



### Message from Fire Chief Douglas A. Holton:

Seasons Greetings! On behalf of the Milwaukee Fire Department, I would like to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

In this issue, we address holiday safety tips as they pertain to placing natural Christmas trees in buildings and homes. We strongly recommend that all Milwaukee home and business owners follow these tips to ensure their safety and the safety of their loved ones.

Also in this issue, we introduce our Significant Injury Plan—a plan that will help protect our members and prevent them from sustaining major injuries. We also highlight Engine 8's noble volunteer service, and the recent MFD Meritorious Service Awards Banquet. Lastly, we say farewell to a good friend and coworker Deputy Chief Skonieczny.

I hope you enjoy this issue of MFD Hot News and please don't forget to submit material for our quarterly newsletter.

Sincerely,

Douglas A. Holton

# MFD HOT NEWS

## The Milwaukee Fire Department Begins Its Quest to Eliminate On-the-Job Injuries



*The gloves shown above were collected from a firefighter who sustained a significant burn to his wrist.*

For the last 136 years, the Milwaukee Fire Department has viewed injuries as normal and synonymous to the occupation. When a member was injured, he or she went on injury leave and all other department members were back to ordinary business. Today, the MFD is changing the way on-the-job injuries are viewed, and handled. The department now has a cutting-edge after action to “in the line of duty” injuries called the MFD Significant Injury Plan.

The MFD Significant Injury Plan was an idea collectively crystallized by the fire chief, the assistant fire chief, seven deputy chiefs, and the 12 members of the Health and Safety Committee. The plan was conceived after a few department members sustained significant burn injuries that were later found to be avoidable.

Within the department, these injuries brought on an eagerness to delve into the reasons why they were occurring, and how as an organization we could better prevent them from occurring again.

The MFD began to investigate each significant injury reported by a member in 2008, and consequently, piloted the Significant Injury Plan. The plan entails looking at current protocols, recreating scenes, taking photos, and interviewing all the crewmembers, witnesses and the injured at the scene. The significant injury investigations mirror how OSHA investigates line of duty deaths.

These initial investigations began to uncover some pertinent information about why these injuries were happening. The investigations unveiled a variety of reasons; however, all the injuries were found to be avoidable.

The Significant Injury Plan was not created as a disciplinary action to the injured, but a way to stop other department members from sustaining the same, or more significant, injuries. In addition, the MFD is aware that occasionally unique situations arise causing someone to get hurt. For example, one of our firefighters was faced with rescuing a kid from a burning home with only one glove. The firefighter lost his other glove, but still took the calculated risk to save the child. As a result, he sustained a serious burn on the hand missing a glove.

The Significant Injury Plan calls for a set of procedures to be followed immediately after a department member is badly hurt. First, the firefighting deputy chief decides if an injury is significant or minor. Significant injuries range from lacerations, smoke inhalation, thermal and chemical burns, or falls from a considerable distance. If the injury is identified as significant, dispatch is notified and an alert is sent to the command staff. The Incident Safety Officer on the scene then collects any evidence related to the incident, and retrieves the injured safety gear and equipment.

*Continued on next page...*

The gear and equipment are photographed, as well as the injury scene, including, all sides of the building, the address, entryways to the building, and the main point of entry. An interior picture of the building layout and damage is also depicted, as well as the spot where the member was injured.

Depending on the person's injuries, either his/her protective gear (all MFD members are given two sets at no cost) or equipment is sent back to the bureau from which it was received. At the bureau, the gear or equipment is meticulously inspected, and either sent back to the manufacturer, repaired, or replaced.

