



MSA Honors the Nashville Fire Department With the Fireslayer of the Year Award

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National Recognition Program Honors Firefighters

PITTSBURGH, April 30 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- The Nashville Tennessee Fire Department responded to nearly 100,000 calls last year. However, the department's actions during one particular call on September 25, 2003 have earned it the Fireslayer of the Year (FOTY) Award, presented annually by global safety equipment manufacturer MSA (Amex: MSA), Pittsburgh, Pa. The award was presented to Nashville Deputy Chief William Curran during a special ceremony today at the annual Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC), held in Indianapolis, Ind.

Responding to a four-story nursing home fire, Nashville firefighters that day arrived to a scene saturated with the sounds of desperate facility caregivers urging responders to rescue trapped patients. Immediate concern for more than 120 elderly residents, many invalid and confined to beds or wheelchairs, led to calls for additional help. Nashville firefighters from across the city responded swiftly and were quickly engaged in efforts to assist the trapped patients.

"As our firefighters neared the top of the stairs to the second floor of the building, they encountered heavy smoke and felt intense heat pressing around them," said Deputy Chief Curran. In reality, the fire on the second floor was quickly gaining strength, fueled by the life-supporting oxygen required by many of the patients. To compound the challenge, the older building had no sprinkler system to help firefighters combat the flames.

Responding to multiple pleas for help, firefighters began evacuating the second floor, searching for patients through thick, black smoke. Amidst a tangle of oxygen tubes and IV lines, some residents were carried down a stairwell and moved to safety while others were evacuated through windows to awaiting aerial platforms. "The process was painfully slow," Curran explained. "I know our team was fatigued, but that didn't stop them from working hard to gain control of the fire and relieve the building of the superheated gases and toxic smoke."

During the event, several firefighters depleted their self-contained breathing apparatus air supplies. Covering their faces with their fire-retardant hoods, the firefighters continued rescue efforts. "At that point, there were still dozens of frightened patients we needed to reach," Curran said. "Seconds can literally mean the difference between life and death and there simply wasn't time to rest or replenish our air supplies."

Tragically, four residents perished in the initial fire, and ten more succumbed later at hospitals from exposure to smoke and stress. One of the fire fatalities was the mother of Nashville Fire Department District Chief Bobby Connelly, who had responded to the scene to locate his mother. But the unyielding efforts of all the firefighters and emergency responders saved the lives of 106 residents, preventing a potentially disastrous tragedy.

Deputy Chief Curran, who accepted the award on behalf of the entire Nashville department, was presented with special leather New Yorker Cairns Helmet(R) and a commemorative plaque recognizing the department's acts of heroism. Replica versions of the plaque will be displayed in each of the city's fire stations. In addition to these awards, MSA has made a \$5000 donation on behalf of the Nashville Fire Department to the International Association of Fire Fighters' Burn Foundation, which benefits the Firefighters' National Children's Burn Camp and vital burn research, rehabilitation and education programs.

"Day in and day out, the men and women of the fire service are called on to perform the noblest act a human being can do," said Eric Beck, Director of Marketing for MSA. "At any minute, on any call, any one of them may willingly risk their life to save another."

MSA established the FOTY program in 2000 to recognize firefighters who display selfless dedication in the line of duty. This year, the company expanded the Fireslayer of the Year program to accept nominations on a national level. The recipient was selected by a panel of fire-service experts from across the United States.

"MSA's goal is to recognize firefighters whose actions serve as models in the fire service for dedication and bravery," Beck said. "The Fireslayer of the Year program is representative of MSA's long-standing association as a leader and innovator in the development of fire service safety equipment. We are excited to have the chance to represent the industry by working together with fire departments across the country to sponsor the premier recognition program to honor firefighting excellence."

About MSA

Established in 1914, MSA is the world's leading provider of quality products and services that protect people's health and safety and the environment. For more than 50 years, MSA has designed and manufactured cutting-edge, high-technology products for the fire service industry, including thermal imaging cameras, portable gas detection instruments, self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and the best-selling CairnsHelmets(R) Fire Helmet brand of head protection. The fire service represents MSA's largest market. The company has annual sales of nearly \$700 million, with manufacturing operations throughout the United States and 28 international affiliates.

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