

State Patrol to Recognize Heroic Acts

Citizens, Troopers, Commercial Vehicle Inspectors and Radio Communications Operators Are Among Those Receiving Awards

WHAT: Their actions saved lives. Getting a suspect to surrender in an active shooter situation, reviving unresponsive motorists, preventing people from taking their own lives and other heroic acts highlight the State Patrol Awards Ceremony.

Honorees include citizens, troopers and other public servants who performed heroic acts in 2020 and 2021.

This year's Minnesota State Patrol Awards Ceremony is again being held virtually. The number of awards presented in-person will be limited. The remaining recipients will be recognized during the ceremony and receive their awards at another time.

WHEN: **Friday, Feb. 25, 1 p.m.**

WHERE: **Virtual Awards Banquet Presentation**

Editor's Note: A broadcast-quality livestream of the awards presentation will be on the Minnesota Department of Public Safety YouTube channel at the following link: <https://youtu.be/bflioQulosQ>. If there are any technical issues during the live event, access to a recorded version will be provided soon after the presentation has ended.

WHO: **Assistant Commissioner Booker Hodges**, Minnesota Department of Public Safety

Col. Matt Langer, chief of the Minnesota State Patrol

WHY:

The Minnesota State Patrol established its awards ceremony to honor the exemplary efforts of troopers who have excelled in their mission to protect and serve the people of Minnesota. The ceremony also recognizes citizens and members of other law enforcement and emergency service agencies who performed commendable acts to assist troopers and help others.

Awards Narratives

Meritorious Citizenship Award: This award is presented to individuals who have assisted the State Patrol in providing a significant service to the public.

Craig Otto

Nov. 19, 2020 – Craig Otto was driving on Interstate 94 when he saw a car pull away from a traffic stop and noticed the trooper was not in his squad. He spotted the trooper in the ditch and pulled over to assist. The traffic stop suspect had assaulted and injured Trooper Darren Athey after being told he was under arrest. Otto assisted Trooper Athey until responding officers arrived.

Vincent Williams

Jan. 3, 2021 – At a crash scene on Highway 252 in Brooklyn Center, Vincent Williams witnessed the suspect driver assaulting Trooper Tyler Regenscheid, pinning him to the ground. The suspect was trying to gain control of the trooper's holstered firearm. Williams physically restrained the suspect and verbally commanded him to release the firearm. With William's assistance, Trooper Regenscheid gained control of the suspect until other officers arrived.

Elijah Andrys-Akins and Rashaad Marks

Jan. 20, 2021 – Elijah Andrys-Akins and Rashaad Marks stopped on Maryland Avenue over I-35E after seeing a young male attempting to jump off the bridge and take his own life. Andrys-Akins and Marks pulled the male over the rail and off the bridge until troopers arrived.

Life Saving Award: This award is presented to State Patrol members who distinguish themselves by performing acts that prevent the death of

another.

Trooper Zachery Fay (District 2100- Rochester)

Dec. 20, 2020 – After meeting a woman at the district office to release items from a vehicle, Trooper Zachery Fay noticed the vehicle she arrived in remained in the parking lot for several minutes. He found the male driver unconscious and the woman trying to wake him. Trooper Fay called for an ambulance and administered Naloxone. After the male stopped breathing, he administered a second dose and began rescue breathing. The driver was transported to the hospital and was later discharged.

Trooper Blake Cederstrom (District 2400- East Metro)

April 25, 2021 – Trooper Blake Cederstrom responded to a medical call on Interstate 94 in Newport. The victim had pulled over after accidentally discharging his firearm while driving. The bullet struck the man in the hip, and caused heavy bleeding. Trooper Cederstrom packed the wound and applied direct pressure to control the bleeding while keeping the man calm until medics arrived.

Trooper Tyler Crabtree (District 2100- Rochester)

June 29, 2021 – Trooper Tyler Crabtree responded to a call for assistance from Rochester police. A man was sitting on an overpass railing and threatening to jump onto Highway 52. As officers distracted the man, Trooper Crabtree approached from behind, grabbed him and pulled him to safety.

