CALIFORNIA FIREFIGHTERS
MEMORIAL
SEPTEMBER 28 • 2019 • CAPITOL PARK
As President of California Professional Firefighters and Chair of the California Fire Foundation, I am once again honored to welcome you to the California Firefighters Memorial Ceremony, our annual tribute to the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our state.

Each year, we come together in this hallowed spot to pay tribute to the men and women who put their lives on the line every day. Whether they were lost in the flash of a catastrophe or the slow curse of a job-related disease, each of the 34 men and women we honor today risked it all for each one of us.

We gather in Sacramento this year with heavy hearts as we reflect upon the losses experienced by our profession and those with whom we serve. Huge swaths of our state continue their slow recovery from terrifying, record-breaking wildfires. Some of those we honor gave their all to protect these heartbroken communities.

These ferocious incidents – and the determination of those who respond – remind us again that when a firefighter puts on turnouts and heads out to a call, there is always the chance that he or she will not return. This ceremony further reminds us that for every fallen hero, there is a family that has also paid the price – a price that we can never forget.

The polished limestone wall at the California Firefighters Memorial honors the more than 1,400 who gave their lives in the line of duty since California became a state. This special tribute not only honors their sacrifice, but also the determination and commitment of those who fight on every day in service to their state and community.

As firefighters and Californians, we recognize the danger that our brothers and sisters face every day and the significant sacrifices made by the families they leave behind.

For all of them, and for the people of our state, we etch their names into this proud Memorial.

Brothers and sisters, we will never forget you.

Brian K. Rice
President, California Professional Firefighters
Chair, California Fire Foundation
CALIFORNIA FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL CEREMONY

UNIFORMED FIREFIGHTER PROCESSION

PRESENTATION OF COLORS

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
Andy Whaley, Captain, Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District

NATIONAL ANTHEM
Dennis Rodriguez, Firefighter-Paramedic, Los Angeles City Fire Department

INVOCATION
Senior Fire Chaplain Kevin Snider, Captain (Retired), Sacramento Metropolitan Fire District

WELCOME
Brian K. Rice, President, California Professional Firefighters

ON BEHALF OF CALIFORNIA
Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California

REMEMBERING A FELLOW FIREFIGHTER
Joe Suarez, Superintendent, Arrowhead Hotshots, National Parks Service

“THERE YOU’LL BE”
UC Davis A Cappella Group

IN HONOR OF SURVIVING FAMILIES
Ashley Iverson, Surviving Spouse, Cory David Iverson

FLAG PRESENTATION TO FAMILIES
Ed Rodriguez, President, California Fire Chiefs Association

THE LAST ALARM
Dan Terry, President Emeritus, California Professional Firefighters

“TAPS”
Thomas Jay, Battalion Chief, City of Riverside Fire Department

RELEASE OF DOVES

RECESSIONAL
CARL SMITH  
Engineer, Palm Springs Fire Department  
June 21, 1957

Carl Smith was a World War II veteran and member of the Palm Springs Fire Department for seven years, working his way through the ranks to become an engineer. Carl passed away after suffering a job-related heart attack in June of 1957.

WILLIAM E. BAKER, III  
Fire Captain, Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District  
August 13, 1989

William “Bill” Baker came to the fire service from law enforcement – he joined a volunteer department while working as a Berkeley police officer and never looked back. Bill began his nine-year career at Rodeo-Hercules Fire Protection District, and he worked as an administrative captain who served as the department’s training officer. Bill loved spending time with his family, enjoyed camping and played on the Rodeo Fire co-ed volleyball and softball teams. In August of 1989, Bill succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer.

