



Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS Standard Operating Procedure

DOCUMENT DETAILS

Standard Operating Procedure: 1.16	Effective Date: February 19, 2025
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Authorized: Michael Robinson	Revision Date: N/A

Applicability: ☒ Volunteer ☒ Career

I. PURPOSE

The Carroll County Department of Fire and EMS (DFEMS) shall recognize the acts of heroism, exemplary performance, and remarkable contribution by career, volunteer, non-uniformed DFEMS personnel, and citizens in the provision of fire & EMS, and related functions.

II. APPLICABILITY

This SOP pertains to all members, volunteer and career, of DFEMS. The practice of recognition at the Company level remains crucial to reinforce the positive actions and investments of the volunteer members of DFEMS. The Companies are invited to utilize the standards for recognition defined in Section V of this SOP, but are not bound by it. The use of ribbons associated with the awards defined in this SOP are reserved for DFEMS issuance at this time. This policy does not supplant or override Company-level awards or recognition.

III. DEFINITIONS

Commendations Review Board: A board of DFEMS career, volunteer, and stakeholder representatives appointed by the Fire EMS Chief to review and investigate nominations for awards and recognition throughout the year. Hereinafter referred to as the “Board”.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. PRESENTATION OF AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

1. All awards shall be presented by the Fire EMS Chief or his/her designee.

1. Personnel may be nominated for recognition on an ongoing basis throughout the year by utilizing the nomination form in Attachment B, according to Section IV, Subsection C of this SOP.
2. The Commendations Review Board shall review all nominations and make recommendations to the Fire EMS Chief for the recipients of each award.
3. Medals and Ribbons are found in Attachment A.
4. Citation formats will follow a consistent format.
5. Career and Volunteer uniformed members of DFEMS are eligible for awards and recognition. Non-uniformed employees, administrative volunteers, and the general public are eligible for select awards.
6. It is at the discretion of the Fire EMS Chief as to the time and place the award or recognition is delivered. This could include in-station, a specific event, gala, or company banquet.

B. COMMENDATIONS REVIEW BOARD

1. The Board shall be made up of the following:
 - a. One (1) representative from the Fire Operations Committee (FROPS).
 - b. One (1) representative who is a uniformed employee of DFEMS.
 - c. One (1) representative from the Carroll County Volunteer Emergency Services Association.
 - d. One (1) representative from the Carroll County Professional Fire Fighters & Paramedics Association.
 - e. One (1) ESAC Member.
2. Board Membership and Term.
 - a. Members of the Board serve at the will of the entity they represent. Each entity can submit a change in representation to the Fire EMS Chief. Membership changes will typically take place February 1st of each year to conserve the continuity of awards and investigations for a given calendar year..
 - i. If a representative entity feels an immediate replacement is necessary, a request with justification will be submitted to the Fire EMS Chief for consideration and action at his/her discretion.
 - b. The Fire EMS Chief can remove any individual from the Board for cause (i.e. poor performance, disengagement, biases, etc.), at any time.

3. Co-Chairs will be elected for the coming calendar year at the last meeting of the year.
 - a. One (1) Co-Chair will be elected annually, each serving a maximum of 2-years consecutively, in staggered terms.
 - b. The two (2) Co-Chairs shall be:
 - i. One (1) Co-Chair must be a volunteer member of DFEMS.
 - ii. One (1) Co-Chair must be a career member of DFEMS.
4. The Board will meet in-person or virtually to review submitted nominations for awards and conduct business, as needed.
 - a. Meeting minutes will be maintained and reported back to the Fire EMS Chief.
 - b. The date and time of meetings will be set by a Co-Chair and emailed to the Board Members at least 72 hours in advance.
 - c. A quorum will be at least 3 members of the Board, one (1) of which must be a Co-Chair.
 - d. A vote regarding a recommendation for or against a nomination will require all 5 members to be present, in-person or virtually.

