Letter of Commendation

Awarded for acts of public service, which bring a high degree of credit to an individual, group or agency.

Gary Agbin
Gary is commended for consistently putting the Department’s needs above his own. He has been described as “one of the best of County Fire,” “An exemplary employee who routinely goes above and beyond to serve our citizens.” His dedication to public service “typifies the spirit of County Fire.”

Gary Cocroft
Gary is commended for his GIS work and vast array of efforts in support of the County Fire organization and his home community, which have earned him recognition for employee excellence from the County of Santa Clara. As observed, “It’s people like Gary that really make a difference.”

Marty Collins
Marty is commended for the initiative he’s taken to reorganize, streamline and maintain the Department’s hose repair program. His on-duty actions consistently reflect a strong work ethic, helping to make him a “model employee and valued asset to the Department.”

Steve Crowley
Steve’s commendation comes from a patient who is grateful for receiving life saving care from Steve after suffering a “widow maker” heart attack, and for Steve remaining with the patient until arrival at the hospital. Initially given a 4% chance of survival, the patient is alive and well.

Mark Franz
Mark is commended for his work as a coordinator for the Fire Academy, the Explorer Program, his work in Community Education, as well as his devotion to excellence in service, for which he has received recognition of employee excellence from the County of Santa Clara.
Letter of Commendation

Richard Green
Richard is commended for his participation and leadership in the Los Altos Hills CERT Program. Having joined CERT in 2012, he is a CERT Supervisor, and has devoted over 2,000 hours of volunteer time to the CERT Program. The program would not be what it is today without him.

Janet Hayton
Janet is commended for her work in managing the digitization of archived Department records, a complex project that resulted in praise from County Counsel. Her devotion to excellence in service earned recognition for employee excellence from the County of Santa Clara.

Wayne Hokanson
Wayne is commended for an exemplary fire service career, during which he has been described as “honest, ethical, committed to quality service and mutually respectful.” His commitment to excellence in service earned recognition for employee excellence from the County of Santa Clara.

Bruce Ingle
Bruce is commended for the positive impact he has had throughout his service community and throughout the community of Santa Clara County during his 36-year fire service career. He excels in his work, is an unofficial County Fire ambassador among the citizens of his professional community and is widely acknowledged as the living embodiment of “Courtesy and Service.”

Julie Linney
Julie is commended for her commitment to public service, which has been described as “selfless,” “thoughtful,” and “possessing the highest integrity”: All qualities that have earned her recognition for employee excellence from the County of Santa Clara.
Letter of Commendation

Mike Neal
Mike is commended for his efforts in raising tick awareness for members of County Fire, and his passion for helping the Department improve its tick prevention and abatement resources. His concern for the improved safety and welfare of others exemplifies the spirit of public service.

Mark Norman
Mark is commended for having served as a role model in the fire service that others looked up to. The integrity and work ethic he demonstrated throughout his career was integral to who he is as a person. As a widely respected company officer, his devotion to duty was exemplary.

Brent Rapport
Brent is commended for being a compassionate caregiver who values the citizens he serves as his highest priority, for being a company officer who is a role model and mentor for his crew members, and for exemplary acts of public service throughout the Campbell community.

Cheryl Ramsay
Cheryl is commended for the dedication to duty she brought to her role as Office Assistant in the Fire Prevention Division. The depth of knowledge developed during her career in public service helped her to provide the highest quality service to our customers, who were her top priority.

Rich Salazar
Rich is commended for an exemplary fire service career during which he worked to ensure emergency personnel were well equipped to provide optimal service. His efforts have been widely recognized – as Public Safety Officer of the Year; Firefighter of The Year; County Fire Employee of the Month (twice); and Santa Clara County Employee of the Month.
Bob Smith
Bob is commended for an exemplary fire service career during which he served as a role model who led by example, asking nothing of others he wouldn’t do himself. His devotion to public service and commitment to excellence earned recognition for employee excellence from Santa Clara County.

Chuck Springmeyer
Chuck is commended for sharing and using his off-road and mechanical expertise in support of County Fire’s operational needs. As instructor, trainer, committee member, and mechanic – on and off duty – his dedication to the well-being of our emergency fleet reflects the spirit of public service.

Carol Starbuck
Carol is commended for her participation and leadership in the Los Altos Hills CERT Program. Having joined CERT in 2012, she advanced to CERT Supervisor, and was instrumental in creating the CERT/Ham Recon team, which will be of great service in times of greatest need.

