

Retired Painter named 'Firefighter of the Year'

John Kirkpatrick (pictured right), a retired union representative for Painters and Allied Trades District Council 5, was named "Firefighter of the Year" at Estacada Rural Fire District #69.

A member of Painters and Drywall Finishers Local 10, Kirkpatrick, 56, took early retirement in 2007. He had toyed with the idea of volunteering for the Fire Department since moving to Estacada more than 20 years ago. But the long, irregular hours of his union job coupled with raising a family prevented it.

A week after he retired, Kirkpatrick saw a sign at the fire station announcing a new recruiting class for volunteers. He checked it out, and decided to take the plunge. "I didn't know I was looking for one of the biggest and most rewarding challenges of my life," he told the Labor Press.

Estacada, like many rural fire districts, relies on volunteers to supplement its career staff in their fire and emergency medical operations.

Kirkpatrick is a certified Firefighter I and holds an EMT B license. He has fought numerous structural, commercial and car fires, responded to car wrecks, helped in extrications, and in rope rescue operations. He has set up landing zones for Life Flight on dark



rainy highways in the middle of the night, loaded patients in ambulances, and experienced the times when there was nothing he could do but call the medical examiner.

"It is an exciting, challenging, more rewarding experience than I could have ever expected it to be, and I get the chance to work with the best people you can ever hope to meet," he said.

His experience was topped off in February when, at the Fire Depart-

ment's annual banquet, he was named Firefighter of the Year for 2008.

"You could have literally knocked me over with a feather," he said. "With all of the other more experienced and capable candidates on the department, I couldn't believe they chose me. But they did ... and they can't take it back!"

Kirkpatrick says the award gives him the incentive to continue to train and work harder to become a better firefighter for the City of Estacada.

Oregon Senate passes bill to raise compensation for orphans, widows of workers killed on job

SALEM – Legislation to increase benefits provided to the families of Oregon workers killed on the job or permanently and totally disabled from their work was approved by the Oregon Senate in February.

"This legislation honors the memory of Oregonians who have experienced the tragedy of workplace death and disabling injuries," said Sen. Diane Rosenbaum (D-Portland), chair of the Senate Commerce and Workforce Development Committee. "We have an obligation to make sure that the loved ones left behind receive proper help in their time of need."

SB 110 makes changes to workers' compensation law in three areas. First, SB 110 increases the current allowances for covering funeral expenses for workers killed on the job from 10 to 20 times the state average weekly wage. Second, the bill increases support for college-aged children of single parents who lose that parent in a workplace accident. This will give students who have relied on the help of a single parent the resources to continue their college education. Third, SB 110 clarifies that if a permanently disabled worker has no surviving spouse or dependent children, an insurer must pay

the full remainder of a disability benefit to the worker's estate.

"Senate Democrats stand by their commitment to working families across Oregon," said Senate Majority Leader Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin). "We are fortunate the number of these accidents a year is minimal, but the affect on Oregon families who face these circumstances is life-altering and we need to compensate them accordingly."

The legislation is the product of SB 835 from the 2007 session. That bill requested the Workers' Compensation Management-Labor Advisory Committee (MLAC) to study the adequacy of death benefits in the workers' compensation system. Those recommendations were included in SB 110.

"In 2007, we heard from Oregon families who had lost a loved one to an on-the-job injury or death," said Senator Vicki Walker (D-Eugene), who was the sponsor of SB 835 in 2007. "It was obvious we needed to do more. The legislation passed goes a significant way towards helping these families in their time of need."

SB 110 has been referred to the House Committee on Business and Labor. The House has until May 20 to schedule a hearing.

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of the women and
men who have lost
their lives through
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