C. SUBMISSION OF NOMINATIONS FOR RECOGNITION

1. The Board is not bound by any nomination as specifically requested by a nominator but shall base their recommendation on the facts presented, investigation findings, and parameters of each type of award.
2. Nominations for medals, awards or commendations may be submitted by any person, Departmental or otherwise, for actions they feel deserve recognition. Nominations can be made regarding a specific award or more generically.
3. Nominations made by members of DFEMS, volunteer or career, will submit the nomination utilizing the form in Attachment B or via online form.
 - a. Nomination forms will be submitted to DFEMSnominations@carrollcountymd.gov or via online form, found at <https://forms.gle/GqhEeGy9QqidHaf08>.
 - b. The nomination form must be filled out as completely as possible, including the names of all individuals and units nominated.
 - c. “Justification” will be included as a narrative of the actions taken by the nominee to warrant recognition.

- i. The narrative will be typed and include additional pages, as necessary, to ensure thorough documentation and written in a way to illuminate how the individual or unit meets the specific criteria of the recognition.

D. REVIEW AND INVESTIGATION OF NOMINATIONS FOR RECOGNITION

1. Within 30 days of submission of a completed nomination form or request for recognition originating outside of DFEMS, the Commendations Review Board will meet to review the submission and initiate the investigation of the nomination.
2. An Investigation Group will be assigned to the nomination.
3. Investigation:
 - a. The investigation group can interview the nominators for additional information and to determine the scope of the investigation.
 - b. Any other individuals determined to be associated or pertinent to the nomination will be considered for interview.
 - i. If the recognition is related to an operational incident, the Deputy Chief of Operations and/or Medical Director must clear the Board to perform interviews related to the incident.
 - ii. Interviews will be completed on the form included in Addendum D of this SOP. Interviews are not considered confidential and will be signed by those involved in each interview.
 - c. All available objective information related to incidents should be investigated and collected to create a comprehensive understanding of who was involved and actions taken. (i.e. CAD notes, video, pictures, incident reports, etc.)
 - d. A comprehensive investigation report will be generated and disseminated to the Board by email for review, utilizing the form in Addendum C.
 - e. If a member, or members, of the Board are the nominator or nominee for recognition, that member will not be involved in the investigation, review, or vote related to their recognition.
 - f. If a member, or members, of the Board feels that they are unable to be unbiased to a nomination, they should recuse themselves.
 - g. In the course of the investigation, if information is discovered or divulged that is covered legally by a duty to report, the investigation will be immediately paused and this information will be reported to the Fire EMS Chief.
4. Board's Review of the Facts: Within 30 days of the completion of the investigation phase, the Board will meet to complete the following:

- a. Review the Investigative Report.
- b. Confirm the most appropriate medal, award, or citation based on the requirements met by the nominee(s)'s actions.
- c. Given the facts of the investigation and requirements of the determined medal, award, or citation, the Board will vote as to whether the nomination is "Founded" or "Unfounded".
 - i. A majority vote of Board members will be required to determine the Board's position.
 - ii. In the case of a tie, the case will be reviewed and discussed to further develop the facts of the case or identify follow-up necessary to make a determination.
 - 1. A new vote can take place at any time after the initial vote given a motion of Board members.
 - 2. A second tie will be considered as an "Unfounded" finding due to not meeting the requirement of a majority vote in favor of recognition.
- d. If found "Founded", the Board will draft a "Citation Narrative"
 - i. To be utilized in the declaration of the medal, award or citation.
 - ii. Language should be concise and professional to highlight the actions specifically justifying the award.
 - iii. Citation Narrative will be no more than 200 words.

5. Findings Report

- a. The Board will produce a Findings Report based on the outcome of the investigation and Board recommendation.
- b. The Findings Report, Addendum E, will include:
 - i. Incident Information (if applicable) – i.e. Incident Number, Time, Date, Location, etc.
 - ii. Personnel to be recognized.
 - iii. Summary of investigation steps taken by the Board.
 - iv. Summary of investigation findings.
 - v. Medals, awards, or citations recommended.

- vi. Board's finding of "founded" or "unfounded", including the list of Board members who voted.
- vii. Citation Narrative
- c. The Findings Report will be submitted to the Fire EMS Chief for review as soon as reasonably possible following the conclusion of the Board's review.
- d. The final approval of any medal, award, or citation is the discretion of the Fire EMS Chief.

