



## CUMBERLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

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To: Sergeant Scott Hendee

From: Chief Charles Rumsey

Date: April 24, 2023

Subject: Issuance of Meritorious Service Award

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The Meritorious Service Award is awarded to an individual department member for a highly unusual accomplishment under adverse conditions with some degree of hazard to the life of the member, unit, or other person.

It is my honor and pleasure to recognize you with this Meritorious Service Award for actions taken on April 6, 2023, to rescue a motorist whose vehicle had crashed on Route 1 near Powell Road.

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, at approximately 6:47PM, you were dispatched to Route 1 for a vehicle crash. Dispatch provided information to you that the vehicle's accelerator was stuck, that grass around the vehicle was catching fire, and that the vehicle was still occupied. You arrived on scene less than 3 minutes later. As you arrived, you could see smoke billowing from the crash site.

You exited your cruiser and grabbed a fire extinguisher before running to the single vehicle, which was off the road in a ditch. You could clearly see that grass and brush behind, and beneath the vehicle was on fire. The windows of the vehicle were already obscured by smoke. You attempted to open the driver's door but were unable because it was locked. You immediately deployed your baton and used it to break out the front driver's side window. This allowed you to see a woman inside the vehicle, either unconscious or semi-conscious. As you began calling out to her to rouse her, you deployed your fire extinguisher to beat back the flames that were growing at your feet.

The rising smoke, flames, and chemicals from the fire extinguisher made it hard to breathe, and hard to determine how to unlock and open the door of the damaged vehicle. The driver was not able to assist you. Next, you deployed your knife and cut the woman's seatbelt before briefly attempting to lift her out of the window. Unfortunately, the height of the vehicle and shape of the window made this impossible.

Realizing the extreme danger the motorist was in, and that time was running out, you were able to briefly stop, look into the interior of the smoke-filled vehicle, and find the button to unlock the door. Once able to open the door, you reached in and extracted the driver by pulling her out, away from the vehicle and up the hill to the road. As you pulled her out, your body camera clearly showed that flames were breaking through the floor of the vehicle by the driver's feet.

As fire and EMS units arrived on scene, they took over care of the driver. Still concerned about the rising flames underneath the vehicle, you went back and fully discharged your extinguisher before making your way to the road, where you began to feel the effects of the smoke and fire extinguisher chemicals on your lungs. Luckily, you were able to be treated by EMS on scene and did not require hospitalization.

It is clear to me that, without your swift, decisive, and efficient action, the motorist would have been seriously injured by the growing fire – or worse. This was a difficult and demanding scene. The actions I've just described unfolded in two minutes, and your efforts in those two minutes surely made a tremendous difference to a human life. These actions make you eligible for our department's Meritorious Service Award, which I am pleased to present to you tonight. I am proud of you, your team members are proud of you, and I know that the community is proud of you as well. We are lucky to have you watching over the Town of Cumberland.

Congratulations!