



Recipients of the 2022 Wildland Fire Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Awards Announced

NWCG announces the recipients of the 2022 Wildland Fire EMS Awards. The NWCG Emergency Medical Committee (EMC) annually recognizes individuals and groups who have demonstrated outstanding actions or accomplishments that are above and beyond the expectation of one's normal mission or job duties.

Kevin Knight, Rogue River Siskiyou National Forest

Outstanding Wildland Fire EMS Individual of the Year

Kevin Knight (MEDL) went out of his way to counsel an openly distraught fellow firefighter while on assignment. This firefighter was visibly upset after many long shifts of work, sifting through the ruins of the homes of friends and family members. The firefighter had reached the end of his emotional endurance and conveyed that he was "at the end of his rope," physically and emotionally. Mr. Knight "talked-him-off-the-edge" through his own experience as a former Army combat veteran. Once the immediate threat had passed, Mr. Knight worked with the Incident Management Team staff, local community leaders, State Fire Department, and faith-based organizations to find like-counseling for this individual. Mr. Knight continues to push to enhance programs within the USFS encouraging recognition for mental health services for wildland firefighters facing emotional distress while on assignments.

Silver City Interagency Hotshot Crew (IHC), Gila National Forest

Outstanding Wildland Fire EMS Crew of the Year

While enroute to a wildfire, the Silver City IHC were the first on scene of a vehicle rollover. They immediately assessed the scene, requested local EMS, and started traffic control on a very busy interstate. Crew EMTs quickly assessed the injured driver and passenger. The passenger was stable and able to be moved to a safe area off the interstate, but the driver needed to be extricated. The vehicle was on its side partially in the east bound lane. Unable to get the patient out through the doors, the crew members opted to remove the windshield, stabilize the patient, and extract the patient. Once the patient was stabilized and out of the vehicle, local EMS arrived, and the patient was transferred to the ambulance and taken to the hospital. State law enforcement arrived and relieved the crewmembers who were controlling traffic. Silver City IHC EMTs and crewmembers went above and beyond their normal duties without hesitation. They managed the scene and patient care incredibly well from start to finish.

Prescribed Fire Crew, Hoosier National Forest

Lauren Zack, Tyler Hatfield, Gage Otto, Jason Combs, and Mike Bishop, Maggie Schuetter, and Terry Severson

Outstanding Wildland Fire EMS Crew of the Year

After completion of a successful prescribed fire, decisive and timely actions, built on a foundation of solid training and preparation, resulted in saving the life of one of their colleagues. After having been released from the burn, a firefighter suffered what doctors later confirmed as a major heart attack. He was found at his personal vehicle, having collapsed, and fallen part way under the truck. The first to

find him immediately contacted 911 and dispatch, who then deployed resources back to the scene, including two firefighters credentialed as EMTs. No pulse or respiration could be found, CPR was initiated, and the AED from the on-scene engine was requested. Chest compressions and multiple shocks were delivered before local EMS arrived on scene. EMS providers continued life-saving measures until a pulse was detected, approximately 24 minutes after the patient was first discovered. Amazingly, the firefighter was eventually released from the hospital, under his own power, a week later. It's been said that luck is when preparation meets opportunity, or in this case crisis. Having trained and credentialed EMTs and first aid responders available, and the immediate deployment of an AED, all played a role in this outcome. Additionally, support from dispatch and a local fire management were invaluable. The patient would later credit the fact that he was still alive to "exceptional people who pay attention in class."

Scott Phillips, BLM Arizona

Outstanding Wildland Fire EMS Distinguished Service

Scott Phillips has dedicated his life to both Municipal Fire EMS and Wildland Fire EMS. Scott is on staff with the Arizona Wildfire Academy and has taught the Medical Unit Leader (S-359) course at the Arizona Wildfire Academy for 8 consecutive years. Scott has been a mentor for many line Paramedics, EMT's, and Medical Unit Leaders. His knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm for Wildland EMS is unprecedented, and he is always willing to assist in any capacity when assigned to a fire. Scott has stated, "the availability and assignment of EMS resources to serve those operating on the fireline and keeping them safe has no limit, we do everything it takes to serve the line firefighters." Scott has many hours on the fireline as a Line Paramedic and Medical Unit Leader. He has been on two incidents involving tree strikes leading to fatalities, one year apart. This experience would sideline the best of us, but not Scott. He uses those experiences to help others to be better prepared to do their jobs. His ability to understand and display compassion is above reproach and it is very evident that it comes from the depth of his heart. Scott Phillips continues to provide world class emergency medical services to the wildland community.

Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District

Bryce Mitchell, James Doyle, Mathew Dargan, Brian Conn

Award of Excellence in Wildland Fire EMS/Rescue

Air Operations Helicopter Rescuer Brian Conn was at home sleeping after his shift when he was awakened by his dog to be let outside. Unable to get back to sleep, he opened a local news page on his phone and discovered a post about on an ongoing incident involving significant injuries. He contacted the individual reporting the event and received information that they were looking for a night rescue hoist helicopter through the local dispatch center. Firefighter Conn contacted the Air Operations Program Manager and pilot Capt. Bryce Mitchell to inform him of the situation. Capt. Mitchell then contacted the dispatch center to advise them that Metro Fire had a night operations capable rescue hoist ship available. The crew was assigned to the rescue of an individual who was critically injured during a family camping event in a remote area by a fallen tree, which had also killed his twin brother. Upon arrival at the extraction site with, the assistance of the local county search and rescue team, the crew successfully extracted the critically injured patient within a confined area surrounded by trees exceeding 180 feet and transported the victim safely to a local hospital. Because of the injuries to the patient, the remote location, and the distance ground rescue personnel would have had to move the patient to transport, without the efforts of the crew the patient was unlikely to survive. The crew's courage, determination, teamwork, and steadfast devotion to duty reflected great credit upon them and upheld the highest traditions of the Fire Service.

Idaho City Hotshot Crew, Boise National Forest

Award of Excellence in Wildland Fire EMS/Rescue

A helicopter crashed into a river while engaged in bucket operations on a wildland fire. The superintendent of the Idaho City Hotshots immediately reported the Incident within an Incident (IWI) to the fire communications in a clear and concise manner and remained as the main point of contact for the incident for an extended period. The rest of the crew attempted to rescue the two pilots, who were still trapped in the wreckage in the river, which was swift and deep. The crew swam across the river, pulled one of the pilots to shore, and initiated CPR. Other members of the crew attempted to free the second pilot from the wreckage. Eventually, the second pilot was disentangled and brought to shore where treatment was started. The second pilot was transported by EMS helicopter to the nearest emergency department. Crewmembers swam across the river with equipment and an AED held above their heads to reach the first pilot. With assistance from the crew, the first pilot was short hauled to an awaiting ambulance and transported to the nearest emergency care facility. Unfortunately, both pilots succumbed to their injuries. The efforts and actions of the Idaho City Hotshots were nothing less than heroic and represented the highest standards of commitment to Wildland Fire EMS.

Congratulations to all the awardees and nominees. Through leadership and initiative, they have made significant contributions to the safety of the wildland fire community. These awards are well deserved. More information about the awards program and how to nominate an individual or crew can be found on the NWCG EMC webpage, <https://www.nwcg.gov/committees/emergency-medical-committee>.