Tom Walsh
Tom is commended for an exemplary fire service career. His expertise and efforts, both on duty and off-duty, were devoted to providing the highest quality service to our customers and communities, which resulted in Tom receiving recognition for employee excellence from Santa Clara County.

Matt White
Matt is commended for his drive to ‘go the extra mile’ – his passion to provide above-and-beyond public service in every workday, in every capacity possible. Described as an “exceptional person and an exceptional employee,” Matt personifies County Fire’s motto of “Courtesy and Service.”
Phil Yannoni
Phil is commended for being the ‘consummate’ fire officer – a natural leader who inspires confidence, maintains balance amid chaos, models behaviors and attitudes expected of others, and serves ‘above and beyond,’ as a Safety Officer and member of the Department’s Honor Guard.

CARES (Cupertino Amateur Radio Emergency Services)
In coordination with LAARES (Los Altos Amateur Radio Emergency Services), CARES worked to build ‘packet radio stations’ for placement at Los Altos and Loyola fire stations, for use in augmenting emergency communications in Los Altos when needed.

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Unit Citation

Performance of exemplary act or achievement that is the result of a total unit effort.

Engine 84 C Shift Crew:
Martin Brandon, David Pope and Chip Stanton
County Fire responded on 1.5.15 to the report of a vehicle over the side of the road on Highway 17. The nighttime call was canceled after a thorough search of the area failed to produce evidence of an accident. After returning to their station, the Engine 84 crew “followed their instincts” and returned to the scene to search further. Heeding their intuition and following up on the discovery of a one-foot section of disturbed roadside dirt led them down the hillside to an unoccupied vehicle. A trail of blood specks was located near the vehicle, leading the crew to the vehicle’s seriously injured occupant, found yards away from the vehicle’s final resting place. Together, the actions of Chip, David, and Brandon resulted in an extraordinary rescue.

Strike Team CNT2310:
Jon Black, Tony Bowden, Gary Cocroft, Mark Cox, Steve Crowley, Dwayne Drake, Suwanna Kerdkaew, Eric Kraule, Brian Luke, Amber Mountford, Juan Ortiz, Tony Rainieri, Brian Vierra, and Anne Weber
While on deployment to the ‘Lodge Lightening Complex’ wildfire in 2014, these members of Strike Team CNT-2310-C faced imminently life-threatening danger when the fire surged and resulted in the burnover, entrapment, and injury of crew members. Altogether, the brave and expert actions taken by the members in this dangerous situation resulted in protecting their injured teammates from further danger as well as ensuring the immediate safety of all team members involved in this incident.
Unit Citation

Combined Giving Campaign Coordinators’ Team:
Kristie Duncan, Lori Gutierrez, Rebecca Lo, Cheryl Roth, Annette Stelk, and Stephanie Stuehler
In the fall of each year, the members of this team lead our Department’s efforts for participating in the County’s charitable giving campaign, which encourages employees to support countless local and global nonprofit agencies through donations of money or time. This award-winning team’s initiative, creativity, energy and enthusiasm has helped to gain County Fire employee support at some of the highest levels among all agencies participating in the Countywide campaign – positively impacting nonprofit and charitable agencies locally and around the globe.

Engine 83 Crew:
Roger Boone, Art Tomasetti, and Keith Wigley
While on deployment to the ‘Summit Fire’ in early summer 2008, this crew, as part of Strike Team XSC-2305-A, employed skill and expertise during structure protection operations that resulted in the saving of a resident’s life as well as their own lives. Exhibiting keen situational awareness, the crew recognized a burnover was going to happen before being able to safely remove the resident from harm’s way. The crew was able to quickly shelter-in-place with the resident inside of Engine 83 in time to avoid deadly consequences of the burnover. This crew’s quick actions on resulted in a life-saving outcome for all involved.
Merit

Performance of an act or achievement that demonstrates exemplary, above-and-beyond effort occurring within or outside of normal duties and assignments.

Jon Black
Jon worked tirelessly to revive a long-retired Explorer Program for the benefit of County Fire and local youth who wish to serve their community and prepare for a future in public service. The result of his efforts is a thriving program that has generated enthusiastic participation of young adults from throughout our community as well as equally enthusiastic participation from members of County Fire.

Gina Cali
Gina’s resume of performing acts and achievements that demonstrate above-and-beyond service is extensive: She’s co-founded a nonprofit MDA support group; worked with homeless children in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya; supports ‘Locks of Love’ in their effort to provide wigs to children battling cancer; served in the education field prior to and throughout her time with County Fire; and, going above-and-beyond duty, has undertaken patient rescue actions on two separate occasions – performing CPR on a patient at the site of a vehicle accident in 2005 and, in 2012, providing patient care assistance after witnessing a major highway vehicle accident in which a patient was trapped. Gina’s impact on the communities she serves is immeasurable and invaluable.