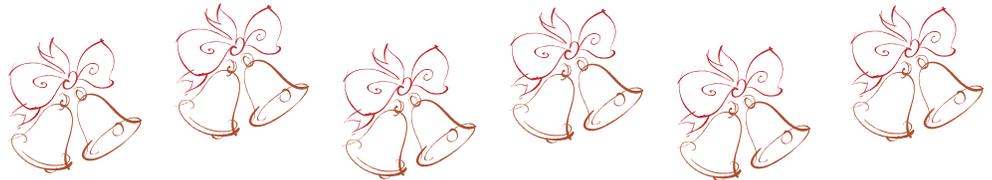
All people who were present at the scene of the injury—the firefighting deputy chief, battalion chief, incident safety officer, company officer, and a witness—must write a report about the incident.

After all the documentation, photos, and the investigation are complete, a presentation is put together outlining the findings of the incident. It is presented to all chief officers and the MFD Health and Safety Committee. The Health and Safety Committee then develops best practices. All the information gathered from the onset of the injury is then made into a DVD. The DVD is sent to each firehouse and bureau head with a sign-off sheet, which each MFD member has to sign to confirm he or she has watched it.

“The ultimate goal of creating the Significant Injury Plan is to keep our members safe on the job. Our people are our greatest asset,” said Chief Holton. “Our department is aiming to be a world leader in firefighter safety, and eventually, want to be known as eliminating on-the-job injuries.”



Firefighters Brad Flees and Dan Hoover ring bells for the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Germantown on Black Friday.



## Engine 8's Green Shift Members Volunteer Their Time to a Great Cause

When Engine 8's green shift members read a flyer circulating in the department for volunteers to ring bells for the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign, the four crewmembers were zealous about signing up.

The green shift crew at Engine 8 — Brad Flees, Dan Holdmann, Aaron Lipski and Dan Hoover—set a goal to raise the most money for the Salvation Army's distinct Christmas campaign in a five-hour time period. The four rang bells on Black Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Wal-Mart Supercenter in Germantown. All four firefighters were off-duty and coming off a 24-hour shift that involved a Thanksgiving Day third-alarm fire they helped extinguish.

*“According to the Salvation Army, they raised the most money in Southeastern Wisconsin that day and managed to fill up three kettles in five hours.”*

The crew, who raised money dressed in their turnout gear, collected \$1325. According to the Salvation Army, they raised the most money in Southeastern Wisconsin that day and managed to fill up three kettles in five hours.

Engine 8's green shift is now challenging other Milwaukee firefighters to volunteer their time to the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign, and to raise more funds than they did to help the increased number of hungry and needy families in Milwaukee.

The challenge is on!

## The Milwaukee Fire Department Held Its Meritorious Service Awards Banquet



*Fire Captain Perry Bertonni presents the son of the late Firefighter Michael Berry with the Lifetime Achievement Award.*

The Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) held its Meritorious Service Awards Banquet November 5 at the Renaissance Place. The banquet was held to honor and award those who show great courage, ability and devotion to the fire service. The emcee for the evening was Battalion Chief Michael Romas, and MFD Lieutenant Michael Wright's band played live music. Food was catered by Saz's.

The award recipients included:

### Class "B" Fire Award

Captain Rick Mueller  
 Captain Dean Garski  
 Captain Daniel Lipski  
 Captain Terry Lintonen  
 Lieutenant Gregory Mindt  
 Lieutenant Michael Nowak  
 Firefighter Anthony Rueda  
 Firefighter Jeffrey Wills  
 Firefighter Paul Lewis-Mizlo  
 Firefighter Mark Lipinski

### Class "C" Fire Award

Lieutenant Carter Hunnicutt  
 Lieutenant James Mueller  
 Heavy Equipment Operator Christian Osell  
 Firefighter Jerry Allen  
 Firefighter Ezra Aitch

### Lifetime Achievement Award

Firefighter Michael Berry (posthumous)

### Community Service Awards

Lieutenant Lawrence Jenkins

### Unit Citations

#### **Engine 33**

Lieutenant Craig Schmitt  
 Heavy Equipment Operator John Rechlitz  
 Firefighter Aaron Przybylski  
 Firefighter Armando Rodriguez

