



# NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION

April 25, 2024

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL WEEKEND WILL HONOR AND REMEMBER 226 FIREFIGHTERS** *Thirteen Texas Fallen Firefighters Among Those Being Honored on May 4-5, 2024*

**EMMITSBURG, Md.** – The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF) will host the **43<sup>rd</sup> National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend** (Memorial Weekend) on May 4-5, 2024 in Emmitsburg, Maryland. This year's national tribute will honor 89 firefighters who died in the line of duty in 2023 and 137 firefighters who died in previous years. The honorees will include the following Texas firefighters:

Firefighter Peter Avila, age 59, of the Brownsville Fire Department, died on 12/7/2021 due to complications of COVID-19.

Firefighter Evan Brown, age 18, of the Honey Grove Volunteer Fire Department and another firefighter were responding to a motor vehicle crash when they hit a cow on the road. The vehicle rolled, ejecting Firefighter Brown, and causing severe injuries. He remained in the Intensive Care Unit at the Medical City Hospital in Plano, TX until his death on 7/30/2023.

Engineer Gregory Cocke, age 41, of the Fort Worth Fire Department, died due to a brain aneurysm on 3/14/2009 subsequent to a training exercise on 3/11/2009.

Battalion Chief Robert Cocke, age 54, of the Fort Worth Fire Department, was conducting a training exercise at a high rise in downtown Fort Worth, TX on 11/17/1993. During this exercise, Battalion Chief Cocke had a heart attack due to a tremendous amount of stress and exertion. He was transported to a nearby hospital where he was admitted for treatment. He was discharged from the hospital on 12/5/1993. On 12/6/1993, he suffered a second, fatal heart attack and died.

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#### EMMITSBURG

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Lieutenant Richard Hempel responded to an emergency medical call at a residence. The next morning, he began to feel ill and was unresponsive. He was transported to the hospital where he died due to a heart attack on 5/9/23.

Firefighter Edward Hykel, age 60, of the West Volunteer Fire Department, responded with the West Volunteer Fire Department and the Department of Public Safety to the scene of a vehicle fire on an interstate on 3/28/23. The inside lane was shut down with traffic control devices; however, a tractor trailer failed to yield or follow the marked traffic paths and struck Edward Hykel, fire apparatus, DPS units, and the vehicle that was on fire. He was transported to the hospital where he died from his injuries.

Firefighter John Norris, age 55, of the Forest Bend Fire Department, responded to a structure fire at an abandoned house on 11/25/2023. Shortly after returning home, he suffered a heart attack. An ambulance was called, and he was transported to the hospital where he died due to a heart attack.

Fire Chief Nahit Oral, age 49, of the Communit Volunter Fire Department, died on 3/9/23 from cardiac arrest within 24 hours of completing and passing a physical ability test for the fire department's tactical medical team.

Firefighter/EMT Joe Parish, age 67, of the Diboll Volunter Fire Department, was responding to a call for mutual aid from Fuller Springs, TX, when his vehicle left the roadway and crashed. He was transported to the hospital and underwent surgery. He died on 9/01/2023 due to the injuries he sustained in the accident.

Firefighter Brandon Peterson, age 31, of the Lancaster Fire Department, died on 12/29/20, due to complications of lung cancer, deemed by the State of Texas to be a line of duty death.

Engineer Keven Teague, age 46 of the Fort Worth Fire Department, died on 5/24/2019 due to complications of pancreatic cancer.

Captain Malcolm Willis, age 34, of the Houston Fire Department, died due to cardiac hypertrophy (sudden cardiac death) on 7/13/2022. He died within 10 hours of completing an overtime shift, during which he responded to multiple calls.

Firefighter Horace Wright, age 71, of the Abbott Volunteer Fire Department, responded to a call for a motor vehicle accident on 4/14/2023. Upon arriving at the scene, it was determined to be a stranded vehicle partially blocking the roadway. The fire department remained on scene for traffic control. As firefighters were repositioning the apparatus, Horace Wright, fell and was struck by the fire apparatus. He was immediately treated on scene and airlifted to the hospital where he died due to his injuries.