Don Carlson
As a member of the Department’s Honor Guard, a former member of our Special Operations Task Force, a co-founder of the fledgling Historical Committee, and facilitator of our Fire Academy, Don carries out his duties with boundless energy and passion for public service. He is an agent for change within the organization and a beloved ambassador for County Fire among the residents of the communities he serves. Don’s dedication to excellence in public service is unparalleled.
Joe Enfantino
As a former member of the Department’s Honor Guard and Special Operations coordinator, Joe is devoted to supporting our community through numerous outlets as witnessed by his participation in holiday ceremonies and parades presented by the Los Gatos Community Foundation; organizing of annual social activities to raise funds for local nonprofit organizations; efforts to encourage others to join him in support of nonprofit fundraising efforts; and his award-winning efforts in working with youth to help them avoid the dangers of drinking and driving.

Steve Gubber
A professional and positive role model for newer employees, Steve delivers “standout” service in all situations. He’s a widely-acknowledged informal leader: Whether as the “go-to” person at emergency scenes, as a leading force in his role as a member of the Special Operations Task Force, or as a Department ambassador among residents of the community he serves. Steve’s willingness and ability to share his technological expertise has aided the Department in successfully carrying out essential functions that would otherwise be a challenge – all to the benefit of County Fire, its members, and the communities we serve. Steve is the embodiment of County Fire’s motto, “Courtesy and Service.”

Andy Huang
As a public safety commissioner for the City of Cupertino, Mr. Huang is very active in his community: Most notably as a member of the Cupertino Amateur Radio Emergency Services Group, which provides critical information to County Fire during disasters, and by volunteering his time to translate fireworks safety campaign public service announcements into Mandarin for use on local Chinese-language radio stations. In the spring of 2015, Mr. Huang won a “Find the AED” contest by identifying 91 AED locations within County Fire’s jurisdiction – all of which are now able to be included in the PulsePoint mobile device application.
**Merit**

**Walter Huber**  
As a private citizen, Walter received notification from the mobile device application called PulsePoint that a person nearby was suffering a heart attack. Walter ran from his location to the reported emergency scene, where he located a patient in distress, and provided CPR until emergency responders arrived on-scene. Walter’s quick and selfless actions directly resulted in the saving of this patient’s life.

**Chris Ingram**  
Chris’ technological expertise is invaluable to County Fire. Using his mapping and GIS knowledge, Chris facilitated creation of the agency’s first official wildland/urban interface pre-fire plans of the highest quality. He’s been instrumental in assisting our IT group with improving device-based mobile routing and ensuring emergency responders have the best technological tools available – all while performing his regular duties as a Firefighter/Engineer.

**Dennis Johnsen**  
Dennis is the consummate public service professional. His expertise in fire investigation and his extraordinary dedication to protecting and serving our communities have earned well-deserved accolades, locally and nationally. Of most notoriety are his efforts leading to a homicide conviction that gained national attention on ABC’s “20/20.” Dennis has devoted his life’s work to countless other investigations, from mundane to life-threatening. Dennis’ work with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies is award winning. Dennis’ efforts in support of his chosen career are tireless, 24/7, and his devotion to duty has been nothing less than extraordinary.

**Shanna Kuempel**  
Serving as Accreditation Manager for the Department’s 2015 re-accreditation process was a massive undertaking. Under her guidance and leadership, County Fire was successful in carrying out its nearly year-long preparation process and, ultimately – in August 2015 – its bid to be reaccredited as an Internationally Accredited agency. Shanna performed above-and-beyond duty in her tireless efforts to shepherd the Department-wide reaccreditation process from start to finish. No doubt her success was supported by prior work that she’s accomplished with the Department’s French Intern Program and ongoing participation in the Urban Shield Exercise. Shanna’s project management skills have been an invaluable asset to the organization.
**Merit**

**Sam Liu**
Sam is a leader in the Department’s Hazardous Materials program. An integral member of the team for over 15 years, he is the “go to” person at haz mat scenes – even off-duty at times. He makes himself available around the clock to be of service. It’s this performance that has earned Sam respect of all who he works with. He’s been instrumental in designing & implementing haz mat related systems and programs, as an instructor in his field of expertise, and his efforts were vital in acquiring Type I status for Haz Mat 72 in the OES response system. Sam’s ongoing efforts are exemplary, exceeding all expectations.

