

WASHINGTON STATE FALLEN FIREFIGHTER REMEMBERANCES



The fire service of Washington State will be unable to gather as planned on June 7, 2020, to honor our members who died in the line of duty in 2019 due to the corona virus.

While we might not be able to connect in person, we join our hearts and thoughts with the families and the departments of these fallen heroes. Their memories and stories will always live on within each of us everyday. They are not forgotten.

Firefighter Crystal Murphy
Lacey Fire Department
December 25, 2017

Assistant Chief Christian Johnson
Okanagan County Fire District 3
October 10, 2019

Firefighter Erik "Justin" Shouse
Snohomish County Fire District 7
April 22, 2018

Chief Don Waller
Okanagan County Fire District 6
November 6, 2019

Captain Mike Zainfeld
Cowlitz County Fire District 2
September 19, 2019

Firefighter/Paramedic Philip Oldham
Grays Harbor County Fire District 2
November 15, 2019

Lieutenant Kirk Robinson
Bothell Fire Department
October 4, 2019

Firefighter Dave Lewis (retired)
Valley Regional Fire Authority
Historic Auburn Fire Department
December 22, 2019

Honoring Their Sacrifice ~ Upholding Our Tradition





Firefighter Crystal Murphy
Lacey Fire Department
December 25, 2017

Crystal Murphy, a Lacey firefighter who mentored hundreds of girls interested in the fire service, died on Christmas Day 2017. She was 40 and a firefighter and EMT for nine years at Lacey Fire District 3. "Crystal was a very, very dedicated public servant and a role model for firefighters, particularly women, in the fire service everywhere," Lacey Fire Chief Steve Brook said.

Murphy was known for her work as an advocate for diversifying the fire service. Nationally, about four percent of firefighters are women, according to the National Fire Protection Agency. Murphy wanted to change that. Using Camp Blaze as a model, Murphy helped start the Capital Metro Fire Girls Camp, a two-day program in Olympia.

"The camp's focus was more on leadership than firefighting," said Ryan Cox, a Lacey fire captain, "but her advocacy helped show more girls that they could pursue that career. She was also the first female member of the Thurston County Special Operations Rescue Team. She really was in love with the job in the fire department," he said. "I have a feeling there will be more women who join because (Murphy) gave her support."



Firefighter Erik "Justin" Shouse
Snohomish County Fire District 7
April 22, 2018

Camano Island Fire & Rescue Commissioner and Snohomish Fire District 7 Firefighter Erik Shouse died unexpectedly at home Sunday morning, April 22, 2018. He is survived by his wife, a kindergarten teacher on Camano, and their two young daughters. Shouse was hired January 6, 2003, as a firefighter/paramedic with Snohomish Fire District 7 and spent most of his career assigned to the Medic Unit at Station 76 in Mill Creek.

He was known for his drive to serve the community and friendly, smiling demeanor. "For 15 years Erik was a valued member of Fire District 7, providing a quality of care expected by the citizens that we serve," Fire Chief Gary Meek said. "His humor in the station brought a calmness to his crew when necessary. He is greatly missed by his Fire District 7 family."



**Captain Mike Zainfeld
Cowlitz County Fire District 2
September 19, 2019**

Battalion chief Mike Zainfeld, a 25-year firefighting veteran of Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue, took his own life on September 9, 2019. Zainfeld was on medical leave when he died,

Cowlitz 2 reported. Cowlitz 2 Fire Chief Dave LaFave said Zainfeld suffered from job-related post-traumatic stress, so it is considered a line of duty death.

Zainfeld's death is a reminder about the hidden stresses that first responders face routinely. His comrades remember Mike as an outgoing, kindhearted leader devoted to serving his community. "He was about as dedicated to the fire service as anybody you're ever going to find," LaFave said. "Mike was the guy who balanced the scales between different kinds of personalities. He was always happy, always working with and for the folks he was responsible for." Cowlitz Fire District 6 firefighter paramedic Stacie Poff noted, "Zainfeld was a kindhearted man who looked out for everybody. He was a leader. Very good at his job. He loved his family, his friends."

Zainfeld started with Cowlitz 2 in September 1994 as a fire cadet in the first year of that program. He was hired full time in 2000 after completing paramedic training in Tacoma. After several years as a fire fighter, he was promoted to lieutenant, captain, and finally battalion chief. He was active in all hazard deployments, qualified as a division supervisor, and had been on assignments in several states.

Zainfeld enjoyed spending time with his immediate and extended fire family, and his German shepherd, Max, and loved the outdoors, fishing, flying his drone and reading history books



**Lieutenant Kirk Robinson
Bothell Fire Department
October 4, 2019**

Bothell Fire Lt. Kirk Robinson died from duty-related melanoma associated with exposures suffered while firefighting. "Kirk impacted many lives – thousands," said Jim Vandertoorn, battalion chief with the Bothell Fire Department. "He had a huge heart, huge heart."

