

Assistance for memorial services— Just a phone call away

by Commander David Hammer, Minnesota Fallen Firefighters Memorial Association

The Minnesota Fallen Firefighters Memorial Association (MFFMA) was founded in July 2001. It is presently made up of members from the Eagan Fire Department and Hasting Fire Department Honor Guards and the Twin Cities Metro Pipe Band.

The purpose of MFFMA is to ensure every line-of-duty firefighter death is provided a dignified funeral service. Presently, we know of only seven Minnesota fire departments that have an established honor guard. That means there are about 793 others that don't have an honor guard.

Our principle is not to arrive and take over the event but to work with the family and fire department to provide as much or as little as needed. We plan to provide supplies such as memorial drape for the fire trucks and other supplies to complete the service. We can provide just a few members to ensure the family members have all needed information for benefits or to hold doors during the service or we can provide everything needed for the service.

To complete the memorial service for family members and the fire department, MFFMA also has a music section with bagpipers and drummers.

Other services provided by MFFMA will be dependent on scheduling, but can include color guards for special events and memorial services. We will also provide instruction and other information to departments interested in starting their own honor guard.

MFFMA was conceived a few years ago from meetings of the existing Minnesota fire department honor guards to discuss issues common to us all. One goal stated during

the meetings was the need for a way to cover the entire state. Ideas were tossed out but nothing firm came out of the meeting.



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Then a few members of the Hastings Fire Department Honor Guard and Eagan Fire Department Honor Guard met Richard Cady of the Twin Cities Metro Pipe Band. It was the bond between these members that pushed us to the decision to create MFFMA. We met during the past Spring to decide how to go about this concept. We formed the basis for the team and brought on a few other members. In July, we made the MFFMA organization official and have applied for non-profit status. One of our staff members is a Chaplin that is certified in critical incident stress debriefing (CISD).

We are now at the stage to recruit the remaining members for the teams and acquire funding for equipment. Our goal for the teams is to have 100 members from around the state. These teams aren't meant to be from one geographic area such as the Twin Cities. Instead we want members from everywhere throughout the state. Additionally, we will not discriminate as to department affiliation. It is open to career, part-time and volunteer firefighters.

Comments have been made from some fire departments and fire chiefs that they have a few members interested in having an honor guard. This

is a perfect opportunity for those individuals to be on an honor guard. Prior experience in the military or marching drill teams isn't required.

Another goal of MFFMA is to compile a complete list of the fallen brothers and sisters in Minnesota since the beginning of statehood. The present list can be viewed on the MFFMA Web site (www.mffma.org). If you have someone who is not on our list, please let us know. The only list that exists is back to the 1960s.

We are here to honor our fallen brothers and sisters. We are pleased that Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association (MSFCA) has honored us by accepting us as a resource at the MSFCA Board of Directors meeting in Duluth. We look forward to working with the existing fire service organizations of MSFCA, Minnesota State Fire Department Association and Minnesota Professional Fire Fighters, existing honor guards and all Minnesota fire departments.

We plan to be at all of the year 2002 sectional fire schools. Watch for us and come visit with us.

As mentioned above we are in the process of growing and looking for members and getting equipment. To contact us in our growth period, please call the Hastings Fire Department 24 hours a day at 651-437-5610, Fax 651-437-5956 (leave a call back name and number) or visit the web site for current information.

As of this issue, MFFMA has all ready performed its first event by supplying pipers and drums to the funeral of active Morristown Fire Chief Nordmeier.