**Tim Maguire**
Tim’s expertise as a communications technician makes him a highly sought-after resource and well-respected ambassador for County Fire during wildland fire command activities. Tim’s grant-writing skills have also proven to be invaluable to the Department: His ability to navigate the complex grant writing & application process has, on multiple occasions, enabled County Fire to secure funds that – due to budget constraints – would otherwise not be available to help County Fire perform at the highest service levels possible.

**Bill McCluskey**
Bill McCluskey served the County Fire organization for over three decades with a humility and compassion that inspired coworkers and created a legacy for Bill as a role model for other County Fire employees to emulate. His commitment to service as a member of the organization was genuine and integral to who he is as a person. From empathy and compassion shown to patients and loved ones at emergency scenes to acts of kindness such as paying for a stranded customer’s taxi ride, the examples are endless of Bill’s above-and-beyond contributions to the foundation of what County Fire stands for in its finest form.
**Merit**

**Daron Pisciotta**  
Daron’s quick reactions resulted in the saving of a life of a neighbor in his home community. While off-duty and at home, Daron witnessed a neighbor fall into medical distress while outdoors exercising. Daron responded to the neighbor’s plight, administering CPR until emergency responders arrived on-scene. Daron’s actions directly resulted in the saving of his neighbor’s life.

**Ben Reade**  
While assigned as Firefighter/Engineer-Paramedic in the Training Division, Ben undertook his duties with energy and dedication. Described as “tireless and unrelenting,” this assignment is critical to delivery of ALS care to the citizens of our community. Ben also served as the American Heart Association training center manager, coordinating CPR and first aid instructors and facilitating CPR delivery activities throughout our community ~ a full-time job in and of itself. Viewed as an informal leader among his peers, Ben’s service with the Training Division set a standard difficult to match.

**Craig Allyn Rose**  
Craig has volunteered and devoted his time to the fire service by responding to fires and capturing phenomenal pictures of firefighters in action. He helps preserve memories for firefighters and their families. Craig has been described to have “great rapport with the crews” and is “part of the County Fire family”.

**Annette Stelk**  
The assignment of carrying out payroll duties for County Fire is complex and unforgiving in nature. County Fire’s payroll process is exceptionally challenging, with multiple moving parts that require regular attention, scrutiny and action. Payroll deadlines are inflexible – they do not adjust for holidays or holiday weekends. Each and every year for a decade, without hesitation or expressions of self-concern, Annette has regularly sacrificed family holiday get-togethers and personal activities – instead, reporting to duty at an empty Headquarters to ensure payroll deadlines are met, without fail. Annette’s above-and-beyond service in support of County Fire’s employees is an expression of the ‘spirit’ of public service.
**Cindy Stewart**
As a member of the Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Services, Cindy exemplifies the spirit of partnership and collaboration as OES integrates services with County Fire. She’s worked above-and-beyond her normal duties to support the Department’s Emergency Management Program: Providing leadership, guidance and support to a series of EOC exercises in County Fire’s communities; assisting with training and support of the Emergency Preparedness program; and helping create after action reports for requesting jurisdictions. Cindy’s collaborative work style is helping shape the direction of Emergency Management.

**Justin Stockman**
Justin’s devotion to public service, and concern for the citizens he serves in his daily job, extend beyond the call of duty. He serves with enthusiasm, empathy and compassion in all that he does on behalf of County Fire. In early 2014, Justin responded with his crew to a medical aid call in Los Altos Hills. Following completion of duties on-scene and after safely delivering the patient’s wife to the hospital where she could be with her husband, it was discovered that the wife had left her purse at home amongst all the chaos of the moment. Justin quietly gave her his own money to ensure she was able to take care of her needs while at the hospital. One week later Justin and his crew visited the home to check-in with the family. Without intent, it turned out they visited during a family gathering held in memory of the patient. The family was overjoyed to have Justin and his crew in attendance – where they offered to help with anything the newly widowed customer might need over the coming few weeks. Justin’s actions demonstrated the heart and spirit of “Courtesy and Service.”
Valor

Performance of an act or actions far greater in risk than routinely encountered, involving life-threatening action taken to render aid to another in a perilous situation.

Anthony Alvarez
Without regard for personal safety, Firefighter Alvarez took measures that placed him in harm’s way during an attempt to rescue Fire Captain Mark McCormack from a deadly situation at a residential structure fire. Neither Tony nor the coworkers that partnered with him in this effort allowed the dangers they were facing to deter them from continuing their attempts to affect the rescue of their fellow coworker.

