

2014 Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards in Swiftwater Rescue Announced

For Immediate Release

For more information: www.higginsandlangley.org

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ASHEVILLE, NC, May 29, 2014—The Higgins & Langley Memorial and Education Fund is proud to announce the 2014 Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards, which honor outstanding achievement in the technical rescue discipline of swiftwater and flood rescue.

Although there is always an element of heroism involved in dangerous technical rescue operations, these are not awards for heroism, but rather awards that recognize preparedness, teamwork, and a job well done – sometimes under extreme conditions – where training is vital to the success of rescue missions, as well as the safety of rescue personnel.

Awards are presented to swiftwater and flood rescue experts worldwide in several significant categories, including the Outstanding Achievement Award, Program Development Award, Special Commendation Award, and Swiftwater Rescue Incident Award.

The awards will be presented on Friday, June 6, 2014, at 7:30 PM, at the annual National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) conference in Woodcliff Lake, NJ. Conference site: Hilton Woodcliff Lake, 200 Tice Boulevard, Woodcliff Lake, New Jersey 07677, Tel: 201-391-3600.

2014 Higgins & Langley Awards

Outstanding Achievement Award

Travis County *STAR Flight*

Travis County, TX

In honor of *STAR Flight's* steadfast commitment of many years to the highest standards of swiftwater and flood rescue training, preparedness, professionalism, and dedication, which culminated in the technically challenging rescues of 32 victims, who were swept away, surrounded, or stranded by dangerous flood waters generated by severe thunderstorms on October 30-31, 2013. Without Travis County *STAR Flight's* robust swiftwater rescue program, numerous lives would surely have been lost in these devastating storms.

Program Development Award

Pennsylvania Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team

Harrisburg, PA

Honoring representatives from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, and Pennsylvania Army National Guard, who designed and coordinated all the elements of an innovative, comprehensive swiftwater and flood rescue program, launching the Pennsylvania Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team. PA-HART is "Always Leaning Forward" for man made and natural disasters in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Special Commendation Awards

The American Canoe Association

Fredericksburg, VA

In honor of ACA's extraordinary efforts to organize and host the first American Canoe Association River Rescue and Safety Conference in October, 2013, coordinated by Sam Fowlkes and Robin Pope. The intensive, three-day, on-river training featured a series of workshops presented by some of the most respected names in Swiftwater Rescue, including Slim Ray, Les Bechdel, Charlie Walbridge, Aaron Peeler, Mike Mather, Walter Fenton and Jim Coffey. Participants included more than 100 recreational paddlers, certified paddlesport instructors, and emergency responders from 22 states and three foreign countries.

Erin Pogmore

New South Wales State Emergency Services
Sydney, Australia

In honor of Ms. Erin Pogmore's pioneering work in swiftwater and flood rescue helicopter safety, enabling specialized self-rescue courses specific to the flood environment to be provided to volunteers of the NSW SES, as well as media outlets, which rely on the NSW SES for transport to communities during major flooding emergencies. And in recognition of her ongoing research to reduce the health and safety risks associated with in-water rescue training.

Swiftwater Recovery Specialist Training Program

Wellington, New Zealand

In honor of the efforts of Mr. Steve Glassey and Constable Geoffrey Bray, of the New Zealand Police, to create a pioneering evidence based course focusing on how to conduct body recoveries from swiftwater environments, making for a more compassionate and effective recovery of lost loved ones, while protecting the safety of first responders. The SRS program moves away from the traditional "task" focus, to a "people" focus, which encourages a philosophy professional recovery that is conducted with humility and compassion. The goal of this innovating training program is to create a pool of internationally credentialed swiftwater technicians who are able to undertake complex and dangerous body recoveries under the direction of police dive squads.

Switlik Parachute Company

Trenton, NJ

Stanley Switlik II, President & CEO

Gregory Switlik Sr. – In Memoriam

Stanley Switlik II and Gregory Switlik Sr. have been at the forefront of research, education, and product development in the marine safety environment. As problem solvers and universal advocates for water safety and rescue, they have worked internationally with numerous organizations, representing the "One Mission, One Team" spirit. Switlik Parachute Co. has been owned and operated by the Switlik family for four generations. This award honors the company's steadfast dedication to pioneering research and development of innovative water safety and rescue products, which has set a standard for protecting the safety and enhancing effectiveness of water rescue personnel in the field.

