

## AMERICAN LEGION NATIONAL FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR

**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. **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.

2. **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.

3. **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.

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

- f. Reside and be assigned or attached for duty in the Department from which they are selected.
- g. If nominee is selected for the National Award, nominee should be available to receive the National award at The American Legion National Convention.
- h. Military firefighters are eligible for participation in this award provided they are state firefighter certified.

## DEPARTMENT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

7. Department Application Packets: 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 ½ x 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. 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. The application packet should be subdivided into the following categories:

- I Community Service
- II Professional Career
- III Heroism
- IV Letters of Recognition, news clippings, and other substantiating documentation

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.

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.