

## North Syracuse volunteer named state's Firefighter of the Year

by Tom Leo / The Post-Standard  
Thursday August 20, 2009, 5:00 AM



Submitted photo

North Syracuse Volunteer Fire Department Assistant Chief Timothy Ellis was named The Fireman's Association of the State of New York Firefighter of the Year for 2008

Firefighter Timothy Ellis says firemen sometimes are forced to make quick and tough decisions. They don't get any tougher than putting your own life at risk to save someone else. That's what Ellis did during an apartment building fire last year in North Syracuse, when he went into a burning building and rescued a tenant who was trapped on the second floor. For his actions, Ellis has been selected to receive The Fireman's Association of the State of New York Firefighter of the Year Award for 2008 during a ceremony today in Niagara Falls.

Ellis is only the fifth firefighter from Central New York to win the award since it was first presented in 1955, and the first since 2003.

"The training and preparation we put ourselves through helps us make decisions," said Ellis, an assistant Fire Chief for the North Syracuse Volunteer Fire Department. "Some of those decisions are to go in and do what our ultimate goal is -- that is to save a life, to save property and to serve the community. . . Sometimes those decisions, as hard as they are, are decisions that are necessary."

The fire on July 9, 2008, began in a first-floor apartment at North Town Village Apartments, 417 S. Main St. Ellis was the first to respond to the blaze and saw Michael Argy, then 49, in a second-floor apartment window, trapped by the fire below. He radioed two other responding chiefs and notified them he was entering the building to get to the victim, and to send a ladder to the second-floor window.

"The goal was for me to get up there and get him out that window," Ellis said.

When Ellis got to the second floor, Argy was unconscious. The window was small and high off the floor, Ellis said. With conditions rapidly worsening, Ellis decided to drag Argy out through the building, which was full of flames, smoke and intense heat. Lt. Joseph Fabio, who had entered the building in response to Ellis' "mayday," helped get Argy out. The victim, still unconscious, was turned him over to NAVAC personnel, who successfully resuscitated him.

Argy was taken to University Hospital, where he originally was listed in critical condition. His condition improved and he was released from the hospital a day later.

"I'm honored; receiving this award is overwhelming," Ellis said.

It's the second time a North Syracuse firefighter was won the award. Al Lewis, now deceased, won the award in 1977.

"That's pretty significant when you consider how big New York state is," North Syracuse Fire Chief Mark Hogan said. "We're all proud of Tim."

The North Syracuse Fire Department has scheduled a local ceremony to honor Ellis at 1 p.m. Sunday at Station 1, 109 Chestnut St.

**Fireman's Association of the State of New York firefighters of the Year from Central New York since the award was first presented in 1955:**

**1977:** Al Lewis, North Syracuse

**1979:** Randall Rhoades, East Syracuse

**2000:** Samuel Mark Sposato, Brewerton

**2003:** Brian Stevens, Manlius

**2008:** Timothy Ellis, North Syracuse