#### **Engine 35/Ladder 16**

Captain Frank Alioto  
 Heavy Equipment Operator Dan Draeger  
 Firefighter Steve Metzger  
 Firefighter Elsa Gomez  
 Firefighter Peter Wellinghoff

#### **Ladder 9**

Lieutenant Mike Bongiorno  
 Heavy Equipment Operator Jerry Wendelberger  
 Firefighter David Rickert  
 Firefighter Matthew Bryant

## City Officials State Codes and Safeguards for Natural Christmas Tree Placement in Buildings

The Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) and Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) is asking Milwaukee property and business owners to follow some newly-adopted codes, cited in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) section 10.14.2, regulating the placement of natural Christmas trees inside certain buildings. DNS is issuing the adequate safeguards Milwaukee property and business owners should implement when placing a natural Christmas tree inside any home or building. One and two-family homes are exempt from following the newly-adopted codes and adequate safeguards; however, these residents are highly recommended to take the same precautions to ensure safety.

The following are the adequate safeguards:

1. A support device should be used to secure the tree and hold it in an upright position. The device must be of sufficient size to prevent the tree from tipping over, and capable of holding a two-day supply of water. The water level must cover the tree stem at least two inches and be checked daily.
2. Any portion of the tree cannot obstruct a means of egress (exit) in the home or building.
3. Any heating source such as heating vents, space heaters, candles, fireplaces, and all open flames should be kept away from the tree at a distance equal to its height or more.
4. Only use holiday lights listed by an approved testing laboratory.
5. Any natural Christmas tree that is allowed to dry out should be removed from the building immediately.
6. The bottom end of natural Christmas trees should be cut off with a straight fresh cut at a ½ inch above the end prior to placing the tree in a stand.
7. Natural Christmas trees placed inside a home or building should only be kept up for two weeks.



**Courage · Integrity · Honor**



The Milwaukee Fire Department (MFD) is the primary fire suppression, prevention, rescue and emergency medical service for the City of Milwaukee. The department's motto is "Courage, Integrity and Honor." MFD consists of approximately 1000 firefighters, many of which serve simultaneously as paramedics providing emergency medical services. MFD is known as one of the best fire departments nationwide for its response times and other quality services.

**Check us out on the Web!**  
[www.milwaukee.gov/mfd](http://www.milwaukee.gov/mfd)

## SUBMISSIONS

We welcome submissions to MFD Hot News on upcoming events, unique runs, stories pertaining to saving someone's life or property, our MFD heroes and heroines, and/or anything worthy of recognition.

This newsletter is quarterly and a means to broadcast the excellent work done by the Milwaukee Fire Department. Let our story be told!

If you have a story idea, please e-mail the Public Relations Manager, Tiffany Wynn, at [ttwynn@milwaukee.gov](mailto:ttwynn@milwaukee.gov). Thank you.

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# MFD HOT NEWS

## **Farewell to Former MFD Deputy Chief Warren J. Skonieczny**



*Deputy Chief Skonieczny stands in the middle as a group of his peers salute him on his last day with the Milwaukee Fire Department.*

MFD Former Deputy Chief Warren J. Skonieczny retired from the department October 9, 2008, after 36 years of service. Chief Skonieczny successfully advanced through the ranks of the MFD during his tenure. He started as a firefighter, and was promoted to heavy equipment operator, fire lieutenant, fire captain, fire battalion chief, and firefighting deputy chief. He held his last position for over 8 years.

Chief Skonieczny was also the president of the MFD Museum and Historical Society at the time of his retirement.

Throughout his years with the MFD, Chief Skonieczny was a battalion chief at the Bureau of Instruction and Training, and a member of the

Chief Officers' Association.

He will be dearly missed by his former colleagues. MFD Fire Chief Douglas A. Holton, stated, "Chief Ski was a valuable member to the Milwaukee Fire Department and his absence will be felt. We wish him a happy retirement and the best in his future endeavors."

Chief Skonieczny will now have more time to spend with his wife, two children, and grandchildren.