CHARLES WARREN HASLUP  
Senior Engineer, Vista Fire Department  
February 27, 1999

Charles “Chuck” Haslup was inspired by his uncles and brother-in-law to follow their footsteps into the fire service. Chuck began his career with the Vista Fire Department and was awarded “Firefighter of the Year” in 1980 and 1993. Chuck enjoyed spending time with his family, traveling, sci-fi movies, diving, snorkeling, physical fitness and he completed the San Diego Marathon. He succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in February 1999.
DON GASPERSON  
Fire Chief, Pacific Grove Fire Department  
November 8, 2010

Don Gasperson worked for the Pacific Grove Fire Department for 37 years. Don joined the department in 1947 and rose to the rank of fire chief in 1959. During his career he established an EMT program for all firefighters and was appointed as Deputy State Fire Marshal. Outside of the fire service, he was a keen golfer and fisherman. Don also served on the Pacific Grove City Council for over 10 years. In his spare time, he liked nothing more than to watch his grandchildren play sports and frequently traveled to Philadelphia to support his grandson who played for the Philadelphia Eagles. In November 2010, Don passed away from job-related cancer.

RICHARD WARDALL  
Fire Captain, San Jose Fire Department  
July 10, 2015

Richard “Rick” Wardall never planned on becoming a firefighter. After being involved in a life-threatening motorcycle accident, he changed career paths and initially became a paramedic before deciding to become a firefighter. He served the citizens of San Jose with honor and distinction for nearly 30 years. Rick became an experienced diver, certified dive instructor and ran his own dive business for several years. Rick succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in July of 2015.

RYAN LEE THORNTON, SR.  
Captain, City of Long Beach Fire Department  
September 30, 2015

Ryan Lee Thornton, Sr. served in the U.S. Navy prior to starting a career in the fire service. He started his firefighting career with the Long Beach Fire Department and rose through the ranks to captain during his 18-year service. Outside of work, he donated his time as a youth basketball coach, youth mentor and volunteered for the Long Beach Fire Department children’s charity. Ryan’s hobbies included spending time with his family on vacation, sports, mentoring youth and practicing his faith. Ryan succumbed to the effects of a job-related illness in September of 2015.
ALLEN J. COLUMBRO
Fire Captain, CAL FIRE
October 14, 2015

Allen Columbro was passionate about the fire service and began his CAL FIRE career in 1975 in the Amador/El Dorado Unit as a seasonal firefighter. He worked in several units including Humboldt-Del Norte, Riverside, Madera/Mariposa/Merced and Tuolumne-Calaveras. In a career spanning 33 years he tirelessly served the citizens of California. Allen’s interests included history and collecting antiques. Allen passed away from the effects of job-related cancer in October 2015.

RONALD L. CASTRO
Firefighter, Orange County Fire Authority
November 30, 2016

Ron Castro was a veteran of the Vietnam War before joining the City of Santa Ana Fire Department. Most of his four decades as a firefighter were spent with Santa Ana until he joined Orange County Fire Authority when the agencies merged. Ron was well-known for his positive energy as well as his passion for golf and traveling. He succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in November 2016.

ROBERT T. WOLF
Battalion Chief, CAL FIRE
March 2, 2017

Bob Wolf was born to a firefighting family, following in his father’s footsteps and serving California for over 35 years. Bob began his career with CAL FIRE as a seasonal firefighter, working his way to become a battalion chief. Bob was also a passionate and forceful advocate for his brothers and sisters, serving for a decade as president of CAL FIRE, Local 2881 and as 6th District Vice President for California Professional Firefighters. Outside of work he loved spending time with his family, coaching baseball and riding his motorcycle. Bob succumbed to a job-related illness in March of 2017.
ALLEN IVAN CHRONISTER, JR.
Captain, City of Long Beach Fire Department
June 8, 2017

Allen Ivan Chronister, Jr. served the citizens of Long Beach with honor and distinction for over 30 years. He followed his two cousins into the fire service and absolutely loved his profession. Outside of work his hobbies included fishing, computing and ham radio, where he received several awards for his contacts across the world. Allen passed away due to a job-related illness in June of 2017.

MARK R. DANA
Captain, Montezuma Fire Protection District
December 21, 2017

Captain Mark Dana was a third-generation firefighter following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather. Mark proudly served his community for over 33 years. Perhaps his proudest moment was when his oldest daughter joined the Montezuma Fire District and his son joined the Explorer Program for Suisun Fire District. Mark enjoyed jet skiing, fishing, camping and riding motorcycles. Mark passed away from a job-related illness in December of 2017.