Trooper Brandon Prowatzke (District 2600- St. Cloud)

July 11, 2021 – Trooper Brandon Prowatzke responded to a complaint of a vehicle crossing the center line and striking construction barriers. He found the driver and passenger slumped over and unresponsive on an exit ramp. Trooper Prowatzke administered Narcan to the passenger and used a bag valve mask to help them breathe until medics arrived. The driver woke up and was arrested for DUI.

Trooper Nick Otterson (District 2800- Baxter)

July 25, 2021 – A speeding vehicle approached Trooper Nick Otterson, with the driver honking the horn. The driver and her daughter informed Trooper Otterson that her husband, the passenger, was not breathing.

Trooper Otterson performed CPR and administered AED shocks until a pulse returned and medics arrived. He then took the woman to the hospital remained in contact until the man regained consciousness.

Trooper Alexander Johnson (District 2400- East Metro)

Aug. 20, 2021 – Trooper Alexander Johnson responded to a call of a pedestrian walking in traffic on Highway 36. He watched the woman run up the ramp and sit on the concrete barrier. She then told him she was going to jump into the traffic below. While Trooper Pedro Ortega talked with the woman, Trooper Johnson wrapped his arms around her and pulled her over the barrier to safety.

Troopers Megan Brynell and Kendall LeMay (District 2400- East Metro)

Sept. 15, 2021 – Trooper Megan Brynell responded to a medical call with a vehicle off the road. The woman inside was unconscious. Trooper Brynell broke a window to get inside and pulled the woman from to an embankment with the help of a bystander and officers. The woman was not breathing and had no pulse so Trooper Brynell began CPR and administered Narcan. Trooper Kendall LeMay arrived on scene and assisted with chest compressions until medics took her to the hospital

Commercial Vehicle Inspectors Daniel Hoesly and Michael Tester (District 4700)

Sept. 15, 2021 – Commercial Vehicle Inspectors (CVI) Daniel Hoesly and Michael Tester were at the Daytonport Scale in Ramsey when a vehicle with two people inside asked for help. They believed their friend overdosed. The victim was unresponsive and not breathing, so Sgt. Ted McCollor called for an ambulance while CVI Tester started chest compressions. Sgt. McCollor administered a dose of Narcan. CVI Hoesly successfully opened an airway. The victim began to breathe and was monitored until medics arrived.

Trooper Ben Barker (District 2500- West Metro)

Oct. 10, 2021 – Trooper Ben Barker responded to a medical emergency after a man fell out of a moving vehicle and was run over. Trooper Barker noticed the man lost a significant amount of blood and was actively bleeding. He applied a tourniquet to the man's leg and stopped the bleeding before medics arrived.

Troopers Mitchell Johnson, James Lee and Ben Lockman (District 2400- East Metro)

Dec. 17, 2021 – Troopers Mitchell Johnson and James Lee responded to a vehicle that swerved into a ditch off of Interstate 694. They found the man inside unresponsive so they broke the window and removed him. The man had no pulse so they started CPR. Trooper Ben Lockman arrived on scene and the three rotated administering CPR. The troopers gave him two doses of Narcan before he regained consciousness.

Lt. Heath Dienger and Trooper Shane Roper (District 2100- Rochester)

This presentation is combined with a Meritorious Citizenship Award for Dr. Sam Economou.

Dec. 18, 2021 – A driver was taking his wife to the hospital when she became unresponsive. He pulled over and Dr. Sam Economou stopped to help. He performed chest compressions for 15 minutes in below freezing temperatures before Lt. Heath Dienger arrived and began rescue breathing. Dr. Economou continued chest compressions while Trooper Shane Roper took over rescue breathing and Lt. Dienger attempted to open the woman's airway. The woman was listed in stable condition the following day.

Chief's Commendation Award – Communications/911: This award is presented to radio communications operators (RCOs) who provide vital, life-saving services that lead to the rescue of a person, provide outstanding performance during a special event, or provide a consistent, sustained high level of customer service.

RTMC Dispatchers (Statewide Communications – RTMC)

RCS (radio communications supervisor) Justin Dejarlais

RCS Katie Webb

RCO Sheldon Carlsted

RCO Abby Jaskowiak

RCO Martin O'Hehir

RCO Charles Sexton

July 6, 2021 – RTMC dispatchers received several 911 calls reporting a

vehicle off the road on I-694. A vehicle pulled next to a driver and his teenage son. The person inside fired a gun. When officers arrived, they found the driver with a life threatening gunshot wound to the neck. The dispatch team reviewed traffic camera video to identify the suspect vehicle, determine its last known location, and document the incident. Their efforts ultimately led to the recovery of the vehicle and arrest of the suspects.

