MSA Honors Four Local Firefighters for Saving One of MSA's Own

PITTSBURGH, March 28, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- Global safety equipment manufacturer MSA (NYSE: MSA) today announced that four members of the Adams Area Fire District, just north of Pittsburgh, Pa., are the recipients of the MSA 2011 Fireslayer of the Year Award. Ironically, the four firefighters were recognized for their heroic actions in the rescue of Michael Rupert, MSA Product Group Manager for First Responder Products, from a fiery crash last May.

Eric Beck, MSA Director of Marketing, presented the award to Chief Al Minjock, Lieutenants Talo Capuzzi and Doug Mellinger, and Firefighter Jeff Leonberg at a special ceremony at the FDIC (Fire Department Instructors Conference).

MSA established the *Fireslayer of the Year Award* in 2000 to honor the outstanding achievements by individual firefighters and departments who serve as role models for others. Past winners include the Fire Department of New York, the Chicago Fire Department, the Nashville Fire Department, and individual firefighters from South Carolina, Florida, Detroit, Milwaukee, and Illinois. The 2011 award is the eleventh in an annual series and the Adams Area Fire District is the first recipient in Pennsylvania.

Mr. Rupert, 43, was driving to work at MSA's Cranberry Township, Pa., headquarters when a pickup truck crossed a double yellow line and hit his vehicle head on. The impact crumpled the front of Mr. Rupert's truck and ruptured the forward fuel tank. Mr. Rupert was trapped inside as the vehicle burst into flames.

Adams Area Fire District Lt. Doug Mellinger was the first rescuer on the scene. He had just finished a 24-hour shift as an EMT for Quality Emergency Medical Services. Except for a "dry powder" fire extinguisher, Lt. Mellinger had no firefighting equipment.

While Mr. Rupert struggled to escape the vehicle, Lt. Mellinger reacted instinctively, grabbed the ambulance's fire extinguisher and ran to the flaming vehicle. "I expended the fire extinguisher quickly," he recalled, "it knocked down the flames enough for me to get in."

Inside the cab, Lt. Mellinger attempted to free Mr. Rupert's legs, which were pinned under the dashboard. "One came free but the other wouldn't release," he recalled. The flames surged and forced Lt. Mellinger to back off. He then located a second, smaller fire extinguisher and attempted to knock down the flames once more. After a repeated attempt to free Mr. Rupert, resurging flames, once again forced a retreat.

"I didn't know what to do next," Lt. Mellinger said, "I turned to try to find another fire extinguisher when a bystander yelled, 'He's out!'" Somehow, Mr. Rupert had freed himself and was sliding out of the cab. Lt. Mellinger raced back to the truck and pulled Rupert away from the flames just as Lt. Capuzzi arrived on scene with Adams Area Fire District's Engine 42. Lt. Capuzzi was alone on the truck.

"We're a volunteer service," Lt. Capuzzi explained. "Some days we have the manpower and some days we just don't."

Mr. Rupert was out of the fire but he wasn't out of danger. Fuel continued to leak from the ruptured gas tank, putting him, and dozens of bystanders, at risk. Lt. Capuzzi recognized the danger and readied Engine 42 for fire suppression while Lt. Mellinger's Quality EMS partner, Patricia Kelly, tended to Rupert.

Chief Minjock arrived on scene and released Lt. Mellinger from the hose. Finally, after braving the hottest part of the fire without protective equipment, Lt. Mellinger donned his turnout gear. FF Leonberg arrived minutes later.

Mr. Rupert was airlifted to the UPMC Mercy Trauma and Burn Center in Pittsburgh, the region's only combined Level I Regional Resource Trauma and Comprehensive Burn Center. With burns over 80% of his body, doctors estimated his chance to survive as one in ten.

With a strong will, Mr. Rupert beat the odds, and is now rehabilitating. In a recorded message addressing the FDIC audience, Mr. Rupert's wife, Jackie, says he vows to return to FDIC.

In an interview played at the FDIC, Captain Minjock, Lieutenants Capuzzi and Mellinger, and FF Leonberg thanked Mr. Rupert for his leadership in developing new and improved products for the fire service. When asked what he would say to Mike, Lt. Mellinger, who is still shaken by the incident, answered with a question, "How did you survive? If anybody is a hero, it's you."

Note to local editors: For more information on this story and the firefighters involved, please visit MSA's YouTube channel at http://www.youtube.com/msasafety.

About MSA :

Established in 1914, MSA is a global leader in the development, manufacture and supply of safety products that protect people's health and safety. Many MSA products typically integrate any combination of electronics, mechanical systems and advanced

materials to protect users against hazardous or life-threatening situations. The company's comprehensive line of products is used by workers around the world in the oil, gas and petrochemical industry, fire service, law enforcement and homeland security sector, the construction industry, mining market and other industries, as well as the military. Principal products include self-contained breathing apparatus, gas masks, gas detection instruments, head protection, ballistic body armor, fall protection devices and thermal imaging cameras. The company also provides a broad range of consumer and contractor safety products through retail channels. These products are marketed and sold under the MSA Safety Works brand. MSA has annual sales of approximately $1 billion, manufacturing operations in the United States, Europe, Asia and Latin America, and more than 40 international locations. Additional information is available on the company's Web site at www.msanet.com .

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For further information: Mark Deasy, +1-724-741-8570

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