ROBERT GENE BRANTLEY
Firefighter Specialist, Los Angeles County Fire Department
January 5, 2018

Robert Gene Brantley embodied the finest qualities of his profession through 19 years of service with the Los Angeles County Fire Department. A proud Navy veteran, Robert began his career in 1993 serving as a civilian firefighter with Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. During his career with LA County Fire, Robert was known for a positive “can do” attitude, and he was nicknamed “Yo” by his brothers and sisters at Station 105. Robert succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in January 2018.
JESSE LOPEZ NICASIO  
Captain, Modesto Fire Department  
January 5, 2018

Jesse Lopez Nicasio was born and raised in Modesto, and began his fire service career in 1972 as a volunteer with what was then the Industrial Fire Protection District. He rose to become department chief and when the agency consolidated in 1993, he moved over to become a fire captain, a role he held for a decade. Jesse was a founding advisor of the department’s Fire Explorer program, helping launch the career of many firefighters. Outside of work, Jesse loved to spend time with his family. In January 2018, Jesse succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer.

RICHARD ALLAN WILLIAMS  
Fire Captain, City of Santee Fire Department  
January 28, 2018

Richard “Rick” Williams wanted to become a firefighter from the time he was a child. He served the community of Santee for almost 29 years. Rick was also a member of the Santee Fire Department’s Color Guard and served as a rescue specialist on FEMA/DHS Urban Search and Rescue. He also helped initiate the LAFS (Life and Fire Safety) program, filling the role of ‘Fireman Gus’ for over a decade. Outside of work, Rick enjoyed spending time with his family, riding his Harley Davidson motorcycle and playing poker at local casinos. Rick succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in January 2018.

CECIL MORRIS  
Fire Captain, Los Angeles City Fire Department  
April 17, 2018

Cecil Morris was a proud and much-admired firefighter in Los Angeles for over three decades. “CEMO” joined the fire service in 1987, rising to the rank of captain II and serving at several stations throughout the city, the last of which was Fire Station 75. Only a few months after a hard-earned retirement, Cecil was diagnosed with job-related brain cancer, which claimed his life in April of 2018.
DAVID MICHAEL TAYLOR
Captain, Fresno Fire Department
May 23, 2018

David Taylor’s connection with Fresno Fire Department carried throughout his life, as his father, Bill Taylor, worked for the department. Deeply dedicated to his calling as a firefighter, David served nearly 36 years with Fresno Fire, retiring in 2010 with the rank of captain. Outside of the fire service, David was a devoted family man who spent much of his leisure time exploring the outdoors and wilderness areas of the country. In May of 2018, David Taylor lost his battle with job-related cancer.

GERASIMOS GRAY
Chief, City of Redding Fire Department
July 2, 2018

Gerasimos “Gerry” Gray began his fire service career in 1988 working as a seasonal firefighter with Lassen National Forest. He was later hired as a fire engineer with the Red Bluff Fire Department, promoting through the ranks to become chief in 2006. Later in his career, Gerry served as battalion chief, deputy chief and ultimately chief with the City of Redding Fire Department. Gerry proudly served the fire service community for over two decades and during this time was also the Director for the Shasta Cascade Haz Mat Response Team. Spending time with his children brought Gerry the greatest joy in his life. Gerry succumbed to job-related illness in July 2018.

BRADEN GORDIE VARNEY
Heavy Fire Equipment Operator, CAL FIRE
July 14, 2018

Braden Varney’s passion for operating equipment and love of helping others led him to proudly follow in his father’s footsteps as a HFEO. He served the citizens of California with honor and distinction for nearly 11 years. Spending time with his family gave him the most joy. He also loved to spend time at the lake, houseboating with friends, riding motorcycles and trying to make others smile. Braden succumbed to fatal injuries battling the Ferguson Fire in Mariposa County in July 2018.
ONEY DURNLEY  
Captain, Fresno Fire Department  
July 20, 2018

Oney Durney joined the Fresno Fire Department in 1972 and proudly served the citizens of Fresno for over four decades. He served on the specialized Urban Search and Rescue Team for over 20 years and mentored countless firefighters during his career. Oney loved his job and after his retirement he continued to train Fresno Fire recruits as well as Fresno City College Academy cadets. He was a cherished friend and firefighter who loved spending time with his family. In July of 2018, Oney succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer.

