Dehn
Firefighter Thomas Hernan
Captain Brian McGowan

Lieutenant Eric Norlin
Firefighter Matthew Regan

The response to a fast-moving house fire in a remote part of Scituate overcame several logistical challenges this past Memorial Day. Both ambulances were on medical runs and area mutual aid was delayed by a parade at the time of the response

When Engine 3 arrived at the house, there was heavy smoke, and a man outside said his mother was trapped inside. A second alarm was struck and Ladder 1 arrived moments later. As Lieutenant Eric Norlin and Firefighter Matt Regan searched the second floor, Captain Brian McGowan started ventilating windows. Firefighter Thomas Hernan helped secure a hose line to the second floor. The mother was found in a bathroom unconscious. She was transported to the hospital and has made a full recovery. She has visited the firehouse several times to thank firefighters. It was later determined that an unattended burning candle was the cause of the fire.

SWANSEA FIRE DEPARTMENT

HOUSE FIRE

Category: Medals of Valor

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Patrick J. Burke
Lieutenant Brett M. Medeiros
Captain Michael J. Patterson

Timely training and an alert neighbor led to the survival of a Swansea resident in an early morning fire on July 22, 2016. Heavy smoke prevented a neighbor and a police officer from entering the house before firefighters arrived. As firefighters responded to the 911 call, they knew that the house might be occupied. First on scene Lieutenant Brett Medeiros and Captain Michael Patterson entered the second floor bedroom without a hose and started to search for the victim with zero visibility and high heat. Also without a



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hose line, Firefighter Patrick Burke entered the house through the front door, making his way upstairs. Three minutes after entering the house, the firefighters found the 65-year old man unconscious on the floor of his room and quickly moved him outside through the bedroom window. While firefighters performed CPR, Lieutenant Medeiros, Captain Patterson and Firefighter Burke searched the house for other victims. No one else was in the house.

Thirty firefighters responded to this incident as part of Swansea's volunteer fire department. For two months, the department had practiced a second floor entry drill. Little did they know how quickly their training would pay off. The victim was in a medically induced coma and spent four days in the ICU. He still has a few months of recovery but has come into the firehouse to express his gratitude several times.

WATERTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT

MOTOR VEHICLE RESCUE

Category: Group Citation for Meritorious Conduct

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Darryl Baynes
Firefighter Jason Capello
Lieutenant Sean Connolly
Firefighter Sean Fitzgerald

Firefighter Shane Gleason
Firefighter Jonathan Mazzola
Firefighter Jeffrey Meon
Deputy Chief Dan Tardif

Members of the Watertown Fire Department arrived on an accident scene December 15, 2016. They found an elderly woman trapped under a car at a construction site. She had been struck as a vehicle backed out from a driveway. With the victim in cardiac arrest and no room to bring in a truck, firefighters manually lifted the vehicle to remove the victim. They performed CPR and she has survived after a stay in rehabilitation.

WEYMOUTH FIRE DEPARTMENT

WORKING FIRE

Category: Citation for Meritorious Conduct

Medal of Valor

Nominee(s):

Firefighter Gabriel Araujo
Firefighter Anthony Diauto

Firefighter Walter Langley
Firefighter Gary J. Walsh (Valor)

A 911 call at 5:15 a.m. for a 26-unit building almost guarantees people will be inside. Weymouth firefighters arrived at the building on May 3, 2016 and were met with heavy smoke and flames coming from the front and windy weather outside. As Ladder 2 entered the interior stairwell, they heard a woman screaming for help, but had no idea where she was. With zero visibility, Firefighter Gary Walsh quickly headed up to the third floor and



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started searching for the victim. It was pitch black and he couldn't see anything, but he felt her arm. As he pulled her close, he realized she also had a baby.

Firefighter Walsh selflessly took off his mask and placed it on the mother and baby's faces, giving them much needed oxygen. With no mask and hardly able to see, Firefighter Walsh got the mother and baby out of the building to safety. Improper disposal of smoking materials in leaves under the porch caused the fire that displaced residents in all 26 units.

State Fire Marshal's Award

Nominee: Retired State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan retired in January after more than 30 years in the fire service, the last 20 as State Fire Marshal and head of the Department of Fire Services. Prior to that he was the Director of the Mass. Firefighting Academy, which is now part of the Department of Fire Services, that was created in 1995. He is honored today for his leadership and foresight that has resulted in some of the strongest fire codes in the country and firefighters that are better trained and equipped to protect the public they protect.

During his tenure, several major incidents changed the fire service, such as the Worcester Cold Storage Warehouse fire in 1999 that killed six firefighters; the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks; the 2003 fire at The Station nightclub in Rhode Island that killed dozens of Massachusetts residents; the 2006 Danvers chemical explosion that amazingly killed none; the 2007 Chinese restaurant fire that killed two Boston firefighters and the 2014 Back Bay fire that also killed two Boston firefighters. From each tragedy, he helped form and lead the coalitions to implement changes based on the lessons learned whether it was changes in fire training, the fire code, building code, laws, or enforcement tools. As the role of a firefighter evolved from not just responding to fires, but also medical emergencies, hazardous materials and terrorism, Coan made sure the Stow, and most recently the Springfield campuses, provided state of the art fire training. On his watch, the State Police Fire & Explosion Investigation Unit adopted the team concept of fire investigation and both the fire investigators and bomb squad were professionally trained and equipped.

Massachusetts is a safer state because of Steve Coan. He worked diligently with state leaders to pass Nicole's Law requiring carbon monoxide alarms, the MA Fire Safety Act of the 2004 requiring sprinklers in many entertainment venues and penalties for overcrowding, the fire safe cigarette law; and the hoax bomb law. He oversaw implementation of certification for those who clean and inspect commercial kitchen exhaust systems, promoted regulations for chemical processing implemented at state and national levels; saw the adoption of a national model code; pushed for the new Welding Commission; and created the highly successful Student Awareness of Fire Education or S.A.F.E. Program which has reduced average annual child fire deaths more than 70% in



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the past 20 years. Building on the success of the school-based S.A.F.E. Program, he was able to launch the Senior SAFE Program to help reduce senior fire deaths in the state.