Detailed information about each of the 226 firefighters being memorialized can be found on the [2024 Roll of Honor](#).

“National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend is a time for our nation to pause and reflect on the heroic efforts and selfless service of the fallen firefighters we are paying tribute to this year,” said NFFF CEO Victor Stagnaro. “We will always remember the bravery, commitment, and sacrifices of each of these 226 heroes—and their families.”

There are **two events open to the public** at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Park on the grounds of the National Emergency Training Center (NETC) during Memorial Weekend.

- The **National Fallen Firefighters Candlelight Service** is on May 4 at 7:30 pm ET and will be hosted by Fire Captain Garon Mosby of the St. Louis Fire Department.
- The **National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service** is on May 5 at 10:00 am ET and will be hosted by actor Jeremy Holm.

Fire service and government leaders are scheduled to address the thousands of attendees at the Memorial Service on Sunday, May 5. The NFFF will live stream both events on the NFFF’s [website \(firehero.org\)](http://firehero.org), [YouTube channel](#), and [Facebook page](#).

There are additional events during Memorial Weekend provided exclusively for the families and fire departments of honored firefighters. These include small group sessions and other activities throughout Friday and Saturday; they are open to the families and coworkers of newly honored and previously honored firefighters.

### **Schedule**

#### **Saturday, May 4, 2024**

##### **Candlelight Service**

Time: 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm ET

Streaming begins at 7:00 pm ET

#### **Sunday, May 5, 2024**

##### **Memorial Service**

Time: 10:00 am – 12:00 pm ET

Streaming begins at 9:30 am ET

The NFFF will provide live satellite feeds of both events. Technical support is being provided by VISTA Worldlink, Comcast Beltway, and INTELSAT. Satellite coordinates can be found at [live.firehero.org](http://live.firehero.org). Images from the 2023 Memorial Weekend are [here](#).

### **Location**

National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Park  
National Emergency Training Center (NETC)  
16835 S. Seton Avenue  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

### **Media Information**

**Members of the media who plan to attend** Memorial Weekend are asked to **RSVP in advance** to gain access to the NETC.

Obtain credentials here: [For the Media - National Fallen Firefighters Foundation \(firehero.org\)](http://firehero.org).

## **How Communities Can Participate**

Those not attending Memorial Weekend in person can also **pay tribute to this year's honored firefighters**. All can participate in [Light the Night for Fallen Firefighters](#) (May 1 – 5) by lighting their homes, businesses, landmarks, or fire departments with red lights. Other ways to remember include [Bells Across America](#), [Sound the Sirens](#), and by signing a virtual [Remembrance Banner](#).

In addition, the **American flag will be lowered to half-staff on all Federal buildings on Sunday, May 5**. The public is also encouraged to lower their American flags that day to recognize the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice.

## **Public Access And Parking**

**Public parking for Memorial Weekend is at Liberty Mountain Resort (78 Country Club Trail, Fairfield, PA)**. Shuttles from Liberty Mountain Resort will begin at 3:30 pm on Saturday, May 4 for the Candlelight Service and at 7:30 am on Sunday, May 5 for the Memorial Service.

Memorial Weekend is supported by individual and corporate donors, a grant from the **Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance**, and in partnership with the **U.S. Fire Administration**, a component of the **U.S. Department of Homeland Security**.

**Social Media:** #FireHero2024 #NFFF

**Website:** [weekend.firehero.org](http://weekend.firehero.org)

## **LOCATION if inclement weather**

PNC Stadium (ARCC)  
Mount Saint Mary University  
16300 Old Emmitsburg Rd  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727

Media contact:

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## **ABOUT THE NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION (NFFF)**

The United States Congress created the NFFF to lead a nationwide effort to honor America's fallen firefighters. The mission is to honor America's fallen fire heroes; support their families, colleagues, and organizations; and work to reduce preventable firefighter death and injury. The National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Park includes the National Fallen Firefighters Monument, the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel, a brick Walk of Honor, a September 11<sup>th</sup> memorial sculpture, and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Bell of Remembrance. Information about the NFFF and the Memorial Park can be found [here](#).

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