JEREMIAH NATHANIEL STOKE  
Fire Prevention Officer, City of Redding Fire Department  
July 26, 2018

Jeremy Stoke began his fire service career as a seasonal firefighter for CAL FIRE and was an example of selfless devotion to duty, honor and service to his community during his 14-year career. A bear of a man with a large heart, Jeremy volunteered as a Little League coach and with a number of local charities. On July 26, 2018, as the Carr Fire exploded and threatened Redding, Jeremy Stoke lost his life as he braved searing flames to save lives and help evacuate threatened residents.

SANDRA KIEFERT-JOHANNS  
Engineer, Fresno Fire Department  
July 27, 2018

Sandi Kiefert-Johanns had her eye on a firefighting career from an early age. She served as an EMT and paramedic shortly after high school. Sandi then joined the Sanger Fire Department, becoming that agency’s first female firefighter. She moved to the North Central Fire Department before becoming an engineer for Fresno Fire, where she worked for 16 years. She was an avid crafter and scrapbooker and also loved sailing with her father. In July of 2018, Sandi succumbed to job-related cancer.
BRIAN CORCORAN HUGHES
Captain, Arrowhead Interagency Hotshot Crew
July 29, 2018

Brian Hughes’ 15-year career began in Colorado as a wildland firefighter. He went on to join the Midnight Sun Hotshots, the Roosevelt Hotshots, the Monterey Hand Crew and the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska. Brian was a trusted leader and mentor who led by example, inspiring others to train hard and develop their skills. He loved the camaraderie of the team and drove himself to contribute as much as he could to the group. Brian loved to spend time with his family and friends. Brian died in the line of duty battling the Ferguson Fire.

DONALD BAN
Engineer, City of Sacramento Fire Department
August 5, 2018

Donald Ban loved the fire service and followed in his uncles’ footsteps into the fire department. He served the citizens of Sacramento with honor and distinction for nearly 30 years. He began his career with the Sacramento Fire Department in 1972 and was later promoted to the rank of engineer working as an apparatus operator. Donald enjoyed visiting car shows and loved nothing more than watching a Hawaiian sunset with his family. Donald succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in August of 2018.

PETER ANTHONY ALIOTTI
Fire Captain, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District
August 28, 2018

Peter “Pete” Aliotti proudly served the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District for 32 years, where he climbed through the ranks, eventually rising to become a fire captain. He retired from the District in 2012. Captain Aliotti was a highly esteemed member of the department. His kind heart, positive attitude and love of life made him an incredible asset to his colleagues and the community he served. Pete was especially happy when golfing or hunting around the world with friends and family. In August of 2018, Pete succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer.
JASON S. POLLARD  
Firefighter, CAL FIRE  
August 28, 2018

Jason Pollard’s firefighting roots began with his father Sam, who served in CAL FIRE’s San Diego Unit. Jason began his own CAL FIRE career as a seasonal firefighter in San Diego. He was hired full time in 2003, serving more than a decade in the Riverside Unit with honor and distinction. Outside of his work, he enjoyed spending time with his family. In August 2018, Jason succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer.

R. JOSEPH DURAN  
Fire Captain, City of Chico Fire Department  
September 12, 2018

Joey Duran loved the fire service and began his career as a firefighter with the Paradise Fire Department prior to joining the City of Chico. In total, he spent 27 years as a firefighter, earning several awards for his career and serving as the leader of the City of Chico Fire Department Rescue Team. Joey loved working with wood, working in his yard and running. Joey succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in September of 2018.