Swiftwater Rescue Incident Awards

Austin-Travis County EMS

Special Operations Team

Austin, TX

When a ferocious series of storms swept through Central Texas, beginning the night of October 30, and continuing through October 31, 2013, Austin-Travis County Swiftwater Rescue Team members performed multiple, dangerous and technically challenging rescues of 79 individuals and evacuated another 100 people and pets from rooftops, trees, cars, and homes. Austin-Travis County Special Operations is to be commended for an impressive and longtime commitment to flood and swiftwater rescue preparedness, which has consistently paid off in the saving of lives.

Chicago Fire Department

Special Operations, Technical Rescue Team

Chicago, IL

In honor of the rescue by The Chicago Fire Department's Special Operations, Technical Rescue Team, of Albany Park residents whose neighborhood was completely flooded by the Chicago River in April 2013. Five people were transported safely to area hospitals and 118 other residents, as well as two pet birds and three cats, were evacuated from residences.

Clackamas County Sheriff's Office Dive/Rescue Team
Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue Swiftwater Rescue Team
Clackamas County, OR

On June 17, 2013 Clackamas County Sheriff's Office Dive/Rescue team members, Deputies Ben Toops and Doug Olsen responded to a report of a man who had disappeared while swimming on the Clackamas River in an area known for swift currents and very cold water. Recognizing that every second counts in a drowning emergency, Deputies Toops and Olsen donned Scuba equipment and started a free dive in swift water. Assisted by members of the Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue Water Rescue Team, the deputies located the subject, who still had a pulse, and transferred him to waiting EMS personal on shore.

Roanoke Fire-EMS Swift Water Rescue Team
City of Salem Swift Water Rescue Team
Roanoke, VA

In honor of the rescue of more than 50 people in imminent danger during unprecedented flash flooding in Roanoke, VA, July 3rd and July 10th 2013. As floodwaters rose quickly, swiftwater rescue teams responded to multiple, simultaneous rescue missions, including 21 children in a daycare center, a badly injured motorist, a bedridden hospice patient whose room was flooded, and other groups of citizens and individuals trapped in vehicles and inside buildings.

North Metro Fire Rescue District
Technical Rescue Team
Metro Denver, CO

In the pre-dawn hours of September 12, 2013, when Colorado's Front Range experienced widespread flash flooding, three vehicles plunged off of a washed out road near Broomfield. The vehicles ended up in raging floodwaters, with one vehicle wedged under a high pressure gas line exposed by the collapse of the road and surrounding land. This award honors the professionalism and commitment of North Metro Fire Rescue District's Technical Rescue Team, who expertly managed the technically challenging rescue of two endangered motorists.

Background

The Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards were established in 1993 by the National Association for Search and Rescue Swiftwater Rescue Committee in honor of Earl Higgins, a writer and filmmaker, who lost his life in 1980 while rescuing a child who was swept down the flood-swollen Los Angeles River, and Los Angeles County Firefighter Paramedic Jeffrey Langley, a pioneer in swiftwater rescue, who lost his life in a helicopter incident in 1993.

Over the past 21-years, the Higgins & Langley Awards have increased awareness about the need for specialized swiftwater and flood rescue training and preparedness. Today, high standards and examples of excellence in swiftwater and flood rescue have inspired agencies worldwide to develop and sustain viable water rescue programs to protect the public and rescuers alike.

The Higgins & Langley Memorial Awards are sponsored by Angel-Guard Rescue Curtain/Los Angeles County Fire Department, CFS Press, Esprit Whitewater, Drowning Accident Rescue Team, Fire and Rescue Concepts, LLC, K38 Water Safety, Liquid Militia, Kokatat, Mustang Survival, ONE-Boat, Rescue 3 International/Rescue Source, Rescue Canada-Force 6 Safety Products, Inc., Sierra Rescue/Rescue 3 West, SkyHook Rescue Systems, Inc., and the Whitewater Rescue Institute.

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