

Subject: The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year (NFY) Award

IMPORTANT – For the purposes of this award, the use of the word Firefighter or firefighter officer includes any living, active, full-time, paid, or volunteer **CERTIFIED FIREFIGHTER** who is also a **MEMBER** of a municipal (city) or county fire department. This includes Emergency Medical Technicians or those serving in some other capacity in the department.

1. This memorandum and the policies contained herein are effective immediately for the selection of the NFY winner.

2. Scope: Americans, especially since the tragic day of September 11, 2001, understand the heroism, bravery and importance of our nation's firefighters and their role in helping to safeguard life and property. The Preamble of the Constitution of The American Legion includes as one of its objectives... "to maintain Law and Order". As concerned citizens and veterans, Legionnaires have always fostered a strong sense of law and order and have upheld the protection of American citizens and the American way of life. They have always held firefighter agencies in the highest regard, and many posts and departments already recognize outstanding firefighters of various jurisdictions who daily serve our communities and frequently lay their lives on the line.

3. Purpose: The purpose of this letter of instruction is to specify the guidelines, eligibility criteria, and application requirements for selection and presentation of the National Firefighter of the Year Award. Our goal is to select a well-rounded firefighter who has exceeded, above and beyond, the duty requirements expected of his/her position and has demonstrated a distinct pattern of community service coupled with professional achievement. Episodes of heroism will, of course, also be included where noted. A major secondary purpose of this award is to encourage the further development of Department and Post Law and Order Committees in all Departments in recognition of firefighters by Posts, Departments, and the National Headquarters of The American Legion. It is firmly believed that the establishment of this award will further serve to promote the public trust and support of our firefighter agencies.

4. Award Designation: This award shall be known as "The American Legion Firefighter of the Year Award" and it will be presented annually at the national convention or other suitable American Legion settings, as appropriate. All Departments are encouraged to participate in this worthwhile and prestigious award program. The American Legion will provide one roundtrip coach airfare or vehicle mileage in accordance with its employee mileage reimbursement rates, staff per diem for two days, two tickets to the National Commander's Banquet, and lodging for one night in accordance with travel policies of The American Legion for an individual recipient or a single representative of a group or organization to receive the award at National Convention. The American Legion will not provide for any incidental expenses or any expenses incurred by

guests accompanying the award recipient. the four regional runners-up will each receive an engraved shadow-box plaque measuring 10” x 12” not exceeding the cost of \$250 each, adjusted as needed for inflation.

5. Guidelines for Departments:

a. All Departments are urged to select a Department Firefighter of the Year before or during their Department convention and submit its Department winner as its nominee for this award. Departments should submit their nominee's application to The American Legion, Attn: National Security-Foreign Relations Division, 1608 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006. It is desired that Departments select and submit their nominees so that postmarked applications are received not later than February 1 of the year following selection as Department winner in order to allow adequate judging and notification time prior to the national convention.

b. The inclusive dates for this award cover the calendar year July 1 through June 30 and until the following February 1 deadline for submission to the National Security-Foreign Relations Division. For example, the NFY Department winner selected for his/her service for calendar year of 2008-2009 will be recognized at the 2010 National Convention.

c. Departments may submit only one nominee per year and their nominee must have been the previous year Department award winner. Once a nominee has been entered in The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award competition, he or she will not be allowed to be submitted for another year.

d. The resume and application for the nominee from each Department must conform to the national criteria for judging as contained herein. The eligibility and criteria stated in this letter will be used to select the National Firefighter of the Year.

6. Eligibility Criteria: To be eligible for consideration, Department nominees must meet the following criteria:

a. Be a citizen of the United States, male or female.

b. Be a certified, living, active, full-time, paid, or volunteer firefighter.

c. Consideration for a posthumous award will be acceptable only if the nominee's death has occurred after the department's selection and within the dates for which the award is being presented.

d. Be assigned to, or fully recognized by, Municipal (City), County, District, State or Federal firefighter officer.

e. Be selected as the Department Firefighter of the Year.

f. Department nominees are not required to be veterans or members of The American Legion.

g. Reside and be assigned or attached for duty in the Department from which they are selected.

h. Federal firefighter officers serving in overseas Departments may be nominated by the overseas Department.

i. Nominees selected for this award should be available to receive this award at The

American Legion National Convention.

j. Military firefighters are eligible for participation in this award provided they are state firefighter certified.

