

# FIREHOUSE®

## Weekly Drill

### DRILL #138: RECOGNITION & AWARDS

#### Introduction

Have you ever taken a class on leadership? If you have then you probably know that one of the areas that has drawn a lot of attention to it is recognition. Many fire departments honor their firefighters in one way or another. Generally, a fire department will host an annual banquet and present a “Firefighter of the Year” award. Larger city fire departments, like the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) host a Medal Day Ceremony where they award several different heroism and life-saving awards.

If your department is not recognizing firefighters for their outstanding performances being conducted, I have to ask why. Giving someone recognition is one of the easiest things you can do. However, I have to advise you that you should establish some criteria for the different awards you decide on celebrating. Without these guidelines, you could find your department honoring all your members, which will lead to the awards having little value.

#### Setting standards

Recommendations for recognition can be initiated by any member of the department. The most common system used for recommending a firefighter for an award is through the use of a standard form. Should a member witness an exemplary act undertaken by another member and feels that it should receive some recognition all he needs to do is cite all the circumstances on the nomination form and forward it to the nomination committee or fire chief.

A nomination committee works well in deciphering the validity of the nomination and which award category or recognition it should receive. This committee can meet as often as necessary or on a regularly scheduled meeting time (monthly, quarterly, bi-monthly or annually) depending on how often the awards will be presented.

#### Different types of recognition

Keep in mind that recognition for performance does not always mean that the individual will receive a medal or other award. It can be a simple word of appreciation. Whatever form of recognition your department considers using make sure that it is done with sincerity and genuine appreciation.



Awards that are used in recognizing firefighters for their bravery and professionalism include:

- Firefighter of the Year
- Medal of Honor
- Medal of Valor
- Distinguished Service Award
- Emergency Medical Service Award
- Unit Citation
- External Recognition Award
- Fire Chief’s Award

If at all possible, a recognition award ceremony should be held to present these awards to the honorees receiving the awards. These ceremonies should put a personal flare to them when recognizing the recipient. Identify the individual and give some personal background on the recipient along with the acts performed at the incident. It is sometimes nice to add a little more family atmosphere to the ceremony and have the firefighter’s family come up on stage with them when they receive the award.

—Prepared by Russell Merrick