

DIVISION OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL

TOM GALLAGHER  
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER  
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

**OUTSTANDING FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PERSONNEL HONORED**

**TALLAHASSEE**-Governor Jeb Bush, Chief Financial Officer Tom Gallagher and the other members of the State Cabinet today honored fire and rescue service personnel from around Florida for outstanding contributions to their industry and their communities.

Many of the awards were given for particular acts of heroism, both on and off the job. Stories included a paramedic who saved a woman from a car submerged in a canal, a fire inspector who rendered critical care to an injured person at his daughter's school program, and a volunteer firefighter who jumped without gear into a rain-swollen river to help save a woman and her daughter.

"The citizens of Florida are fortunate to have such dedicated and brave individuals committed to their safety and well-being," said Gallagher, who also serves as State Fire Marshal. "These men and women are role models, but all who answer the call to serve and protect the public are heroes, and I extend my gratitude to each and every one."

Florida's Governor and Cabinet also recognized firefighters' commitment to raising money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association as part of the International Association of Firefighters' annual "Fill the Boot" campaign. The campaign has raised more than \$200 million for the charity during the past 50 years.

Seventeen fire and rescue workers and one fire school were recognized for outstanding service in 2003:

**Florida Fire Chief of the Year** - Terry Schenk, Seminole County Fire Department  
**Florida Firefighter of the Year** - Henry Farfan, Islamorada Fire Rescue Unit  
**Florida Forestry Firefighter of the Year** - Joe Burroughs, Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry  
**Florida Fire Marshal of the Year** - Richard C. Butcher, Tarpon Springs Fire Rescue  
**Florida Fire Inspector of the Year** - Rick Ridenour, Alachua County Fire Rescue  
**Florida Public Educator of the Year** - Lois "Puddin" Race, St. Lucie County Fire District  
**Florida Professional Firefighter of the Year** - Jerry L. Polk, Orange County Fire Rescue Service  
**Florida Fire Instructor of the Year** - Chief George Bessler, Seminole County Fire Department  
**Florida Paramedic of the Year** - Stewart Beale, Jr., Hillsborough County Fire Rescue  
**Florida Emergency Vehicle Technician of the Year** - Lt. Gregory A. Wilk, Palm Coast Fire Department  
**Florida Fire Investigator of the Year** - Kevin B. Hays, Tallahassee Fire Department  
**Florida Volunteer Firefighter of the Year** - Jesse L. Gaskins, Sun 'N Lake of Lake Placid Fire Department  
**Hazmat Responder of the Year** - Nick Devita, Ocala Fire Department  
**Search and Rescue Responder of the Year** - Captain Jeff Strickland, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue  
**Emergency Medical Service/Rescue of the Year** - Peter Allen, Tequesta Fire Department  
**Emergency Management Professional of the Year** - Bob Lay, Brevard County Emergency Management Program  
**Florida Public Information Officer of the Year** - Gary Jordan, North Bay Fire District  
**Certified Training Center of the Year** - Miami Training