

MSFCA Leadership Award for Tom Cvar

Chief Tom Cvar began his career with the Mountain Iron Fire Department almost 30 years ago. He quickly (very quickly) rose through the ranks and became Chief a mere five years later; a post he retained for over 25 years until he retired this past year.

During his tenure as Chief he worked tirelessly to ensure firefighters were safe and to upgrade the departments' facilities, apparatus and firefighter personal protective gear. Evidence of this is found in the fact that there was NEVER a loss of life or severe injury to any members during his tenure. His main concern was everyone going home on their own terms after the call.

He also was very talented in persuading Council members to invest in the future and be proactive as far equipment purchase. While being budget conscious he always wanted firefighters to be equipped with the best possible equipment. In 1988 Council agreed to a new first line engine and an addition to the station, as more room was needed to house it.

In 2000 he was instrumental in persuading the Council to replace a 1957 pumper with a 2001 4WD Quick Attack 1000 gpm Pumper to serve our rural customers whose driveways were not always big enough to fit a full size unit. During that purchase, with his creative budgeting, it allowed us to also fit every firefighter with a personal SCBA mask and allowed for a SCBA to be available for every member. His budget conscious progressive thinking also allowed us to purchase Mountain Iron's first Thermal Imaging Camera, which a few years later may have paid for itself many times over during a fire in a multi-family apartment building where we ended up locating numerous hot spots aiding us in salvage and overhaul.

In 2004 the department was awarded a FEMA Grant for \$225,000. This allowed the City to purchase a \$305,000 truck for approximately \$95K. This was a 2005 Pumper / Tanker that replaced a 1975 Engine and a 1977 Tender (water hauler only).

In 2005 Mountain Iron was awarded another FEMA grant in the amount of approximately \$85,000 to replace and upgrade all of our SCBA. Through his diligence and always thinking about moving forward, the department was able to purchase a new cascade system and mobile trailer for refilling SCBA on-scene.

In 2007 Mountain Iron was again awarded another FEMA grant to allow the purchase of complete new sets of turnout gear fitted properly for each member. This was from helmet to boots.

He was always open to suggestions and input to better the equipment and the department while also being aware of budget constraints. He was always open to allowing technology to help assist the firefighter. The 2001 Engine was the first truck in Mountain Iron, and one of the few in the area, to have an onboard computer controlled Class A foam system. Also the SCBA purchased that year were fitted with the Quick Fill System allowing refill without the problem prone bottle replacement during inclement weather.

The 2005 Pumper/ Tanker allowed us pumping capacity never seen before in Mountain Iron. It also was the first ever electronic governor pump controls which simplified operation and maintenance. This also convinced him that the Electronic Governor should be installed on Engine 2001 along with a 5" Master Discharge.

Through his leadership there were always some members that would want to conduct research and do things that were good for the Department and Community.

While Tom doesn't know which end of a screw driver to hold, his encouragement allowed membership to refurbish, paint and make road-worthy one of Mountain Iron's first fire trucks - a 1934 Chevrolet. This was completely redone in approximately 6 months to be ready for display during Mountain Iron's Centennial Celebration.

Despite all of these accomplishments, perhaps his greatest demonstration of leadership came at the end of his career when local politics turned against Tom. Tom weathered the storm and refused to set aside his principles of fairness, integrity and professionalism. While it was clear politics were in play he refused to engage in the antics and chose to retire rather than subject the department and community to an unwarranted environment of personal agendas.

His leadership and contributions were not limited to Mountain Iron Fire Department. Tom was, and is still, active in both the Arrowhead Region and the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association. Tom is the current chair of the Finance Committee, a position he has held for more than five years. Tom is also the Arrowhead Region director to the MSFCA Board, a position he has held now for almost 4 years. He has also been a member of the MSFCA marketing committee for almost ten years.

His involvement with the Region includes near perfect attendance, serving on numerous committees, and spearheading all legislative activities including all the arrangements for Fire Service Day at the Capitol.

For all of this and Tom's tremendous positive attitude, we nominate him for Fire Chief of the Year.

Dear Committee Members,

It is with the utmost respect that we submit this letter of consideration for Chief Paul Thon of the Frazee Fire Department for recognition as The Minnesota Fire Chief's Association Public Safety Award recipient. To say that Chief Paul Thon is a leader, among leaders would be fitting. Paul is one of the most respected men in our community. He has given our town, our region a new definition of selflessness, and is a walking example, of how every God-fearing man should conduct their day to day life!

Chief Thon has definitely set the bar high for all of us. His countless hours at City, County and regional meetings, not to mention the continuous hours spent training, re-training, and the re-evaluation of both real-time emergencies, and mock emergency situational settings too often go unmentioned or recognized. Paul Thon is a tireless teacher too. He has always taken that "extra" time needed to share his decades of experience with our newer, less experienced firefighters, always keeping their safety, and the rest of the Departments safety, his primary focus.

Chief Thon is a dedicated Husband & Father. Paul and his wife Ginni, have 3 children, 2 boys and a girl. Both Sons are in the Fire Service, one in a neighboring town and another is a wildland Firefighter on the West Coast.

Paul Thon is a local business owner, he is active in his Church, and is the first to volunteer when disaster strikes. Recent floods in the Fargo area and Tornado aid in Wadena come to mind.

Paul has held many positions over the years at FFD including: Relief Association, Treasurer, Training Officer, Assistant Chief, and Chief!