RCO Chris Daas (Statewide Communications – RTMC)

This presentation is combined with a Meritorious Citizenship Award for Dana and Laura Fontaine and Travis and Todd Wheeler.

Sept. 5, 2021 – RCO Chris Daas received a 911 call of a rollover crash with injuries. Citizens Dana and Laura Fontaine and Travis and Todd Wheeler found an overturned vehicle on Highway 84. The man inside was unresponsive and was gasping for air. RCO Daas directed Travis and Todd to remove the man from the vehicle and perform CPR as Laura relayed information about his condition. Medics transported him to the hospital and he was later released.

Meritorious Service Award: This award is presented to employees for acts involving personal risk posing hazards which could lead to serious injury or loss of life to the employee.

Trooper Steve Quern (District 2600- St. Cloud) and Trooper Daniel Ryan (District 2500- West Metro)

Nov. 29, 2020 – Trps. Steve Quern and Daniel Ryan responded to an active shooter in Albert Lea. The shooter fired more than 90 rounds in a neighborhood, at cars, and at law enforcement which injured a local police officer and two citizens. Trps. Quern and Ryan deployed as a sniper team. Trooper Ryan acted as the spotter while Trooper Quern delivered one shot at the suspect. The shooter surrendered and was arrested.

Sgt. James Brings (District 2600- St. Cloud)

Feb. 9, 2021 – Sgt. James Brings assisted Buffalo police with an active shooter at the Allina Clinic. At risk of serious injury, Sgt. Brings used his squad car as cover so law enforcement could enter the clinic. Once inside, Sgt. Brings navigated around a known undetonated bomb, directed an arrest team to the shooter, searched for victims and treated the injured.

Trooper Rich Pender (District 2700- Duluth)

This presentation is combined with a Chief's Commendation Award – Communications/911 for RCO Michelle Bustrak.

Oct. 16, 2021 – Trooper Rich Pender was dispatched to a double homicide when he spotted the suspect's vehicle. Trooper Pender pursued the vehicle while waiting for additional squads. During the pursuit, the suspect called 911 and said he was going to the police department to commit suicide or force suicide by cop. Once assisting agencies arrived, Trooper Pender performed a PIT maneuver to end the pursuit. The suspect died from a self-inflicted gunshot.

By proactively relaying relevant information to supervision and coordinating assistance with other agencies in a developing situation, RCO Michelle Bustrak helped bring this incident to an end.

Exceptional Service Award: This award is presented to employees who have provided extraordinary service in the performance of their duties.

Sgt. Phil Jergenson (District 2500- West Metro)

Sgt. Phil Jergenson is the West Metro District Investigator, the assistant team leader on the Special Response Team (SRT), and serves as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Army National Guard. Sgt. Jergenson used that experience during an SRT call for an active shooter on Nov. 29, 2021. A man with a high-powered rifle shot an Albert Lea police officer and two others and had entered an apartment building. Sgt. Jergenson organized his team, relayed critical information and led a tactical approach to evacuate residents. As the team came under fire, Sgt. Jergenson issued clear directions in a calm manner until the suspect surrendered.

Sam Kunjummen (MNIT/CAD Group)

During Operation Safety Net, Sam Kunjummen was an invaluable asset to the Statewide Communications team. He quickly assembled CAD equipment, responded to urgent requests for technical assistance and developed timely solutions to service interruptions. Sam answers his phone day or night and is willing to help or show up when needed. When CAD stations need attention, Sam is quick to remote in or stop by to fix the issue. He sees the job through and never accepts anything less than success.

Trp. Ryan Marthaler (District 2200- Mankato)

As a member of the Special Response Team (SRT), Trooper Marthaler holds the position of team leader. This is a demanding position requiring excellent organizational skills and the ability to meet high expectations. In addition, Trooper Marthaler displays a strong work ethic within district operations. He often leads district functions while seamlessly managing SRT duties. He leads with compassion and fairness, taking care of his people to ensure the mission is complete.

