



CARY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

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News Release

Cary Fire Honors Individuals for Lake Killarney Water Rescue

The Cary Fire Protection District recently recognized several members and a community resident for their roles in a January water rescue on Lake Killarney.

During a ceremony, the District presented the Milton A. Neeley Lifesaving Award, Unit Citations, and a Community Service Award to those whose actions helped save two individuals who had fallen through the ice near the East Beach area on January 13, 2026.

The Milton A. Neeley Lifesaving Award was presented to Firefighter/EMT Ben Delatorre, Firefighter/EMT Cody Delatorre, and Firefighter/EMT Kyler Ochab. This award is one of the District's highest honors and is reserved for members whose actions directly result in the saving of a life under particularly dangerous conditions. In this incident, off duty firefighters were first on scene and immediately began rescue efforts. When additional crews arrived, Firefighter/EMT Kyler Ochab, wearing a Mustang survival suit, entered the water to assist with the rescue, helping bring the second individual to safety. Their coordinated actions and willingness to place themselves in harm's way were instrumental in saving lives and bringing the incident to a successful outcome.

The Cary Fire Protection District Unit Citation was awarded to NERCOM Telecommunicators Penelope Wegner, Bridgette Veronese, Tracy McNamara, and Grant Havens, along with Lieutenant Steve Nelson and Lieutenant Peter Penkava. These individuals were recognized for their critical roles in coordinating, supervising, and supporting the incident, ensuring that resources were dispatched quickly and that the rescue operation was carried out safely and effectively.

The Community Service Award was presented to Steven Willis, a Lake Killarney resident, for his courageous actions in attempting to rescue the victims before fire department personnel arrived and for continuing to assist responders once he was safe. His willingness to act in an emergency and provide support played an important role in the overall rescue effort.

The Cary Fire Protection District commends all those involved for their professionalism, teamwork, and dedication to protecting others. Their actions on January 13, 2026, reflect the highest standards of service to the community.

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