



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHIEF SANTIAGO CONGRATULATE
125 NEW CHICAGO FIRE DEPARTMENT GRADUATES**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Fire Department (CFD) Commissioner Jose Santiago today recognized nearly 125 new firefighter graduates of the Fire Academy during a ceremony this evening at Navy Pier. Today's graduating class includes 29 former or current members of the U.S. Military, 10 former police officers, 11 former CFD medics who will now be Firefighter/Paramedics and two family members of those who gave their life in service to the City as Police officers or Firefighters.

"Firefighters share a common sense of duty and responsibility," said Mayor Emanuel. "Becoming a firefighter is more than a job, and more than a career. It is a calling. Firefighters chose to run towards the burning building while the rest of us run from it. They chose to be there in our moment of peril, to risk their lives so they can save ours."

This graduation ceremony recognizes newly recruited firefighters and paramedics who started classes in August of 2016. New recruits spend three months on learning medical procedures and response and three additional months learning to become certified Illinois firefighters. This class is made up of 42.62% minorities.

"These men and women will continue the strong tradition of Chicago having the best equipped and trained members who are ready to serve every neighborhood to save life and property," said Fire Commissioner Santiago.

Special achievement awards were given to candidates who have excelled academically and or physically in the course, including the Commissioners Award of Excellence, the Meritorious Command Award, and the Award of Merit. This ceremony, the Meritorious Command Award is being presented to the team that led efforts fighting a 12-unit building fire at 79th and Merrill in May.

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 operation in confined space and specific rescue techniques for search, rescue and extrication. 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.

This year, the emcees for the evening's event are Tanja Babich and Terrell Brown of ABC7. The CFD has for the past 14 years partnered with ABC7 on Operation Save A Life to promote fire and carbon monoxide safety and prevention.

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