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Lower Paxton Township Honors Heroes of Police, Fire, and EMS at 2025 Emergency Services Awards Ceremony

Lower Paxton Township, PA (Wednesday, May 7, 2025) – The Township proudly recognized the extraordinary commitment and lifesaving actions of its police officers, firefighters, and emergency medical service professionals at the annual 2025 Police, Fire & EMS Awards Ceremony held Wednesday evening at Dauphin County Heroes Grove.

The evening featured honors for individual and team heroism, lifesaving interventions, and community contributions.

EMS Awards

Six lifesaving teams were recognized for their swift, decisive actions in the field. Battalion Chief Stephen Handford, Paramedic Geoffrey Cooper, and EMT David Scalzo were honored for their efforts in resuscitating a critically ill patient. Paramedic Bryce Pruna and EMT Stephanie Warner were commended for their calm, expert response that brought a patient back from the brink. Pruna also shared recognition with EMT Andrew Damon for another life-saving incident. Battalion Chief Steve Schlegel, Captain Danielle Felty, and EMT Catherine Rush were celebrated for their cohesive efforts that saved a life during a high-stress emergency.

Firefighter Awards

Three Firefighters of the Year were named: Lieutenant Nick Nepa (Station 33), Braden Benedict (Station 34), and Lieutenant Tyler Stover (Station 35), each recognized for their exemplary dedication, training leadership, and emergency response. The Most Fire Training Hours awards went to Kaden Hine (33), Raymond Broaddus (34), and Tyler

Stover (35) for their extensive commitment to skill development and public safety service.

Police Awards

- Mission Barbeque received the 2024 Outstanding Partnership Award for ongoing community support. Letters of Commendation were awarded to Officer Michael Elezovic (two awards) for outstanding investigative work leading to multiple arrests and case closures, and Detective James Glucksman for a homicide investigation resulting in charges.
- Life Saving Awards were presented to Corporal Melinda Welcomer, Officer Bryan Ryder, and Officer John Balint for reviving a cardiac arrest patient; and to Corporal Zachary Fehrenbach and Officer Benjamin Feidt for a similar life-saving response.
- The Award of Merit went to Officer Neal O'Malley, who courageously pursued and apprehended an armed suspect following an officer-in-distress call in Harrisburg. Officers Rachapak Suwanrut and Tyler Mardis were recognized for safely rescuing three individuals from a structure fire.
- Platoon C received the 2024 Unit/Platoon Citation for outstanding team performance, and Officer Neal O'Malley was named 2024 Officer of the Year for his consistent professionalism, dedication, and performance.

A new award, the **Steven Wertz Beyond the Badge Memorial Award**, was presented in memory of Detective Steven Wertz, who passed away unexpectedly in 2024. Officer Phillip Minter received this inaugural honor for his commitment to investigative excellence and interagency collaboration.

Promotions Announced

Assistant Fire Chief Paul Esposito was introduced as the new Assistant Chief of Logistics for the Lower Paxton Township Bureau of Fire. Esposito brings extensive field experience, leadership, and specialized training to the role, including serving with the Defense Logistics Agency Fire Department and as a member of PA Task Force 1.

The Bureau of Police celebrated the following promotions:

- **Lauren Gonzalez** will be promoted to *Patrolman First Class* on May 19, 2025. A military veteran and 8-year law enforcement officer, she brings strong experience to Platoon B.
- **Derek Day** was promoted to *Corporal* in January 2025 after five years with the Bureau. He now serves on Platoon D.

- **Andrew Brady** was promoted to *Sergeant* in June 2024, assigned to the Criminal Investigations Section.
- **Autumn Lupey** rose to *Lieutenant* in June 2024 and now commands the Operations Division.
- **Timothy Hicks** was promoted to *Captain* in June 2024 and leads the Technical Services Division.

Lower Paxton Township proudly commends all honorees and newly promoted leaders for their unwavering service, courage, and dedication to the safety and wellbeing of the community.

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Lower Paxton Township is the largest municipality in Dauphin County and the 13th largest in Pennsylvania, covering a 28-square-mile area. To learn more, visit www.lowerpaxton-pa.gov and follow Lower Paxton on Facebook @LowerPaxtonTwp, X @LowerPaxtonTwp & Instagram @lowerpaxtontownship