Robinson served with the Bothell Fire Department for 18 years. "Anywhere he went, he reached out to everyone. He was a magnet for people," said Michelle Pidduck with the Shoreline Fire Department. "I would say he was a mountain of service to others. Extremely compassionate. His tank never emptied. He helped everybody, whether he was on or off duty, he was always doing something for somebody. Incomparable in terms of that, he was just incredible. I love him," Vandertoorn said.



**Assistant Chief Christian Johnson
Okanagan County Fire District 3
October 10, 2019**

Christian Dean Johnson, 55, a volunteer assistant chief with Okanogan County Fire District 3, died October 10, 2019, at Harborview Medical Center in Seattle, where he had spent the last month in intensive care trying to recover from third degree burns to more than 50% of his body he suffered while fighting the Spring Coulee Fire started on the evening on September 1.

Christian served his country as a sergeant in the U.S. Army, and was deployed with the Washington State National Guard from November 2003-May 2005 in Baghdad. He retired after 22 years of service and volunteered for the Okanogan Fire Department for 20 years.

Christian is a selfless man who was always willing to help those in need, and never asked for anything in return. "He always felt that helping others was important", his wife Pamela said.



**Chief Don Waller
Okanagan County Fire District 6
November 6, 2019**

For more than 45 years, Don Waller devoted his life to fire fighting in the Methow Valley, starting as a volunteer in high school and working to create a fire district of four stations that he led as chief for many years. Waller died November 6, 2019, at home in Winthrop, about a year after being diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, which resulted from his exposure to toxins during his years as a firefighter. Waller was 65.

"Don lived and breathed firefighting," said Darold Brandenburg, who serves as a commissioner for the fire district. "He gave his entire life to it, not just the death, but the whole thing. "I knew Don my entire life. I fought fires with him for 26 years. Don made more sacrifices than just about anyone I know in this town."

Waller started his fire career as a volunteer at the Winthrop station in 1972 when he was 18 and still in high school. "At the time, fire protection was provided by four stations that operated independently of each other," said Cody Acord, who became fire chief after Waller's retirement in 2018. Waller became an assistant chief in Winthrop in 1976 and chief in 1981, both volunteer positions. When the different stations in the valley were consolidated into a fire district, Waller became the first fulltime paid fire chief in 2002.

"According to his son, when the siren went off, Don ran from his house through the neighbors' yards to the Winthrop station, because it was faster than driving," Acord said.



**Firefighter/Paramedic Philip Oldham
Grays Harbor County Fire District 2
November 15, 2019**

Phil started with Grays Harbor Fire District #2 in April 2004 as a Firefighter/Paramedic. He was promoted to Lieutenant/Paramedic in January 2015.

He served as the Fire District's Health & Safety Officer for many years, and was instrumental in the development of its safety program. He had a passion for the breathing air that supported firefighters.

Phil was in charge of the Self-Contained Breathing Air Program for the fire district. He led the committee that oversaw the selection of SCBA's for four agencies, and was instrumental in securing an Assistance to Firefighter Grant which paid for the purchase of 101 SCBA's. He was very proud of that program and took very special care of making sure that firefighters were safe. Oldham was also involved in wildland fire deployments throughout the state.

Three words sum up Philip well: Service, Family and Faith. First, Philip was a servant. In addition to his years of service as a firefighter and volunteer, Philip served anyone who had a need. He always put others first. Philip was a man of great faith. He loved reading his Bible and engaging in deep theological discussions. Philip left us on November 15, 2019, at Providence St. Peter's Hospital after a five month long battle with a rare and aggressive form of leukemia. He went peacefully, surrounded by the people he loved. He was 52 years old.



**Firefighter Dave Lewis (retired)
Valley Regional Fire Authority
Historic Auburn Fire Department
December 22, 2019**

On December 22, 2019, the Valley Regional Fire Authority said goodbye to Firefighter First Class Dave Lewis after a long battle with occupational cancer. Dave started his firefighting career with the City of Auburn Fire Department in 1982, retiring from the Valley Regional Fire Authority in 2010.

Dave served his communities for nearly 28 years in many different capacities, including over 14 years as a Special Operations Team member. He received a Medal of Merit and Meritorious Unit Citation for outstanding work in this specialty which included water rescue, hazardous materials, confined space rescue and rope rescue.

Dave was diagnosed with cancer in 2011, shortly after retiring. He fought valiantly while living life to the fullest, enjoying his family and the outdoors. He was an avid bicyclist, skier, hiker, motorcycle enthusiast and talented musician. Dave's strength, work ethic, and compassion will be missed by all.

"Dave was a gentle giant. He was naturally quiet but had a strong presence in the fire station and on the fire ground. He was a pillar of physical and mental strength and was good at his job. Dave had a good work-life balance and understood the importance of enjoying outdoor recreation," said Deputy Chief David Larberg.