E. TYPES OF MEDALS, AWARDS, AND CITATIONS

1. Medals for Valor – The following awards for Heroism shall be presented in recognition of individual effort to save a life under threatening circumstances but are not dependent on the ultimate survival of the life at risk. These awards are to be presented annually at the DFEMS Awards Gala.
 - a. **Gold Star of Valor Medal** – recognizes an act of bravery involving extreme personal risk that is clearly above and beyond the call of duty or an incident of valor that results in serious injury or death. Except in the most unusual circumstances, no more than one gold medal should be awarded annually.
 - b. **Silver Star of Valor Medal** – recognizes acts of bravery involving great personal risk beyond the call of duty.
 - c. **Bronze Star of Valor Medal** – recognizes acts of bravery involving unusual personal risk beyond expectations while performing usual responsibility. Bronze medals may also be awarded to members who demonstrate unusual judgement, zeal, or ingenuity during an emergency when such an act is beyond that is normally expected in the performance of duty.
2. Service Awards: These awards are to be presented annually at the DFEMS Awards Gala.
 - a. **Chief's Award** – presented at the sole discretion of the Fire EMS Chief in recognition of an individual that has provided exemplary contributions to the Department embodying the core values of DFEMS. This award is presented annually and open to uniformed and non-uniformed personnel.
 - b. **Firefighter of the Year Award** – presented to one career and one volunteer firefighter annually who best exemplifies the standards of the Department. The recipient of this award shall meet at least one of the following criteria in the area:
 - i. Clearly demonstrated, in the eyes of the nominator, that he/she was outstanding among his/her contemporaries.
 - ii. Clearly demonstrated that he/she was an inspiration to both superiors and peers.

- iii. Demonstrated outstanding traits and performance which exemplified the standards of the Department throughout the year.
- c. **EMS Clinician of the Year Award** – presented to one career and one volunteer EMS Clinician annually who best exemplifies the standards of the Department. The recipient of this award shall meet at least one of the following criteria in the area:
 - i. Clearly demonstrated, in the eyes of the nominator, that he/she was outstanding among his/her contemporaries specifically in the area of emergency medicine.
 - ii. Clearly demonstrated that he/she was an inspiration to both superiors and peers specifically in terms of emergency medicine.
 - iii. Demonstrated outstanding traits and performance as an EMS Clinician which exemplified the standards of the Department throughout the year.
- d. **Officer of the Year Award** – presented to one career and one volunteer officer annually who best exemplifies the standards of the Department. The recipient of this award shall meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - i. Clearly demonstrated, in the eyes of the nominator, that he/she was outstanding among his/her contemporaries.
 - ii. Clearly demonstrated that he/she was an inspiration to both superiors and peers.
 - iii. Demonstrated outstanding traits and performance which exemplified the standards of the Department throughout the year.
- e. **Administrator of the Year Award** – presented to one employee and one volunteer non-uniformed member annually who best exemplifies the standards of the Department in the course of their administrative duties. The recipient of this award shall meet at least one of the following criteria:
 - i. Clearly demonstrated, in the eyes of the nominator, that he/she was outstanding among his/her contemporaries.
 - ii. Clearly demonstrated that he/she was an inspiration to both superiors and peers.
 - iii. Demonstrated outstanding traits and performance which exemplified the standards of the Department throughout the year.
- f. **Service Ribbons:** At the discretion of the Fire EMS Chief with recommendation from the Board, these ribbons may be presented at the annual Awards Gala or throughout the year.

