

2011 Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards in Swiftwater Rescue Announced

For Immediate Release

For more information: www.higginsandlangley.org
or contact Slim Ray 828-505-2917 (slimray@gmail.com)

ASHEVILLE, NC. April 3, 2011—The Higgins & Langley Memorial and Education Fund Awards Committee is proud to announce the 2011 Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards in Swiftwater Rescue, which recognize excellence in the field of flood and swiftwater rescue.

The awards will be presented on Friday, June 3, 2011, at 7:30 PM, at the annual National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) conference, at John Ascuaga's Nugget Hotel, 1100 Nugget Avenue, Sparks, NV, 89431. Telephone: 1-800-328-0876.

2011 Higgins & Langley Awards

Outstanding Achievement

Ocoee River Rescue

On October 3, 2010, Dr. Michael McCormick seriously injured his cervical spinal cord in a whitewater kayaking incident on the Ocoee River in Tennessee after being flipped in a hole at the top of Slice and Dice rapid. Paralyzed and unable to move, he was rescued by four kayakers he had met only 45 minutes before—Michael Howard, Kevin Sipe, Neal Carmack, and Bryant Haley. After realizing their new companion was in trouble, the kayakers chased him down through two sets of Class II-III rapids and were able to catch and roll him upright just before entering a larger set of rapids. At that point one of the rescuers (trained as a military medic) immobilized his neck while another paddled ahead to phone medical support. The rest got him into an eddy and with the help of a passing raft company evacuated him to the road side, where he was met by an ambulance and subsequently transported on a helicopter.

Program Development

Breeding Volunteer Fire Department Technical Rescue Team, Columbia, KY

After an incident in 2009 in which a would-be citizen rescuer drowned, the Breeding Fire Department committed to the development of a technical rescue team. Since December of 2009, under the leadership of Captain Chris Taylor and Lieutenant Brandon Harvey, rescuers have put in nearly 1000 man hours of training, consisting of rope rescue and swiftwater technician at the NFPA 1670 and 1006 level. The department has acquired a 26' enclosed trailer, technical rope rescue gear, 2 self-bailing rafts, a Mercury IRB, 10 sets of technician level PPE and 10 sets of operations PPE—altogether nearly an \$80,000 investment in technical rescue gear. The team consists of 5 swiftwater rescue technicians and 7 rope rescue technicians, and trains monthly with Taylor and Green Counties.

Killeen Rescue Team, Killeen Fire Department, Killeen, TX

After dealing with prior flooding incidents in Central Texas Lieutenant Beau Arnold and Fire Rescue Officer/Paramedics Justin Todd and Darren Morphis of the Killeen Fire Dept. developed a flood rescue program meant to deliver safe, effective response for multiple rescues and evacuations. The program was put to the test on September 7, 2010 during a flood where water conditions varied from flooded creeks with moderate debris loads rated at Class III to Class IV-V water in creeks and streets contaminated with raw sewage and major debris including trees,

household materials and fire ants. Over an 18-hour period the Killeen Fire swiftwater rescue team performed 83 flood rescues and evacuations, including one individual trapped in a tree in rising floodwaters and four dogs rescued by boat.

Team Awards

Travis County STAR Flight, Austin, TX

During the flooding following Tropical Storm Hermine in early September, 2010, Travis County STAR Flight deployed its three hoist-equipped EC-145 Public Safety Helicopters after receiving over 20 requests for search and rescue assistance throughout Central Texas. Thirteen individuals were rescued, including a man clinging to the roof of his submerged vehicle in extremely swift-moving water, three ground-based swift water boat team members whose rescue boat became stranded amongst trees in swift water, a family of four stranded on the second-story of their home, a man stranded on high ground surrounded by flood water, and four individuals trapped in their homes. All were hoisted to the aircraft with an extraction collar by a Helicopter Rescue Specialist (HRS), over half during the hours of darkness using night vision goggles.

Travis County STAR Flight Swiftwater Rescue Team: Glenn Anderson, Lynn Burttschell, Willy Culberson, Bill Derrick, Kristin McLain, Casey Ping, Chuck Spangler, Mike J. Summers, Kenneth M. Thompson

San Diego Fire-Rescue Lifeguard Swiftwater Rescue Team, San Diego, CA

On December 21, 2010, the Lifeguard Communications Center received a report from the United States Border Patrol of people trapped by water in the Tijuana River Valley. Lifeguard Swiftwater Rescue Team units responded and rescued three individuals from the Tijuana River. Much of the city was flooded in the most severe event since 1980, the major impact falling on Mission Valley, through which the San Diego River runs. Over the next forty hours, all across the city, the Lifeguard Swiftwater Rescue team rescued a total of seventy-three people and 7 dogs, responded to approximately twenty-three other calls, as well as assisting with the evacuations of some sixty people forced from their homes. Incidents included rescues of numerous persons who became trapped in their vehicles after attempting to cross the river. At the Premier Inn in Mission Valley the Lifeguard Swiftwater Rescue Team, with support from Fire Operations, constructed a tension diagonal rescue system to safely and efficiently evacuate all fifty-one occupants.

San Diego Lifeguard Swiftwater Rescue Team: John Everhart, Robert Albers, Michael Cranston, Troy Keach, John Sandmeyer, Jon Vipond, John Bahl, Jim Birdsell, Marc Brown, David Calder, Timothy Cicchetto, Charles Davey, Robert Eichelberger, Steven Malcolm, Daryl McDonald, Leslie Mendez, Ric Stell

Special Commendation

Matthew S. Peek, Water Entry Team (WET) Assistant Director, Reno Fire Department, Reno NV

On Tuesday, June 8th, 2010 Assistant Water Entry Team Director Matt Peek was instructing WET members on the Truckee River near Mayberry Park in Reno. Because of high water conditions Peek had had the team's training venue changed to the Truckee that day, making it available for rescues if needed. While the class was in session two tubers, neither wearing PFDs, struck a partially submerged log jutting out from the right bank of the river. Both were flipped out of their tubes and one female became entrapped on the log, barely able to keep her head above water. Peek exited his kayak and reached the victim, keeping her head above water until her leg was freed. Shortly afterward a second group of five tubers came down the river and struck the same log. All went into the water, and a teenage boy with the party became entrapped on the same log. He was

also rescued by Peek, who then recommended that the log be immediately removed. This was done shortly afterward with a rescue truck's winch.

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.

Thanks to our Sponsors

The Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards are sponsored by CFS Press, CMC Rescue, Inc., ESPRIT Whitewater, Fire and Rescue Concepts, LLC, K38 Water Safety, Liquid Militia, Ozark Rescue Suppliers, Rescue Canada, Rescue 3 International/Rescue Source, Rescue ONE Connector Boats, Sierra Rescue/Rescue 3 West, Whitewater Rescue Institute, and SkyHook Rescue Systems, Inc. Additional support for the awards is provided by the Rudi Schulte Family Foundation, the National Association for Search and Rescue, Jon Stephen and Karen Langley Stephen, and the family of John B. and Shirley A. Rigg, as well as contributions from other generous individuals.