Lt. Andrew Martinek (District 2500- West Metro)

In addition to his supervisory duties in the downtown Minneapolis station, Lt. Andrew Martinek manages the district's Field Training Program, serves as the agency's Traffic Incident Management Coordinator, teaches DWI/SFST training at the Trooper Training Academy, and created the agency's arrest and booking procedures during civil unrest. Lt. Martinek consistently accepts new challenges when tasks are time sensitive or high priority. He identifies creative solutions for creating efficiencies to seek higher success.

Heidi Ostlie (District 2900- Detroit Lakes)

In addition to her regular full-time duties, Heidi Ostlie volunteered to provide support services to the Mobile Response Team and quickly became the team's primary timekeeper. Heidi worked extra hours to accomplish the task during numerous deployments while serving as a resource for other districts. Due to Heidi's extensive knowledge, experience and high-quality work, she was asked to manage the Special Response Team's time keeping duties as well. She accepted the additional duties without hesitation.

RCO Danielle Wressell (Statewide Communications- RTMC)

On Memorial Day morning, RCO Danielle Wressell received a call from Dakota County dispatch of a stranded driver on Interstate 494 with a disabled trailer. After dispatching a trooper to assist, she learned the driver was a member of VFW Post 9024 and was hauling equipment to a Memorial Day commemoration at Woodbury City Hall. RCO Wressell made arrangements to personally incur the cost of the tow service.

Eagle Squadron Award: Each year, the Eagle Squadron Award is

presented to the Minnesota State Patrol trooper who arrested the greatest number of impaired drivers the previous year.

Trooper Gustavo Culbeaux (District 2500- West Metro)

Impaired driving enforcement continues to be job number one for every State Patrol trooper. Aggressive enforcement in this important area saves countless lives and injuries each year. In 2021, Trooper Culbeaux arrested 142 impaired drivers.

Leadership Award: This award is presented yearly to the employee who consistently exhibits outstanding leadership and excellence in public safety through their personal actions, guidance, direction and professional involvement.

Captain Jason Engeldinger (District 3100- Virginia)

Captain Jason Engeldinger embodies leadership and steadfast commitment in his role as Mobile Response Team (MRT) Commander. He works closely with allied agencies and stakeholders on a well-constructed plan to ensure the best possible outcome when MRT is deployed, even working early mornings or late at night. Captain Engeldinger is a confident and assertive leader who is conscious of his team's safety. He is present at nearly all MRT deployments. If not at the scene, he actively plans and monitors events. Captain Engeldinger provides the highest level of support and mentorship leading to measurable results.

Civilian Employee of the Year: This award is presented to the non-sworn employee who best demonstrates outstanding work performance, initiative, leadership and effective interpersonal relations.

Sarah Robinson (Training and Development Section)

Sarah Robinson is tasked with numerous duties and achieves them all with excellence. Sarah's logistical expertise is heavily relied on – from Trooper Training Academies to Mobile Response Team (MRT) deployments. She willingly answers the call day or night, and doesn't stop working until the job is done. Sarah's skill and determination are on full display in rapidly changing, fluid situations. In addition to her regular work, she tracked all expenses related to the Line 3 project including equipment, meals, lodging, supplies and overtime. Her attention to detail and organizational skills were a key contribution to this large project.

Trooper of the Year: This award is presented to the trooper who best demonstrates outstanding work performance, initiative, leadership and effective interpersonal relations.

Sergeant Rick Harjes (Training and Development Section)

Sergeant Rick Harjes played a significant role in several large scale projects resulting in the delivery of critical and vital information to agency members.

Operating an academy during a pandemic is a challenge. To avoid a potential delay or shutdown due to COVID, Sergeant Harjes researched and implemented alternate curriculum delivery methods that would allow a quarantined cadet to safely participate in class via live stream.

Sergeant Harjes also developed training on the new Use of Force statute and Taser Awareness. Sergeant Harjes worked with supervisors to develop training on the new Intrepid app. He also worked with the Department of Corrections on training their staff on the new CAD system. Once these projects were accomplished, Sergeant Harjes was tasked with training the entire agency on the body worn and fleet camera implementation.

Sergeant Harjes took on all of these challenges in addition to teaching, and serving as a staff officer in the 62nd academy. His commitment, perseverance, positive attitude and excellence in delivering this large volume of work is admirable.