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National Wildfire Coordinating Group Announces Winners of 2014 Wildfire Emergency Medical Service Awards

Boise, Idaho – A nurse from Los Angeles who is committed to firefighter burn safety; two interagency hotshot fire crews who helped save severely injured fellow firefighters in remote locations; and two wildland firefighters who resuscitated a stricken helicopter pilot, have all been selected for the “2014 Wildfire Emergency Medical Service Awards.” The annual awards program, sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group’s Incident Emergency Medical Subcommittee (IEMS), recognizes and honors individuals and/or organizations who have demonstrated outstanding work, actions or programs in emergency medical service (EMS) for wildland firefighters.

“The IEMS Selection Committee considered a number of outstanding nominations this year, in fact more than last year,” said Mike Long, former Florida State Forester and current chair of the IEMS awards selection committee. “The interesting thing was, when we voted, every member of the committee had almost unanimously selected these people for the emergency actions they performed on behalf of wildland firefighters who serve this Nation,” Long added.

The three Emergency Medical Service Award categories that nominations were selected from include:

- Outstanding Wildfire Emergency Medical Service Individual
- Outstanding Wildfire Squad/Crew/Team
- Excellence in Wildfire Emergency Medical Service/Rescue

Each of the awardees will be recognized with a plaque and certificate of award.

The 2014 Wildfire Emergency Medical Service Award recipients are:

Mary Valance, Los Angeles County Fire Department, awarded the “**Outstanding Wildfire EMS Individual of the Year Award**” for her work in wildland fire smoke inhalation, exertional heat injuries and her instruction of the department’s paramedics and emergency medical technicians. Additionally Valance has (on her own time) created an awareness campaign on wildland fire injuries and has presented this information at numerous workshops and conferences as well as medical facilities. She is currently working to improve firefighter rehabilitation from heat related illnesses.

The Navajo Interagency Hotshot Crew based in Fort Defiance, Ariz., and the **Winema Interagency Hotshot Crew** based in Klamath Falls, Ore., both awarded the “**Outstanding Wildfire EMS Squad/Crew/Team of the Year Award**.”

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The **Navajo Interagency Hotshots** are recognized for their dedication and foresight to being fully prepared to deal with medical emergencies in the field by starting (and continuing) their own EMS training program (since 2011) and for putting that emergency medical training into practice this past August 15 when two interagency hotshot crew (IHC) members were struck by a log rolling down a hill on the South Cle Elem Ridge fire in Washington State. The rolling log dragged and then pinned the two IHC members. The crew immediately activated their “incident within an incident plan” and contacted both the division supervisor and the incident commander. While transportation was called for, others assessed the two patients for injuries and began treatment. While the immediate injuries were determined not to be life threatening; stabilization, packaging and medical evacuation proved to cause challenges. The crews’ decisions for patient care and stabilization proved to be fully appropriate and helped to minimize further, unnecessary on scene medical care that may have compromised the patient’s condition by others who arrived on scene. The crew then continued to help to expedite the patient’s evacuation to a Seattle trauma center.

The **Winema Interagency Hotshots** are recognized for their emergency response when a veteran Winema IHC crew member was struck and severely injured by a falling, dead tree while working on the Freezeout Ridge fire in the Hells Canyon National Recreation Area in Idaho. The crew, led by its medically trained personnel immediately performed a patient assessment and determined the significance of the injuries and the threat they posed. They immediately reported the medical emergency and requested a Life Flight. As the fire’s Incident Management Team placed its “incident within an incident” protocol into place, and care was being provide to the patient, other members of the Winema IHC constructed an emergency medical landing zone. The injured firefighter was packaged for transport, flown a short distance via “long-line” to an awaiting medevac and flown to a trauma center in Boise. There the injured hotshot was discovered to have sustained a fractured skull, lacerations to the face and head, two broken arms, a broken jaw, a broken thumb, as well as minor burns.

Jason Barnhart and Michael Bramlett with the Klamath National Forest Helitack, Helicopter 502, are awarded the “**Excellence in Wildfire EMS/Rescue Award**” for their actions during a medical emergency that occurred at the Scott Valley Helibase. A contract helicopter pilot on the helibase went into cardiac arrest. While “911” was contacted and a request for Life Flight was made, firefighters Barnhart and Bramlett assigned to H-502 at the helibase immediately responded to the medical emergency with their ships’ trauma bag and an automated external defibrillator (AED). Upon assessing the patient, they recognized the patient was pulseless and not breathing and without hesitation they started CPR. Meanwhile, they also hooked up the AED and shocked the patient several times as directed by the medical device. Heavy smoke conditions in the area prevented a Life Flight helicopter from reaching the scene and the ground ambulance transport time would take up to 45 minutes to reach a hospital after it reached the scene. The decision was made to configure Helicopter 502 for emergency medical transport to expedite the continuity of patient care to a higher level. Firefighters Barnhart and Bramlett continued CPR for more than 30 minutes while the helicopter pilot was flown to a hospital. The entire rescue took only 37 minutes. The stricken helicopter pilot survived and was released after several weeks in the

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hospital. Doctors credited the prompt medical response directly to the patients' survival. Firefighter's Barnhart and Bramlett acquired their emergency medical technician certifications on their own time and at their own expense.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group's Incident Emergency Medical Subcommittees' mission is to establish a methodology that meets the emergency medical and occupational health care needs of managed incidents, providing information, updates and guidance to enhance the health and safety of wildland firefighters and other personnel during wildland fire incidents.

The Wildfire Emergency Medical Service Awards program was originated to recognize the unselfish acts and actions of individuals and/or organizations for "going above and beyond" their normal duties in rendering emergency medical service care and training for member agency incidents and programs.

For additional information about the National Wildfire Coordination Group's Incident Medical Emergency Subcommittee and the Wildfire Emergency Medical Service Award program, please visit: <http://www.nwcg.gov/branches/pre/rmc/iems/index.html>.

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