

2010 Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards in Swiftwater Rescue Announced

For Immediate Release

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ASHEVILLE, NC. April 3, 2010—The Higgins & Langley Memorial and Education Fund is proud to announce the 2010 Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards in Swiftwater Rescue, which recognize excellence in the dangerous technical rescue discipline of swiftwater and flood rescue.

The awards will be presented on Friday, May 14, 2010, at 7:30 p.m., at the annual National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) conference at Harrah's Casino Resort Tunica, Mississippi ~ Mid-South Convention Center (Tunica, MS: 866-635-7095; www.nasar.org: 877-893-0702).

2010 Higgins & Langley Awards

Team Incident Award

Miles City Fire Department, Miles City, MT

On March 4th, 2009, the Miles City Fire Department responded to a call about a car in the frozen Tongue River, only to find a truck pinned against an ice floe. Backed by units of the department FF/EMT Branden Stevens, who had recently graduated from a swiftwater rescue course, along with FF Tim McGlothlin, successfully rescued the truck's driver from the ice-choked river.

Potomac River Rescue Association (US Park Police, OWL Volunteer Fire Dept, Fairfax County Fire Dept. Swift Water Rescue Team, Fairfax County Police Dept. Aviation Division)

On May 31, 2009, at approximately 12:45 PM, Fire and Rescue Units from the Occoquan-Woodbridge-Lorton (OWL) Volunteer Fire Department responded to the Occoquan Reservoir Dam for a water rescue. Two fishermen were perilously stranded at the top of a seventy-two foot dam after their boat had been swept over it. OWL VFD rescue boats deployed on the reservoir 100 yards from the lip of the dam, while Fairfax County Fire Department's (FCFD) Swift Water Rescue Team, Fairfax County Police Department's Aviation Division (Fairfax 1) and the United States Park Police Department's Aviation Unit (Eagle 1) responded. FCFD's Swift Water Rescue Team set up below the dam while Fairfax 1 lowered PFDs to the fishermen, then towed one victim to waiting boats, while Eagle 1 rescued the other with a Billy Pugh net.

Individual Incident Award

Rodney O. Seals, Pennington County Water Rescue Team

On May 24th, 2009, a slow-moving thunderstorm flooded Rapid Creek, a watercourse near Rapid City, SD. Three adolescent boys became trapped by the rising water, one of them clinging to a tree branch in the current. Rodney Seals, who had just returned from a swiftwater rescue technician course, was the only trained and equipped responder available in the area. Seals was instrumental in rescuing not only the three trapped boys, but also in assisting six rescuers back from an island where they had become marooned during a rescue attempt.

Program Development

Clackamas County SWIFT Team

Clackamas County SWIFT Team is drawn from the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office and Clackamas County Fire, a unique collaboration between fire and police agencies. It is a FEMA Type 1 (14 member) Swiftwater and Floodwater Rescue Team, which responds both in and out of Oregon through the Federal EMAC program, and is the first team of its type in the state. All

members are currently training to meet qualifications for a Type 1 designation, including qualification as swiftwater rescue technician, rescue specialist, rescue boat operator, EMT and animal rescue technician, as well as additional training in helicopter and flood operations.

American Medical Response NW River Rescue Team

American Medical Response (AMR) created the Oregon River Safety Program and developed a river rescue team. Prior to its formation in 1999 an average of two people drowned each year in the Sandy River at Glenn Otto Park in Troutdale. AMRs River Rescue Team endeavored to prevent drowning deaths by providing lifeguard services and public education. In 2002 it expanded to a second site on the Clackamas River near Gladstone, Oregon. No swimmers have drowned at either park in the years that AMRs River Rescue life guards have been on duty. Each spring AMR hires a team of full and part-time Oregon state-certified paramedics, emergency medical technicians, and first responders who must first pass a rigorous swim fitness test. Team members are then trained to conduct surface rescues, perform hazard mitigation, and provide public education on water safety. In 2009 AMR celebrated the completion of its eleventh season.

