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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 20, 2018

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**MAYOR EMANUEL, FIRE COMMISSIONER FORD GRADUATE 87 NEW FIREFIGHTERS**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Fire Department (CFD) Commissioner Richard C. Ford II today announced 87 Firefighter EMTs are graduating from the Fire Academy in a ceremony at Navy Pier.

“This ceremony is a celebration of new firefighters, their commitment to duty and their dedication to all the residents of Chicago,” said Mayor Emanuel. “Firefighters are real-life superheroes, turning tragedies into triumphs, and embodying the deepest values of our city.”

Today's graduating class of Firefighters include 15 military veterans, five former Chicago Police Officers and five who had a parent or other relative who died in the line of duty as a police officer or firefighter. The 87 new Firefighters are 41 percent minority and seven are females. In addition, eight were previously working as CFD paramedics.

The graduation ceremony recognizes new Firefighter EMTs who will begin their district assignments this month. Candidates graduating today completed a rigorous six-month training course at the Robert Quinn Fire Academy that includes courses for certification as an emergency medical technician (EMT) and Illinois Firefighter. Training includes not only basic firefighting skills, but also operation in confined space and specific rescue techniques for search, rescue and extrication as well as coordinating medical services with hospitals, mental health clinicians and dispatchers. Within the Academy, physical structures and simulations provide realistic training scenarios including multi-story buildings, zero visibility rooms and actual smoke and fire atmospheres. Following graduation, the new members will be assigned to various firehouses based on department needs and lottery selection.

“These men and women have proven themselves after successfully completing one of the most rigorous training programs of any fire department. I congratulate them as they join the ranks of Chicago's bravest,” said Fire Commissioner Ford.

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