

Ceremony honors fallen firefighters, awards others for acts of heroism

May 9 2017 1:42 PM



Hundreds of firefighters gathered in Springfield for the 24th Annual Illinois Fallen Firefighter Memorial, Firefighter Medal of Honor Awards Ceremony

SPRINGFIELD – Firefighters from across the state gathered in Springfield to remember fallen firefighters who lost their lives to protect Illinoisans. The 24th Annual Illinois Fallen Firefighters Memorial and Fire Fighting Medal of Honor Awards Ceremony also honored individual firefighters for extraordinary acts of bravery and heroism to protect fellow firefighters and civilians.

“Our firefighters are the best of the best who serve with courage and bravery,” said State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. “Today we recognize those who went above and beyond the call of duty. They are heroes who performed lifesaving measures in the face of tremendous danger. We honor our fallen comrades who gave the ultimate sacrifice to protect their fellow firefighters and Illinoisans. We will never forget their bravery and legacy.”

Two 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 Captain Eric Kohlbauer of Freeport Rural Fire Protection District and Firefighter and Paramedic Kenneth Harris of Village of Oak Park Fire Department.

Twenty-four 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:

- Captain P. Edward Bermann, Brookfield Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Carlos Jimenez, Brookfield Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Keith Wonskowski, Brookfield Fire Department
- Fire Paramedic Nicholas Chow, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter Jason Lach, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter Brian Herrli, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter William Vaci, Chicago Fire Department
- Captain Matthew Berk, Flossmoor Fire Department
- Firefighter John Burke, Kankakee Fire Department
- Lieutenant David Kruse II, Kankakee Fire Department
- Captain James Grady IV, Lockport Township Fire District
- Firefighter James Kozek, Lockport Township Fire District
- Firefighter/Paramedic John Baskerville, Lockport Township Fire District

- Lieutenant Robert Vargo, Lockport Township Fire District
- Firefighter/Paramedic Andrew Eason, Morton Grove Fire Department
- District Chief Daniel Gallagher, Morton Grove Fire Department
- Chaplain Ryan Follis, Nokomis Area Fire Protection District
- Firefighter Dylan Goldsmith, Nokomis Area Fire Protection District
- Firefighter/Paramedic Dustin Rhodes, Nokomis Area Fire Protection District
- EMT Breann Vincent, Nokomis Area Fire Protection District
- Paramedic Joletta Hill, Nokomis-Witt Area Ambulance Service
- Paramedic Jillianne Quinn, Nokomis-Witt Area Ambulance Service
- Firefighter Josh Graham, Pekin Fire Department
- Captain Trent Reeise, Pekin Fire Department

In addition, five units received the Firefighter Excellence “Unit Citation” Awards 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:

Incident #16-1765

- Captain John Armstrong, Broadview Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Joseph Marbach, Broadview Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic James Mulligan, Broadview Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Steven Schaer, Broadview Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Alec Stevens, Broadview Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Cory Triner, Broadview Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Jesus Aguirre, Maywood Fire Department

- Firefighter/EMT Phillip Brooks, Maywood Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Michael Cerullo, Maywood Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Emanuel Coker, Maywood Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Ronald Edwards, Maywood Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Kevin Kehoe, Maywood Fire Department
- Lieutenant Anthony Morrone, Maywood Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Kevin Silvers, Maywood Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Richard Weikal, Maywood Fire Department

Incident #16-244

- Firefighter/Paramedic Patrick McBrien, Brookfield Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic David Poskus, Brookfield Fire Department
- Fire Chief Gordon Nord, Lyons Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Jon Ritter, McCook Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Ricardo Salgado, McCook Fire Department

Incident #15-1211

- Engineer Jason Irwin, Chicago Heights Fire Department
- Lieutenant Kevin Leuder, Chicago Heights Fire Department
- Engineer Michael Napoli, Chicago Heights Fire Department
- Engineer Justin Bracken, Flossmoor Fire Department
- Firefighter Nick Camilli, Flossmoor Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Zach Jebens, Flossmoor Fire Department

- Firefighter Brendan Marshall, Flossmoor Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Thomas Slayton, Flossmoor Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Devin Cross, Hazel Crest Fire Department
- Lieutenant Jim Shields Jr., Hazel Crest Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Bill Wojtanowski, Hazel Crest Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Joe Exline, Homewood Fire Department
- Lieutenant Scott Moran, Homewood Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Sean Sullivan, Homewood Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic David Vitolka, Homewood Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Daniel Price ,Thornton Ambulance
- Firefighter/Paramedic Sean Quirk, Thornton Ambulance

Incident #16-2769

- Firefighter/Paramedic Matt Holuj, DeKalb Aerial Ladder Truck Company #1
- Firefighhter/Paramedic Mathew Klotz, DeKalb Aerial Ladder Truck Company #1
- Firefighter/Paramedic Jon Ritter, DeKalb Aerial Ladder Truck Company #1
- Firefighter/Paramedic Andrew Romano, DeKalb Aerial Ladder Truck Company #1
- Captain Michael Thomas, DeKalb Aerial Ladder Truck Company #1
- Firefighter/Paramedic Todd Adamson, DeKalb Engine Company #2
- Lieutenant/Paramedic Brett Gautcher, DeKalb Engine Company #2
- Firefighter/Paramedic Chris Krupa, DeKalb Engine Company #2
- Firefighter/Paramedic Tim Stiker, DeKalb Engine Company #2

Incident # 15-48726

- Engineer Larry Brandt, Morton Grove Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Sean Brink, Morton Grove Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Kurt Lipa, Morton Grove Fire Department

Four firefighters were honored with the Medal of Valor award. It is given by the state of Illinois to a firefighter for an act of heroism or bravery that clearly demonstrated courage and dedication in the face of danger while in the performance of duty.

Recipients include:

- Lieutenant Jerry Cambria, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter/EMT Edgar Gallo, Chicago Fire Department
- Captain John McAndrew, Chicago Fire Department
- Firefighter Phil Hutto, Lockport Township Fire District

The Medal of Honor award, the highest award given to firefighters by the state of Illinois, was presented to three 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:

- Firefighter/Paramedic Jared Thorp, DeKalb Fire Department
- Firefighter/Paramedic Christopher Salazar, Kankakee Fire Department
- Captain Michael Smalley, Nokomis Area Fire Protection District

The awards presented today recognized heroic actions during 2015 and 2016. Nominations were reviewed and winners selected by the Illinois Fire Fighting Medal of Honor Committee.