Don Carlson
Without regard for personal safety, Fire Captain Carlson took measures that placed him in harm’s way during an attempt to rescue Fire Captain Mark McCormack from a deadly situation at a residential structure fire. Neither Don nor the coworkers that partnered with him in this effort allowed the dangers they were facing to deter them from continuing their attempts to affect the rescue of Captain McCormack.

Jim LaFuente
Without regard for personal safety, Fire Captain LaFuente took measures that placed him in harm’s way during an attempt to rescue Fire Captain Mark McCormack from a deadly situation at a residential structure fire. Neither Jim nor the coworkers that partnered with him in this effort allowed the dangers they were facing to deter them from continuing their attempts to affect the rescue of Captain McCormack.
Valor

Bill McCluskey
Without regard for personal safety, (Retired) Fire Captain McCluskey took measures that placed him in harm’s way during an attempt to rescue Fire Captain Mark McCormack from a deadly situation at a residential structure fire. Neither Bill nor the coworkers that partnered with him in this effort allowed the dangers they were facing to deter them from continuing their attempts to affect the rescue of Captain McCormack.

Tom Oldread
Without regard for personal safety, Firefighter Oldread took heroic measures in attempting to rescue Fire Captain Mark McCormack from a deadly situation while working at the scene of a residential structure fire. Upon seeing his coworker down, Tom used a flat-head axe in an attempt to free the captain of contact with a fallen live power line. Recognizing the dangers of the situation, placing himself in great peril – and even incurring injury to himself in the process – Tom was undeterred in taking heroic measures to affect a life-saving rescue.

Mark Cox
While deployed to Lodge Lightening Complex fire, the crew Firefighter Cox worked with was involved in a burnover that resulted in entrapment of Engine 373 and burn injuries being sustained by three fellow emergency responders. As advancing fire continued to threaten the burned firefighters, Mark single-handedly deployed hose lines and fought the fire alone for several minutes until he could safely return to his crew and provide medical care for their injuries. Once his crew members were attended to, Mark returned to fighting fire – unassisted – until Engine 377 arrived.

Suwanna Kerdkaew
While deployed to Lodge Lightening Complex fire, Captain Kerdkaew’s crew was overrun by a wall of fire. As the crew moved toward their safety zone, Suwanna gained their attention – ordering them into a patrol vehicle and remaining on the ground until everyone else was inside. Once inside the vehicle, she kept the crew calm as the burnover happened. Everyone survived. Immediately afterward, Suwanna directed her crew to take actions that sustained their environment until they could return to safety. Suwanna’s actions in this life-threatening situation undoubtedly saved lives.
Valor

Jeff Jacobs
As a member of the United States military, without regard for his personal safety, Firefighter Jacobs willingly placed himself in harm’s way in defense of our Nation’s freedom. Jeff deployed with the California Army National Guard to Afghanistan, where he served for 18 months providing aeromedical treatment and transportation for combat-wounded US troops and members of the Afghan National Army, as well as flying on missions that involved high-level trauma medical care to frontline troops.

Carl Sette
As a member of the United States military, without regard for his personal safety, Firefighter Sette has willingly placed himself in harm’s way in defense of our Nation’s freedom – not once but twice while also serving as a member of County Fire: Carl deployed with the United States Coast Guard to the middle east for 12 months from the fall of 2009 into the fall of 2010. Most recently, he deployed with the USCG to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he served from January 2014 to February 2015.

Daniel Nunez
Following an off-duty bike ride, Firefighter Nunez observed a vehicle that had collided with a gas pump, igniting a fire and causing small explosions as the fire began to engulf the vehicle. He saw an unconscious male trapped in the vehicle and, without regard for his personal safety, successfully endeavored to free the man from the driver’s seat as fire began burning through the passenger side of the vehicle. If not for Daniel’s quick reaction and heroic actions, it is highly unlikely the man he rescued would have survived the accident.

Mark Shumate
During a family vacation, Captain Shumate witnessed a vehicle rollover that resulted in the ejection of two passengers, entrapment of a child inside the vehicle and ignition of a grass fire. The situation became deadly as the fire moved toward the vehicle while Mark worked – successfully and without regard for his personal safety – to free the boy from his seatbelt. With the child’s safety assured, Mark turned his attention to the needs of the ejected passengers until emergency responders arrived on-scene. If not for Mark’s quick reaction and heroic actions, it is highly unlikely the child he rescued would have survived the accident.