

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL F BURKE,

IN SUPPORT

TO HB 1389- Public Safety Officer – Performance of Duties – Death Benefit

In introduction, please be informed that I am a Veteran, with 21 years of Service with the US Army, as a Military Police Officer, MP Investigator, and Counterintelligence Agent. Beyond that, I have more than 25 years of experience as a County, State, and federal Law Enforcement Officer and Special Agent. I am an expert in Maryland Firearms Law, federal firearms law and the law of self-defense. I am also a Maryland State Police certified handgun instructor for the Maryland Wear and Carry Permit and the Maryland Handgun Qualification License and a certified NRA instructor in pistol, as well as a Chief Range Safety Officer. I have also served more than 25 years as a VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER and EMERGENCY MEDICAL TECHNICIAN, Emergency Vehicle Operator, Pump Operator, Fire Inspector, Fire Instructor, Safety Officer and EEO Officer

I appear today in SUPPORT OF HB 1389.

In my decades of public service as a First Responder, I have sadly witnessed hundreds of Line of Duty Deaths of Police Officers, Firefighters, Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians. More troubling, I have witnessed hundreds of fellow First Responders suffer debilitating injuries in the line of duty.

Our injured brothers and sisters don't get memorials, parades, funerals or decorations. They don't get promoted, they don't get advanced training, they don't get to serve in their chosen careers- they often lose their 'other' jobs due to those wounds.

What this committee, the House and Senate don't know- outside of the major cities- 80% of the firefighters, paramedics, Emergency Medical Technicians and other Responders are VOLUNTEERS. These folks serve the public – your families- out of DEDICATION, the willingness to SACRIFICE their time, their fortunes, their hearts, minds, limbs (and lungs, kidneys, etc.) to SAVE OTHERS. They willingly enter environments and buildings known to be Immediately Dangerous to Life or Health, (IDLH) an acronym that stands for something that is going to KILL people.

We very few undergo rigorous and repetitive training – training based on the investigation of the deaths of thousands of men and women who went before us.

We learned to wear gloves- to wear HELMETS- to carry air tanks and respirators. We learned to wear seatbelts in fire engines, trucks and ambulances while rushing to YOUR personal emergency- be it fire, trauma, or medical event. We use loud sirens and air horns to clear traffic along the way- and hearing protection to save our own inner ears.

NIOSH defines IDLH “that poses a threat of exposure to airborne contaminants when that exposure is likely to cause death or immediate or delayed permanent adverse health effects or prevent escape from such an environment.”



Today, we face more risk from contaminants, hazardous chemicals created by burning petrochemicals and 'unknown' items in homes, motor vehicles, industrial facilities, even in fields and wildfires.

First responders are increasingly disabled by cancer, respiratory illness, blood diseases, neurological conditions, etc- all unseen injuries, unlike the 'ordinary' cases- head injuries, amputations, spinal injuries, third degree burns, blindness and deafness.

Worse (if one can believe) than these are the most internal wounds. Traumatic Brain Injuries. Depression. Drug and Alcohol addictions related to the cumulative stress of the scenes we experience.



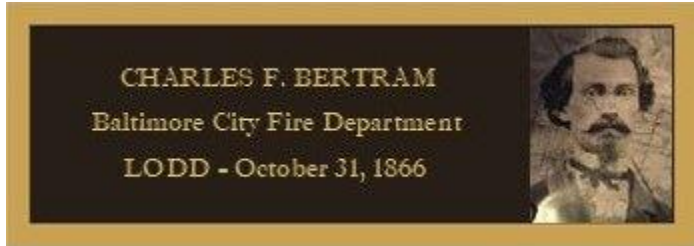
We lose too many of our brothers and sisters to these unseen injuries. Post Traumatic Stress. Sadly, not only do these injuries prevent them from continuing to serve, some are lost to self-injury- suicide.

These lost are not on the memorials.

