

For more information, contact Daniel Matlick, 520-444-6388.

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**LOCAL BUSINESS NEWS:**

***Tucson based business recognizes  
firefighter achievements and provides  
essential support for ailing fire department***

On September 11<sup>th</sup> of every year since 2001, America reflects back on the terrorist attacks to the World Trade Center. Our nation will never forget the tragic loss of thousands of lives including the death of 343 of New York's heroic firefighters who responded to the incident. This horrifying event was the single largest loss of firefighter lives at one time in our country's history.

The extraordinary impact of that day will forever change the way the fire service responds to massive incidents. It forced fire departments to reevaluate their response tactics and improve the way individual agencies now work together. The calamity also helped to better educate the general public on the risks firefighters must take to protect the lives and property of people they typically don't even know. As a community, we should use this ominous occasion to recognize not only F.D.N.Y.'s losses but also acts of local bravery and sacrifice.

For the past 20 Years, Tucson-based United Fire Equipment Company has worked selflessly to help share stories about the courage, compassion, and commitment of Arizona firefighters by presenting the only state-wide firefighter of the year award. The award was presented on Thursday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Mesa Convention Center with over a 1,000 firefighters in attendance. Considering historical and current Arizona events, it was one of the most significant presentations and important acknowledgments of past service ever provided.

This year's ceremony also honored the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Kingman BLEVE disaster that ultimately took the lives of 11 firefighters and was Arizona's largest loss of firefighter personnel at any one time until this year. Now the Yarnell "Hill" Fire sadly holds that place, with the loss of 19 of the Prescott Fire Department's Granite Mountain Interagency Hotshots, and also represents the worst Wildland Firefighter loss in the U.S.A. in 80 years.

The Firefighter of the Year Award presentation focused on the exceptional training and many successes of the elite Granite Mountain Hotshot Crew and also recognized the important 25-year legacy of the Prescott Fire Department's Wildland Programs. The Department was responsible for helping to identify and combat a growing Wildland Fire and Urban Interface problem and has been recognized for their leadership and fuel mitigation accomplishments that create defensible space around homes. Their work has become nationally recognized as the "gold standard" to follow, according to Hylton Haynes, associate project manager for Firewise Communities USA.

United Fire presented the award and acknowledgment to representatives of the Prescott Fire Department including Fire Chief Dan Fraijo, Wildland Division Chief Darrel Willis, and the sole survivor from the Type 1 Hotshot crew, Brendan McDonough. They received a special plaque along with over \$10,000.00 in fire equipment and prizes. Some of the many sponsor donations from local businesses, resorts, and sports franchises will be used to help raise additional funds for the families of the fallen.

During the award ceremony, presenter Daniel Matlick, President/CEO of United Fire, also shared information with attendees about the devastating impact the Hill fire had on the Town of Yarnell and their local fire department. More than 125 homes and structures were lost in the fire including many belonging to volunteer firefighters and emergency dispatchers. Compounding their pre-existing problem of having only 'hand-me-down' used and outdated tools, much of their equipment was destroyed in the fire.

To make matters worse, the town has estimated that because of the fire losses they will end up with a 30% to 40% reduction in property value, substantially reducing the Yarnell Fire Department's already limited budget. The fire department calls to respond have already seen a dramatic increase while the community attempts to rebuild. And with the memorial site for the 19 Hotshots located in Yarnell, call loads are anticipated to increase for several years to come.

When Matlick learned about the Yarnell situation, he was astonished that the little town of Yarnell had next to no public attention. FEMA refused to help the devastated community and indicated support would have to become a local effort. Matlick immediately reached out to industry fire equipment manufacturer leaders to get help for Yarnell and the response was nothing less than fantastic. Eight companies quickly committed to providing uniforms (Blauer), structural turnout gear & gloves (LION), hose (All American Hose), nozzles & brush fire hand tools (Akron), Wildland fire helmets (Bullard), Wildland fire clothing (Fire-Dex), and a chain saw (SuperVac). One manufacturer "MSA -The Safety Company" will provide nearly \$50,000 in equipment including 20 Cairns structure fire fighting helmets, four Self Contained Breathing Apparatus, and one state-of-the-art thermal imaging camera. Altogether, more than \$110,000 in equipment was raised and will be issued to the fire department.

Yarnell Fire Chief Jim Koile remarked, "These essential products will provide our firefighters with the tools and confidence necessary to help safely protect our community. United Fire demonstrated great sensitivity to our situation and the generosity from the manufacturers is a testament to their dedication to the fire service."

United Fire is celebrating their 45th Anniversary as a locally-owned and operated small business based on Fourth Avenue in Tucson. They specialize in providing fire and safety equipment to fire departments and provide sales and service for portable fire extinguishers, emergency lights, fire alarms, sprinklers, commercial kitchen systems, and clean agent systems for computer rooms.

**Pictures provided by The Daily Courier, Joanna Dodder Nellans:**



Presenting the Granite Mountain Hotshots' Firefighter of the Year Award to PFD Chief Dan Fraijo is Daniel Matlick, president of United Fire Equipment Co. in Tucson.



Joanna Dodder/The Daily Courier  
Fire equipment manufacturers announced at the Arizona State Fire Training School Thursday that they are donating more than \$110,000 worth of equipment to the Yarnell Fire Department to help it recover from the devastating Yarnell Hill wildfire. Shaking the hand of Yarnell fire chief Jim Koile is Dave Herterich of the MSA Safety Company, which donated nearly \$50,000 worth of the equipment. Next to Herterich is Daniel Matlick, president of United Fire Equipment Co., sponsor of the school's opening ceremonies. Others in the photo are YFD volunteers.

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