- i. **Meritorious Service Ribbon** – presented in recognition of exemplary personal conduct, either for a single event or over an extended period of time. This award is presented when at least one of the following factors were present:
 - 1. The nominee clearly demonstrated that they were an inspiration to both superiors and peers.
 - 2. The nominee clearly demonstrated the initiative, imagination, resourcefulness and untiring efforts to significantly contribute to the overall mission of the organization.
 - 3. The nominee effectively initiated or participated in the implementation of a major change or program development which resulted in the betterment of the Department and the service it provides.
 - 4. The nominee, in an individual capacity, demonstrated exemplary performance in the provision of emergency services in the course of an incident.
- ii. **Unit Citation Ribbon** – presented in recognition of exemplary performance by a company or unit in the provision of emergency services and/or a team that performed in an exemplary manner to develop and implement a successful non-emergency program or initiative.
- iii. **Lifesaving Ribbon** – Presented for an act of prompt and alert life saving effort on or off duty that results in saving a life or bringing back life with a measurable outcome after hospitalization.
- iv. **Stork Ribbon** – presented in recognition of an individual(s) who assisted with the birth of a child. (Non-uniformed DFEMS personnel and/or general public are also eligible for the Stork Award).
- v. **Campaign Ribbon** – At the discretion of the Fire EMS Chief, a Campaign Ribbon can be awarded for specific and extraordinary periods of service by the Department or specific groups with the Department. These circumstances should be considered especially demanding of those involved. This award is not limited to uniformed personnel.
- vi. **Public Recognition Ribbon** – At times, members of DFEMS are recognized by other organizations or agencies for exemplary service to the Carroll County community in the course of their role as a member of the Department. This Ribbon is awarded by DFEMS in recognition of that award by the other entity.
 - 1. To receive this ribbon, the award and justification will be submitted to the Board for consideration and authorization.

- g. Length of Service Awards: These awards are to be presented to DFEMS uniformed employees on the appropriate anniversary of their employment with the Department.
 - i. **Length of Service Ribbon** – to recognize the length of service of DFEMS uniformed employees, the Length of Service Ribbon will be awarded upon 5 years of employment and every 5-year increment thereafter. A corresponding badge will be worn on the left sleeve of the Class A coat.
 - 1. Volunteer members of DFEMS have historically been recognized likewise by their Companies. This SOP should reinforce the importance of that recognition and continued practice.
- h. Civilian Awards: These awards are presented at the Fire EMS Chief's discretion.
 - i. **Civilian Citation** – This is awarded to a civilian to be recognized for their efforts in the saving of a life, reducing a serious injury, or the reduction of property loss.
 - ii. **Certificate of Appreciation** – May be awarded to any deserving individual for a deed that is worthy of recognition but does not fall within the guidelines of a Civilian Citation.
- i. Multiple Awards/Ribbons of the Same Kind
 - i. Over time, personnel may acquire multiple of the same ribbon. If an award recipient has two or more of the same ribbon, a star device for each additional occurrence will be added to the original ribbon. The star indicates how many times the recipient has received that particular ribbon.
 - 1. Devices are awarded in the following increments.
 - a) Bronze Star – 2, 3, and 4 citations.
 - b) Silver Star – 5, 7, and 9 citations.
 - c) Gold Star – 10 and in later increments of 5.
 - 2. **Example:** The Unit Citation Ribbon with two bronze stars would indicate that the recipient has received this ribbon three times.



V. RECISION

This Standard Operating Procedure rescinds all directives regarding Commendation or similar content previously issued for personnel of the Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS.












VI. RELATED STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES / DOCUMENTS







VII. ATTACHMENTS

Addendum A

Medals and Ribbons by Order of Precedence

Numbered by Order of Precedence. Equal awards are numbered together.

1. Gold Star of Heroism Medal		
2. Silver Star of Valor Medal		
3. Bronze Star of Valor Medal		
4 . Chief's Award		Awarded at the Discretion of the Fire EMS Chief
5. Firefighter of the Year		One (1) Career & One (1) Volunteer Awarded Annually
5. EMS Clinician of the Year		One (1) Career & One (1) Volunteer Awarded Annually
5. Officer of the Year		One (1) Career & One (1) Volunteer Awarded Annually
5. Administrator of the Year		One (1) Career & One (1) Volunteer Awarded Annually

6. Meritorious Service Ribbon		
6. Unit Citation Ribbon		
7. Lifesaving Ribbon		
7. Stork Ribbon		
7. Campaign Ribbon	--Fire EMS Chief's Discretion--	Awarded by discretion of Fire EMS Chief
8. Public Recognition Ribbon		
9. Length of Service Ribbon	 Device showing 5-year increments.	Eligible: DFEMS Uniformed Employees Volunteer Members follow Company practice.