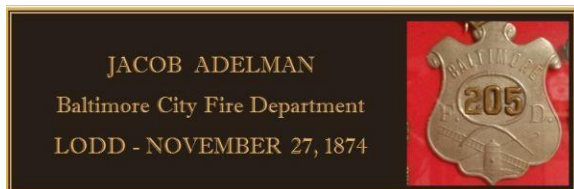
The deaths - Some of these are listed HERE:

<https://www.mdfirerescuehero.org/lodd-directory>

EXAMPLES-



On October 29, 1866 Box No.3 sounded at 5:50 p.m. The Marston Building located at 246 West Baltimore Street was afire. Three firefighters were advancing a hoseline up a ladder when a high wooden cornice fell from the burning building and buried all three under the rubble. When the men were extricated, it was found that Firefighter Thomas Rodeslie sustained severe injuries to his chest and head, Firefighter William Norris sustained a broken arm, and Firefighter Charles Bertram was found to have both legs broken and injuries to his spine. Firefighter Bertram died on October 31, 1866 and was the first Line Of Duty Death recorded by the Baltimore City Fire Department since being officially established 1859. Firefighter Charles F. Bertram was 28 years old.

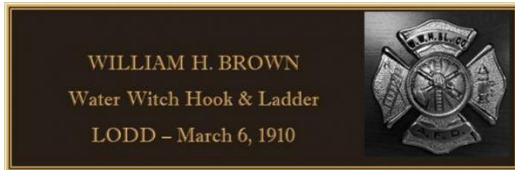


November 27, 1874 Box No.6 sounded at 06:05 Marburg Brothers Tobacco warehouse, Charles and Barre Streets, was afire. A curing dryer had upset on the top floor of the 4 story brick building. Pipeman Jacob Adelman was taking the hose pipe to the roof of the adjacent building, when he mistepped, fell from the roof top to the ground below, and was critically injured. He died from his injuries on November 29, 1874. Pipeman Jacob Adelman was 28 years old.



ACOMB, John

Worst tragedy of Baltimore City FD when 7 members were lost at warehouse fire when building collapsed with 16 firefighters inside, 9 escaped death.

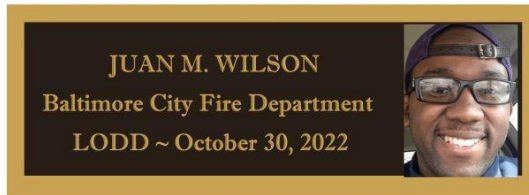


Firefighter Brown fell from a ladder while fighting a fire at Market Space and Fleet Street in Annapolis. Initially, his injuries were thought to be minor. Firefighter Brown died later that night at his residence from massive swelling of the brain. Firefighter William H. Brown was 72 years old.



Deputy Chief Sander B. Cohen was killed on December 8, 2017 at approximately 10:00 p.m. after stopping to assist FBI Supervisory Special Agent Carlos Wolff who had just been involved in single vehicle accident in the southbound lane of I-270 in the Rockville area. Deputy Chief Cohen, who was off-duty and in his personal vehicle, took notice of the accident, pulled in behind the vehicle of Agent Wolff, activated his emergency flashers and called the Rockville Barrack reporting the accident that placed him in an official capacity. Deputy Chief Cohen exited his vehicle and assisted Agent Wolff. Both Agent Wolff and Deputy Cohen were standing on the shoulder when a vehicle traveling southbound, for reasons unknown, swerved left and struck both Agent Wolff and Deputy Chief Cohen. Both Wolff and Cohen were thrown over the jersey wall where Chief Cohen was struck by a northbound vehicle. Deputy Chief Cohen was pronounced dead at the scene. Agent Wolff was transported to Suburban Hospital where he later died of his injuries. Chief Cohen graduated from Prince Georges County Police Academy in 2009. He was assigned to Southern Regional Office, later taking on the special assignment to assist Prince Georges County Fire & EMS, Fire Investigations Unit. After completing his assignment in Prince Georges County he was assigned to the Upper Eastern Shore Regional Office prior to transferring to the Northeast Regional Office where he remained until his promotion. Chief Cohen was promoted to Deputy Chief in January of 2017 and was assigned as Regional Commander of the Northeast Regional Office, consisting of Carroll, Harford and Cecil counties. He was team leader on numerous Major Incident Response Team deployments assisting fire investigation units in Baltimore City as well as Montgomery and Howard counties. Sander was a decorated investigator which included receiving a Unit Citation during his assignment with Prince Georges County Fire & EMS Department in May of 2014. It was in recognition of a multi-agency investigation in which a suspect was charged with the manufacture, possession, and detonation of a destructive device in connection with an explosion at the Magic Johnson Movie Theatre in Largo, Maryland. His goal was to graduate Hazardous Device School and become a Bomb Technician within the agency. When off duty, Sander served his community as a volunteer fire captain with the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department ~Station 3, where he had been serving as an active member since

2003. Deputy Chief Sander Benjamin Cohen was 33 years old and had served the citizens of Maryland for 14 years.



On the evening of Monday, Sept. 19, 2022, Baltimore City EMT/Firefighter Juan Wilson responded with BCFD units to an emergency medical call at a residence.