7. Department Application Packets: Only one copy of the Department application packet needs to be submitted to the National Security - Foreign Relations Division. Department application packets for their nominee should include: (1) a completed application form, (2) a 5x 7 photograph of the nominee, and (3) a maximum of 18 one-sided pages 8 1/2x 11 bond paper of service documentation. The first six or seven pages should contain the individual's service narrative. The additional pages may include supporting citations and other documentation to include press articles. Only one copy of the application package needs to be submitted. The following documentation should be included:

a. Application form - Complete the attached application form and use it as the cover page of the application. This cover page shall not count as part of the maximum 18 pages of service documentation.

b. 5 x 7 official photograph of the nominee.

c. Service narrative and supporting documentation. The goal of the National Law and Order Committee is to select a well-rounded firefighter who has exceeded, above and beyond, the duty requirements of his or her position and who exemplifies the virtues of professionalism and dedication and has demonstrated a distinct pattern of community service to his/her community, state or nation; and also has proven his/her personal dedication to community security and protection. The firefighter officer must be recommended by his/her Commanding Officer or Supervisor for this award. The commanding officer or supervisor should also state that the firefighter officer, if selected for this award, will be available for its presentation at the national convention. Specific acts of community service, heroism and meritorious performance recognized by his/her firefighter agency should be included and documented. To assist Departments in their selections, judging guidelines at the national level will be based on the following criteria, and maximum percentage points will be allocated as follows:

- I Community Service35 points
- II Professional Career40 points
- III Heroism.....20 points
- IV Letters of Recognition, news clippings,
and other substantiating documentat.....5 points

d. Community Service: Outstanding service to the community, state or nation by the firefighter, in both on-duty and off-duty activities, should be explained for the past year and may include previous years. Cite, for example, awards and/or supporting letters from city or county commissioners, letters from state officials, and letters from The American Legion Department or Posts, or from citizens attesting to and commending the firefighter for his/her community service contributions. Remember, one of the major aims of the award program is to select a well-rounded firefighter officer who has demonstrated a distinct pattern of community service, above and beyond assigned duty requirements.

e. Citations for community service, heroism and meritorious performance of duty should be explained for the past year and may include previous years. Include citations and any supporting letters from the officer's chain of command as well as other documentation from city, county, state authorities and American Legion officials, citizens or civic groups as further evidence of community service, heroic and meritorious performance of duty by the officer.

f. Include a copy of your nominee's state or federal certification as a firefighter as well as copies of pertinent training and education certificates as appropriate.

g. The Department which submits the winning nominee will be notified by the National Security-Foreign Relations Division as expeditiously as possible.

h. Remember to let your nominee know what The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award is, and receive assurance from the officer's chain of command that if your nominee is selected as the winner, that he/she will be available for the award presentation at the national convention. If the winning firefighter is a uniformed firefighter, then he/she is requested to appear in full uniform at the national convention at the time of presentation. Non-uniformed winners would be expected to appear in appropriate business attire.

8. National Judging: Judges will be selected by the Chairman of the Law and Order Committee from members of the Law and Order Committee and the National Security Commission. Each judge shall represent his/her region (Departments assigned to each national vice commander) and will select a regional winner from regions other than their own. Regional winners will be selected at the Washington conference. The national winner will be selected from the regional winners during the Spring Meeting of the National Executive Committee. Alternates-at-large judges may also be selected by the Chairman of the Law and Order Committee in the event of absences of any judges. In the event the national winner is unable to be present to receive his/her award at the national convention, The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award will be accepted by the winner's American Legion Department Commander at the national convention on behalf of the winner for presentation at an appropriate Department ceremony. National Regional awards: The four regional runners-up will each receive an engraved shadow-box plaque measuring 10" x 12" not exceeding the cost of \$250 each, adjusted as needed for inflation. The funds expended for purchase of The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award plaque are set at an amount not to exceed \$350 annually, adjusted as needed for inflation.

9. Your comments on how the program can be improved, streamlined, or modified are solicited. Any questions on this award program should be sent to the undersigned in care of:

The American Legion
National Security-Foreign Relations Division
1608 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
Telephone: (202) 861-2700

All efforts have been expended, and will continue to be expended, to assure fairness and impartiality to all Department nominees. We strongly believe that the presentation of The American Legion National Firefighter of the Year Award will reflect great credit on firefighters and agencies, communities and states, our nation, and the American Legion. It is our underlying hope that this award program will also further encourage such recognition of "America's Bravest" at the Post and Department levels.

Department Adjutant _____

(Signature)

Failure to use this form may result in the DISQUALIFICATION of your nominee. It should be placed as the COVER SHEET for your packet of materials supporting your candidate. Include an official photograph of the nominee. Mail completed application to the National Security Foreign Relations Division, 1608 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006 to arrive by February 1. Submit one copy of your application packet and it should conform to the instructions contained in this National Security Foreign Relations Memorandum.