Addendum B
Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS
Awards & Recognition Nominations Form

Submitted By: _____ **Station:** _____ **Shift:** _____

Rank: _____ **Email:** _____ **Phone:** _____

Nominee: _____ **Station:** _____ **Shift:** _____

Rank: _____ **Supervisor:** _____

Award or Citation Nominated (circle):

Gold Star of Heroism Medal

Meritorious Service Ribbon

Silver Star of Valor Medal

Unit Citation Ribbon

Bronze Star of Valor Medal

Purple Heart Ribbon

Chief's Award

Lifesaving Ribbon

Firefighter of the Year

Citation of Honor Ribbon

EMS Clinician of the Year

Stork Ribbon

Officer of the Year

Length of Service Ribbon

Administrator of the Year

Civilian Citation or Appreciation

Incident Date: _____ **Incident Number:** _____ **Time:** _____

Justification (include here or attach typed document):

I attest that all I have submitted is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I agree to interviews or other follow-up investigations in the course of reviewing this nomination.

Nominator Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Attach More Pages as Necessary

Addendum C
Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS
Investigation Form

Submission Date: **Investigator(s):**
Nominator(s):
Nominee(s):
Incident Number (if applicable): **Incident Date** (if applicable):
Incident Type (if applicable):
Date Cleared by Deputy Chief of Operations or Medical Director for Interview:

Summary of Findings:

List of Interviews (Attach all interviews completed on DFEMS Witness Statement):

Witness:	Number of Pages Attached:
Witness:	Number of Pages Attached:
Witness:	Number of Pages Attached:
Witness:	Number of Pages Attached:
Witness:	Number of Pages Attached:

DRAFT Citation Narrative (200 word maximum)(if applicable):

Recommended Medal(s), Award(s), and/or Citation(s):

Recipient Name:	Medal, Award, Citation:
Recipient Name:	Medal, Award, Citation:
Recipient Name:	Medal, Award, Citation:
Recipient Name:	Medal, Award, Citation:
Recipient Name:	Medal, Award, Citation:

Investigation Date of Completion:

Investigator:	Investigator Signature:
Investigator:	Investigator Signature:
Investigator:	Investigator Signature:
Investigator:	Investigator Signature:

Attach supporting documentation and witness statements.

Addendum D
Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS
Commendations Board Interview Form

Interview Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Place:** _____
Witness Information:
Witness Name; _____ Rank: _____ Station: _____
Phone Number: _____ Supervisor: _____
Any Relationship to Parties Involved: _____

Statement: _____

I have read the above and attached statement, consisting of ____ pages, and attest that it is a true and accurate account of the events. I understand that the information divulged in this interview is not considered confidential, except that pertaining to HIPAA. Information will only be used for investigative purposes regarding potential commendations and subsequently submitted to the Fire EMS Chief as supporting documentation.

Signature of Person Providing Statement: _____

Interviewer 1's Printed Name

Signature of Interviewer 1

Interviewer 2's Printed Name

Signature of Interviewer 2

Page 1 of _____

Attach additional pages as needed.

Addendum E
Carroll County Department of Fire & EMS
Commendation Board Findings Report

Investigator(s):

Findings Report Completion Date:

If Applicable:

Incident Date:

Incident Time:

Incident Number:

Incident Location:

Personnel to Recognized:

Nominee Name:

Medal, Award, or Citation:

Nominee Name:

Medal, Award, or Citation:

Board's Finding after investigation of the facts and vote: FOUNDED or UNFOUNDED

Voting Board Members:

Vote Date:

Executive Summary of Findings:

Summary of Investigative Steps: *(Example Information Below)*

Submission of Nomination by FF/EMT John Doe on 1/1/2025.

Nomination Reviewed by the Board on 1/3/2025.

Investigation Phase:

Investigator 1 and Investigator 2 were assigned to Investigation Team on 1/3/25.

Interviews: FADO Joe Smith on 1/8/25; PM Jane Paramagic on 1/10/25

Review of supporting documentation (attached): CAD Notes, redacted eMEDS report.

Investigation Report completed on 1/14/25, submitted to Board same day.

Citation Narrative: (if "Founded Finding") (Less than 200 words)

Report Submission Date: _____

Co-Chair Signature: _____

Co-Chair Signature: _____

Chief's Decision: Concur or Deny

Chief's Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

All Supporting Documents are to be attached to the Findings Report.