While performing CPR on the patient, EMT/Firefighter Wilson, himself, suffered sudden cardiac arrest. On-scene personnel immediately cared for EMT/FF Wilson and continued caring for the original patient. Additional units were requested. EMT/FF Wilson experienced ROSC and was transported to the UMMS ED in critical condition. Although ROSC was maintained, he never regained consciousness, and remained on a ventilator.

Sadly, on Sunday October 30, 2022, EMT/Firefighter Wilson passed away. He was assigned to Engine 53 in Edmondson Village. He was 34 years old and had served the citizens of Baltimore City for 11 years.

We have been recognizing and mourning our lost brothers and sisters for over 200 years in Maryland.

A promotional graphic for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. The top left features the text "NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION" in gold and blue. Below this is a "MISSION:" section with a list of six bullet points: "Sponsor the annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend", "Assist survivors attending the annual memorial weekend", "Offer support programs for survivors", "Award scholarships to fire service survivors", "Help departments manage line-of-duty deaths", and "Create a National Memorial Park". To the right of the mission is a yellow oval with the text "Remember: If you have a line-of-duty death in your department, call L.A.S.T. first. Toll Free: 866-736-5868". Below the mission list are logos for the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. At the bottom center is the contact information: "National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, P.O. Drawer 498, Emmitsburg, MD 21727, 301-447-1365, www.firehero.org". On the right side, the text "NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS FOUNDATION" is repeated in blue. Below it is "Line-of-Duty Death State Response Teams Program" in blue. Further down is a graphic of a fire department badge with a red rose, and the text "SUPPORTING THE NATION'S FIRE SERVICE SURVIVORS" and "CALL L.A.S.T. FIRST". At the bottom right is the text "Local Assistance State Team" in blue.



<p><b>What the Team can provide</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Department of Justice-Public Safety Officers' Benefits (DOJ-PSOB) expertise</li><li>■ Honor Guard and Ceremonial support</li><li>■ Chaplain services for department members</li><li>■ A fire service survivor to work with the family</li><li>■ A behavioral specialist to work with the department members and the family</li><li>■ Information and access to various Federal, State and local benefits that may be available to the family</li><li>■ Other information and resources to assist the family and department</li></ul> 	<p><b>What the Team will do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Respond only when requested</li><li>■ Be on the ground within 6 hours with the team components that are requested</li><li>■ Ensure the family and the department are the priority at all times</li><li>■ Ask first before taking any action</li><li>■ Maintain transparency and work behind the scenes</li><li>■ Provide timely and accurate information</li><li>■ Practice personal and team integrity</li><li>■ Ensure quality over expediency</li><li>■ Show empathy at all times</li><li>■ Always think in terms of honor, dignity and respect</li><li>■ Have an exit strategy after the first day on the ground</li></ul> <p><b>What the Team won't do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Self respond!</li><li>■ Take over!</li><li>■ Do anything without consulting the Chief or designate and/or the family!</li><li>■ Give inaccurate information!</li></ul>	<p><b>Rules of Engagement for the Local Assistance State Team</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The primary mission is to bring expertise to the surviving family in filing for the DOJ-PSOB.</li><li>■ Follow the mission of providing necessary assistance and support to families and fire departments of fallen firefighters, as requested.</li><li>■ Provide the families and fire departments of fallen firefighters the support mechanisms needed before, during and after the funeral.</li><li>■ Act as a resource for the family and fire department.</li><li>■ Act as the initial contact and agents for the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.</li></ul> 
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We do this well for the dead. For the injured, for the disabled, the survivors of either a single incident- or a lifetime of service, responding to thousands of traumatic events- we are less organized, and far less supportive.

We need this bill- on a Statewide level.