Maryland Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (MDHART)

Maryland Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team consists of the Baltimore County Police Department Aviation Division, Baltimore County Fire Department Special Operations Division and the Maryland Army National Guard (Co. C, 2nd Bn., 224th Aviation Regiment). MDHART training started with pilot extrication drills, equipment loading, victim capture devices, dunker training, and swim requirements, then progressed to airborne hoist drills beginning with empty field insertions/extractions and then moved to aircraft to roof drills, aircraft to trees, aircraft to drill tower and aircraft to car exercises. After a final swim test and dunker training in 2007 personnel conducted in-water and short haul system training. It took approximately 2 years of planning and training before the MDHART became fully operational. Training continues with quarterly aviation training with the MDARNG as well as annual re-certifications on the dunker, HEEDS, victim contact and device drills.

Special Commendation

Lisa Stuart – Safe-Tay Project (Scotland)

Lisa Stuart began the Safe-Tay project following the 2006 drowning death of her brother, Graham Motion, in the Tay River in Perth, Scotland. Motion's death was compounded by the lack of qualified river rescue personnel. Stuart launched the Safe-Tay charity to improve river rescue capability, raise awareness of the hazards associated with water, and to work with local fire & rescue services, police, media and government agencies to actively promote water safety within the Tayside area, including poster campaigns and community events. They have also raised funds for the fitting of alarms linked to the city's lifebelt stations. In the event of a lifebelt being removed from its station, an alarm will sound and the CCTV camera linked to the system will be activated, enabling emergency crews to locate a possible river rescue incident faster, and also preventing the malicious use of lifesaving equipment. Stuart, who is a civilian and director of the Safe-Tay charity, also completed an operations-level swiftwater rescue course to gain a better understanding of the hazards involved for crews responding river rescue incidents.

Outstanding Achievement

US Coast Guard – Red River Flood Response

In late March and early April 2009, the Red River crested at record levels in the area of Fargo and Grand Forks, ND, placing tens of thousands of citizens at risk. The Coast Guard began mobilizing members from units nationwide, and their aircraft, airboats and rescue crews assisted local agencies in North Dakota during the worst flooding yet recorded. Aircrews navigated across nearly 600 miles of treacherous upper Midwest territory with 60 knot winds, significant turbulence and blowing snow showers to reach Fargo, while boat crews experienced blinding snow storms, freezing temperatures and dangerous patches of ice, forcing them to make daily repairs to their airboats. Their combined efforts, however, resulted in 103 lives saved and provided assistance to over 7,000 people. Through close coordination with Sector Upper Mississippi River in St. Louis

and liaisons from other Coast Guard units, as well as other county and local emergency operations centers, the Coast Guard took the lead for search and rescue operations and accounted for over 75 percent of all lives saved by the interagency response.

Background

The Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards were established in 1993 by the National Association for Search and Rescue Swiftwater Rescue Committee in honor of Earl Higgins, a writer and filmmaker, who lost his life in 1980 while rescuing a child who was swept down the Los Angeles River, and Los Angeles County Firefighter Paramedic Jeffrey Langley, a pioneer in swiftwater rescue who lost his life in a helicopter incident in 1993.

The Awards have increased awareness about the need for specialized swiftwater and flood rescue training and preparedness. Today, worldwide training certifications have increased and agencies have been inspired to develop viable water rescue programs to protect the public and rescuers alike.

The Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards are sponsored by CFS Press, CMC Rescue, Inc., K38 Water Safety, Rescue 3 International, Rescue Source, Rescue ONE Connector Boats, and SkyHook Rescue Systems, Inc. Additional support for the Awards is provided by the Rudi Schulte Family Foundation, Jon Stephen and Karen Langley Stephen, the family of John B. and Shirley A. Rigg, and other generous individuals.

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