

2016

Sergeant Robert Prochazka
Patrolman Christopher Olup

Willowick Police Department

Working a midnight shift, you can be fairly certain that your tour of duty is over. The city is waking up just as you start to feel your eyelids getting heavy in anticipation of parking your cruiser and going off duty. Normally all that remains is the paperwork. All that changed in the City of Willowick on April 5, 2016 at 0655 hrs.

Sgt. Prochazka and Patrolman Olup were among the Willowick units dispatched to a working house fire on Lakeshore Blvd. Additional information reported a disabled resident who could not get out of the house. From a distance, responding officers could see heavy smoke in the area, and then, billowing from the residence.

Olup and Prochazka were the first responders on scene. They immediately went to the front door, but could not see anything inside due to the smoke. Calling out, a male responded from inside. Olup began crawling into the house and toward the sound of the male's voice. Approximately 20 feet into the home, Olup located the male in the area of the laundry/furnace room. The male could not walk, so Olup began dragging him to the front door. This was very difficult due to the large size of the male. Sgt. Prochazka began to assist, by pulling on Olup's gunbelt to help in removing the male from the home. Both officers were then transported to the hospital along with the victim, where the officers were treated for smoke inhalation.

Lieutenant Pallante, in his incident report, stated that in his opinion, the efforts of these officers were instrumental in the saving of the victim's life. He indicated that within seconds of the victim's removal, the area from which he was rescued was totally engulfed in flames..

Chief Michael Lazor nominated both officers for the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service award citing Lt. Pallante's report of the incident. In acting quickly and without regard for their own safety, these officers certainly personified the very best of our local heroes, and were very deserving of their award.