GREGORY EWERT  
Fire Captain, Modesto Fire Department  
September 23, 2018

Gregory “Greg” Ewert loved the fire service. He started and finished his career with the Modesto Fire Department and served the citizens of Modesto with honor and distinction for over 30 years. Ever an example, Greg was a dedicated firefighter who enjoyed teaching new recruits and was part of the Modesto Fire Technical Rescue Team. In his spare time, Greg was an avid fly fisherman. He also loved to read and learn new things, and he was a devoted family man. Greg succumbed to job-related cancer in September of 2018.
KENNETH JERRY HOOD
Assistant Chief, California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services
October 24, 2018

Kenneth “Ken” Hood loved the fire service. He began his career as a volunteer firefighter in Georgia at the age of 16. Ken thrived in being part of various groups such as SWIFT (South West Interface Team), FIRESCOPE and Incident Command Team. He was a chief that worked side-by-side with his firefighters and would never ask them to do something that he would not do himself. Ken was a passionate volunteer in every community he ever lived in. Ken enjoyed NASCAR, traveling, the ocean and his two dogs. In October of 2018, Ken succumbed to the effects of job-related cardiac failure.

RUSSELL VAN FAGAN
Firefighter, Los Angeles County Fire Department
November 24, 2018

Russell Fagan fell in love with the fire service when he trained to be a firefighter while in the U.S. Air Force. He served in the Los Angeles County Fire Department for 25 years, working as a hazmat specialist as well as an instructor for the hazmat special team. Outside of the firehouse, Russell was an avid surfer who dreamed of traveling to “catch all the big waves.” Russell succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in November 2018.

ROGER V. HARLESS
Captain, Contra Costa County Fire Protection District
January 9, 2019

Roger Harless loved the fire service. He served the citizens of Contra Costa County with honor and distinction for nearly 29 years, rising to become a captain at Contra Costa Station 11. In 2018, he was part of the first group to complete hazardous materials training and become a member of this specialized group of firefighters. Away from the firehouse, he was a devoted family man and coach. In January 2019, Roger succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer.
RANDALL DUARTE  
Firefighter-Paramedic, Los Angeles County Fire Department  
January 13, 2019

Randall “Randy” Duarte started his career at the Los Angeles County Fire Department as a student worker and went on to become a firefighter in December of 1995. He served the citizens of Los Angeles County with honor and distinction for over 30 years. Randy was awarded with a Certificate of Valor in 2013 and Certificate of Merit in 2017. Randy was a well-respected firefighter and will be remembered for his dedication and commitment. Outside of work, he loved coaching his children’s sports teams and watching them play. Randy passed away in January of 2019 of a job-related illness.

KEITH JAMES HERNANDEZ  
Fire Apparatus Engineer, Kings County Fire Department  
February 23, 2019

From a young age, Keith Hernandez knew he wanted to be in the fire service and his passion for helping others led him to a career as a firefighter. Keith proudly served the rural areas of his community for five years. Keith worked for various agencies in the fire service, including CAL FIRE Sonoma Lake Napa Unit as a seasonal firefighter and Clovis Fire Department. Outside of work, he enjoyed sports but he loved nothing more than spending time with his family. Keith succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in February of 2019.

 STEVEN F. CASADOS  
Fire Apparatus Engineer, CAL FIRE  
February 28, 2019

Steven “Steve” Casados began volunteering for CAL FIRE in 2000 and rose through the ranks to become fire apparatus engineer. During a career that spanned more than a decade, Steve took great pride in helping others. He thrived on the camaraderie at the fire station and his positive energy and humor filled the station. He loved spending time with his family. Steve’s passions included music, sports and exercise. Steve succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in February of 2019.
DANIEL JOSEPH LAIRD
Helitack Captain, US Forest Service
March 27, 2019

Daniel Joseph Laird knew early in life he wanted to be a firefighter. His 23-year career in the fire service included time as a hotshot and service in the Lewis Mill fire crew in the Tahoe National Forest. He led engine strike teams, hand crews and heavy equipment. Eventually, he rose to become a Helitack Captain with the Tahoe National Forest. Daniel was a keen fisherman, golfer, skateboarder, snowboarder, gardener and loved to spend time with his family. In March 2019, Daniel was conducting prescribed fire operations when his helicopter crashed and he died in the line of duty.