

CHARLESTON

FIRE DEPARTMENT



Battalion Chief Bryan Kleskie 2013 Safety Officer of the Year

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Charleston, SC (August 16, 2013): Battalion Chief Bryan Kleskie was recognized on Thursday as the 2013 Safety Officer of the Year at the Fire-Rescue International Conference in Chicago, IL. The award is given annually by the IAFC's Safety, Health and Survival (SHS) Section and co-sponsored by *FireRescue* magazine and the Fire Department Safety Officers Association (FDSOA).

Chief Kleskie was assigned as the health and safety officer in August 2007, two months after the Sofa Super Store Fire. The award recognizes his tireless work in building the safety programs and improving the department's overall approach to safety.

"Battalion Chief Kleskie was the first health and safety officer for the department and his direction helped transform the safety culture within this agency," said Fire Chief Karen Brack. "He was faced with a daunting task of building programs and systems from the ground up while trying to ingrain safety into the organization. His efforts have made us a better, safer, and healthier department so we can serve the community to the best of our abilities."

Chief Kleskie has been involved with numerous programs such as developing and overseeing hose testing practices, as well as its respiratory protection program and SCBA maintenance program; presiding over the accident review panel; working on essential SOPs related to incident command, maydays, RIT deployment, etc.; coordinating the department's medical physicals; establishing a deputy safety officer program to provide a shift safety presence; obtaining a grant that resulted in the creation of a rehabilitation trailer; and investigating injuries and collisions involving department personnel and apparatus, and making recommendations for preventing future occurrences.



Pictured from left: Robert Finley, Michael Petroff, Bryan Kleskie, Tim Sendelbach. Photo by FirefighterNation.com and FireRescue Magazine.

In a statement released by *FireRescue* magazine, Editor-in-Chief Tim Sendelbach said he recognizes Kleskie's award with pride and admiration. "In the darkest hours following the loss of nine firefighters, Chief Kleskie assumed the daunting task of making safety a top priority for the Charleston Fire Department. Today the Charleston Fire Department's safety program is quickly becoming a model for others to follow. Chief Kleskie is a true representative of what it takes to be an effective safety officer in today's fire service."

Kleskie says his award nomination came as a surprise. “There are so many health and safety officers in this country who are working tirelessly every day to ensure that each of their department’s personnel completes every shift and their entire career safely that it is hard for me to believe that I am the most deserving,” he says. “I feel very fortunate to have been selected to receive this award.”

Kleskie joined the CFD in 1980 at the age of 18, resigned in 1981 to serve four years with the Army, and then returned to the CFD in 1985 after receiving his honorable discharge from the Army. Following the tragic events of June 18, 2007, Kleskie says he was proud to have the opportunity help the department heal and to be part of the change process instead of just waiting for it to happen.

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