Chief Paul Thon continues to better himself and his Firefighters daily. There will come a time when Paul decides to step down and retire, and rest assured his successor will have enormous "boots" to fill!

Thank You for your time in considering Chief Paul Thon of the Frazee Fire Department for The Minnesota Fire Chief's Association Public Safety Award. In our eyes there is no one more deserving of this prestigious recognition.

Respectfully Submitted,
Scott Geiselhart, Asst Chief FFD
Regi Ueke, Asst Chief FFD
Rob Tolefson, Interior Captain FFD

Nomination Information on Dale Specken

Dale Specken is the Fire Chief for the City of Hopkins. Dale is also the Emergency Manager and Fire Marshal for the City of Hopkins.

Chief Specken is known for his Leadership and "can do Attitude". He is Highly Respected, Dedicated, Fiercely Loyal and Fair. Dale's history and knowledge in the Fire Department and in the City of Hopkins make him virtually indispensable to the City and the fire service. Chief Specken is a gifted and frequently requested instructor in the fire service. He is a team player and works well with other departments, always offering assistance whenever possible. Chief Specken cares about doing the right thing. Chief Specken is a leader as a teacher and trailblazer. He cares about fire prevention. He trusts the people in his department to do their job and does not micro-manage. Chief Specken has created an outstanding work culture in the Fire Department. Chief Specken is known for going above and beyond the call of duty with firefighter, co-workers, and the community.

Dale is well liked, dependable, knowledgeable, extremely caring and compassionate, giving, understanding, patient, trustworthy, and has a Willingness to go above and beyond.

I believe Dale is very deserving of this award due to his individual and team effort to promote continued improvement in the fire and emergency management area. Chief Specken is a progressive leader in the Minnesota

I have listed some of Chief Specken's specifics and many years of contributions within the City of Hopkins and the overall fire service community below:

- Wife: Jane Children: Scott, Melissa, Paige
- Surviving mother: Jane
- Deceased father: Joe
 - (Joe was also a member of HFD for over 20 years)
- Dale has 3 brothers and one sister
- Brother Rick Specken is also with Plymouth Fire and Minnetonka Fire
- Many of us know this, we will take Dale anytime. He will always try to do what's right.
- Emergency Manager / Emergency Preparedness – he has been active in promoting emergency preparedness. He has actively worked to keep the City Emergency Plan up to date.
 - He played critical role in the coordination of a school shooting exercise with the Hopkins School District.
- He has been extremely successful in conducting exercises in his community and improving the emergency management system by working with public and private agencies.
- Ability to resolve issues before they escalate.
- Frequently requested for speaking engagements.
- Extremely compassionate with grieving families who have faced tragedies.
- Member of many committees and groups in the city, state, and nationally.
- Regional Director for the MSFCA.
- Regional Fire Coordinator with the MSFCA Intrastate Mutual Aid Plan.
 - He has taken an active role in coordination of his region.
- Active with the EMS Committee.

- Has an outstanding rapport with other city fire departments and is always willing to assist.
- Major contributor in the emergency services field on a daily basis with the City of Hopkins and Hennepin County.
- Involved in many, many other city, state and national committees and groups. (AMEN, HCFCA, HSEM, MSFCA, IAFC, MSFDA)
- Actively pursues individual growth through continued education.
- Dale has contributed endless hours to our association, in front and behind the scenes. His efforts to promote MSFCA and the fire service are ongoing.
- Active leadership and participation in the Hennepin County Fire Chief's Association.
- Active community leader with business and industry in the fire prevention and emergency management area.
- Dale joined HFD on – 03/05/1981 (29 years of service) He was a member at 18
- Dale became the fulltime Fire Chief/Fire Marshall in 2004
 - (He was the first fulltime employee at HFD)
- Dale rose thru the ranks and has held every officer position – LT, Capt, Batt. Chief, Assistant Chief, and Chief
- Dale was a fulltime fire instructor at Hennepin Tech before becoming the Chief in Hopkins.
- One of the best attributes Dale has is the ability to empower the people around him. He is truly a servant leader. His management style is very similar to that of Brunacini's. He has installed in all of us to lead and to manage people with the customer in mind. He leads from the top but he wouldn't hesitate doing whatever it takes to get the task or the job done.
- Dale has a willingness to listen to anyone that comes in the door. Without fear of retribution, people will speak their mind and then if needed Dale will take action on their input in a constructive manner. Firefighters and officers know there is a chain-of-command, but if a member feels they aren't being heard, they can at any time count on speaking to Dale to have their concern addressed. Because Dale has earned his way to lead from the bottom up, the people on the department are willing to follow not blindly but with a faith in knowing that Dale will always try to do what's right. Making decisions and doing what's right isn't always easy. But Dale's everyday's actions to lead his members with the departments best interest in mind makes it easier for us all to do what's right and to try to make the right decision as well.
- Being a chief isn't easy. The leaders of our departments are asked to do more and more with less. I'm sure it's easy to get distracted by trying to do the other responsibilities or to help the other organizations that we belong too. But one thing is for certain with Dale. He knows and hasn't forgotten where he came from.
- Dale is an amazing Chief. He isn't perfect. Dale isn't without his flaws. But I have worked and been around many different departments and leaders of departments.
- Active in positive promotion of the fire service throughout Hennepin County and e region.

Submitted by
 Scott M. Gerber
 Fire Chief
 Excelsior Fire District