



DIVISION OF STATE FIRE MARSHAL

TOM GALLAGHER

GALLAGHER PRESENTS 2005 FIRE SERVICE AWARDS

Ten men and women, one school recognized for outstanding service

TALLAHASSEE—State Fire Marshal Tom Gallagher and Agricultural Commissioner Charles Bronson today honored 10 men and women and a school for exemplary dedication to the fire, rescue and emergency management service. The award recipients were chosen by their colleagues for actions last year ranging from pulling a woman from a burning house to training fellow responders how to safely handle hazardous materials.

“In the aftermath of back-to-back hurricanes and the threat of man-made disasters, in addition to daily duties of responding to fires, these individuals have valiantly responded to the needs of the people of Florida,” Gallagher said. “On behalf of the State Fire Marshal’s Office and the people of Florida, we give them and all who wear an emergency responder uniform our heartfelt thanks for their service.”

“Every year countless lives and millions of dollars’ worth of property are saved because of the dedication of these men and women,” Bronson said. “This annual ceremony is an opportunity to let them know how much we appreciate all that they do.”

Gallagher and Bronson presented proclamations signed by Governor Jeb Bush and other members of the Cabinet recognizing them for being named fire and rescue service personnel of the year for 2005 and declaring this week “Florida Firefighter Appreciation Week.”

The 2005 honorees are:

- Fire Chief of the Year — Chief Barry B. Baker, Ormond Beach Fire Department
- Fire Marshal of the Year — Wes Hayes, Polk County Fire Services
- Fire Instructor of the Year — Cindy Ferguson, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, Bushnell
- Forestry Firefighter of the Year — Glenn Davis, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry, Suwannee
- Fire Inspector of the Year — Frank Raike, Orange County Fire Rescue
- Career Firefighter of the Year — Mike Presby, St. Cloud Florida Fire Rescue Department
- Professional Firefighter of the Year — Bob Saunders, Orange County Fire/ Rescue Department
- Fire Investigator of the Year — Juan Bailey, Bureau of Fire and Arson Investigations, Florida Department of Financial Services, Orlando
- Volunteer Firefighter of the Year — Robert L. Bush, Arcadia Volunteer Fire Department
- Emergency Manager of the Year — Robert “Chip” Patterson, Director, Jacksonville Emergency Preparedness Division
- Training Center of the Year — Gulf Coast Community College, Panama City

(more)

2005 Fire Service Awards

April 18, 2006

Page Two

Gallagher also presented a proclamation recognizing a 50-year law enforcement veteran who is retiring from the State Fire Marshal's law enforcement agency, the Bureau of Fire and Arson Investigations. Garrison began his career at age 21 in 1956 and served for more than 15 years with the Bureau, the last nine years as captain of the southwest Florida region.

As part of Florida Firefighter Appreciation Week, Gallagher also recognized Florida firefighters for their 2005 record-breaking "Fill the Boot" campaign. Last year's campaign raised nearly \$2.3 million – almost \$1 million more than in 2004 – for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Their fundraising total last year led the nation.

Following the awards presentation, Gallagher led a ceremony at the Fallen Firefighter Wall of Honor to remember 135 Florida firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Recognizing that firefighters and emergency responders are facing increasing risks due to methamphetamine, or meth, labs in Florida, Gallagher this year is pushing for legislation that would apply strong criminal penalties to meth manufacturers whose labs kill or injure a responder, and would prevent insurance companies from canceling coverage for an emergency responder injured while responding to a meth lab. The chemicals used to make meth are highly toxic and flammable, and in the last two years there have been at least 50 meth lab fires and explosions. For more information, visit www.fldfs.com/fightmeth.

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As a statewide elected officer of the Florida Cabinet, Chief Financial Officer Tom Gallagher oversees the Department of Financial Services, a multi-division state agency responsible for management of state funds and unclaimed property, assisting consumers who request information and help related to financial services, and investigating financial fraud. Gallagher also serves as the State Fire Marshal.