



Ceremony honors fallen firefighters, recognizes 27 others for live saving acts of bravery

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Hundreds of firefighters gathered in Springfield for the 23rd Annual Illinois Fallen Firefighter Memorial, Firefighter Medal of Honor Awards Ceremony

SPRINGFIELD – Firefighters from across the state gathered in Springfield to remember firefighters who died in service and honor 27 other firefighters for their outstanding bravery and service to their communities during the 23rd Annual Illinois Fallen Firefighter Memorial and Firefighter Medal of Honor Awards Ceremony.

The ceremony began in the State Capitol Complex area with the presentation of colors and an invocation at the Illinois Fallen Firefighter Memorial, followed by the awards ceremony at the Prairie Capital Convention Center.

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“Our firefighters in Illinois serve with courage, pride and honor,” said State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “Today we recognize those that took extraordinary actions to help protect the lives of their fellow firefighters and citizens. Their bravery and selflessness embody what the profession is all about. We also take a moment today to remember those that lost their lives in the line of duty this year. Their sacrifices will always remain in our hearts.”

Four firefighters who died in, or as a result of, the performance of duty were honored during the ceremonies as their families were presented with the Duty Death Gold Badge by Fire Marshal Perez. Those recognized include the late Daniel V. Capuano, a Firefighter/Paramedic with the Chicago Fire Department, the late Fidel G. Serrano, Jr., a Firefighter/Paramedic with the Chicago Fire Department, the late Mark A. Zielinski, Sr.,

a Firefighter/Paramedic with the Matteson Fire Department along with the late Kenneth J. Lehr, a Chief with the Medora Fire Protection District.

Five firefighters received the Certificate of Recognition Award for their dedication to the principles and traditions of the fire service, to the state and the community, with honor and integrity. Recipients include:

- Fire Paramedic Mark Madonia, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Aaron Omaye, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT David Pae, Chicago Fire Department
- Ambulance Commander Jennifer Schulz, Chicago Fire Department
- Lieutenant Christopher Serb, Chicago Fire Department

Fifteen firefighters received the Firefighter Excellence Award for an act of service in the line of duty, demonstrating excellence and professionalism in service to the citizens of the state of Illinois. Recipients include:

- Firefighter/EMT Cesar Arroyo, Chicago Fire Department
- Paramedic Field Chief Deborah Sommer, Chicago Fire Department
- Fire Paramedic Wendell Smoot, Chicago Fire Department
- Captain/EMT Michael Spencer, Chicago Fire Department
- Paramedic in Charge Joseph Summers, Chicago Fire Department

Incident # 15-325-1128-00, Engine Company 98:

- Lieutenant Michael Balnis, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Jason Faber, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Gloria Kehoe, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Anthony Owens, Chicago Fire Department
- Engineer/EMT Casstedaro Simpson, Chicago Fire Department

Incident # 15-325-1128-00, Truck Company 3:

- Firefighter/EMT Braulio Aguayo, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Michael Cannon, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter Robert Fitzpatrick, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Greg Ogorkowski, Chicago Fire Department
- Lieutenant Peter Vassios, Orland Fire Protection District

In addition, 4 firefighters were recognized for acts of heroism or bravery that clearly demonstrated courage and dedication in the face of danger. Medal of Valor award recipients include:

- Battalion Chief James Jablonowski, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter Joseph Martinelli, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter Lyndon Perzee, Marion Fire Department
- Firefighter Chad Schmid, Marion Fire Department

The Medal of Honor award, the highest award given to firefighters by the state of Illinois, was presented to 3 firefighters who were selected for their acts of outstanding bravery or heroism, by which they demonstrated selflessness and personal courage above and beyond the call of duty, under adverse conditions, with the possibility of extreme personal risk. Recipients include:

- Deputy District Chief Ronald Dorneker, Chicago Fire Department
- Lieutenant/EMT Lee Sullivan, Chicago Fire Department
- Deputy Chief Trevor Herrmann, Hampshire Fire Protection District

The awards presented today recognized heroic actions during 2014 and 2015. Nominations were reviewed and winners selected by the ten-member Illinois Fire Fighting Medal of Honor Committee.