

# 2009

Firefighter Andrew Federer  
Firefighter Jeff Kirkner  
Firefighter Greg Mitskavich

## Eastlake Fire Department

None of us can imagine the adrenalin rush when the tones go out. One minute, you are taking care of normal day to day duties within the firehouse, and the next, you are pulling on your gear, climbing aboard a fire truck, and hurtling down the road, uncertain what waits at your destination. On October 13, 2009, that adrenalin rush hit the on-duty members of the Eastlake Fire Department as they responded to a possible structure fire on Lakeshore Boulevard.

The call came in at 11:32 A.M, and could have been one of many typical fire calls, that turn out to be minor in nature. In this case, the call was to a multiple unit apartment building, a situation which raises the stakes. In addition, several months earlier, a fatal kitchen fire had occurred within the same apartment complex. The first arriving fire unit found heavy smoke coming from the first floor of a two floor apartment building. In assessing the situation, it was determined that a male was missing in the burning apartment unit, and a second victim was trapped by smoke and heat on the second floor. Officer in charge, Lieutenant Bob Lloyd, began making assignments to aggressively fight the fire and conduct rescue operations.

Eastlake fire personnel attacked the fire, and Firefighters Mitskavich and Federer were assigned to protect a stairwell with a hose line and begin extinguishing the fire. Other personnel went to the second floor. Federer and Mitskavich entered the burning apartment, finding a raging kitchen fire. High heat and zero visibility due to smoke added difficulty to their assignment, however, while Federer worked the fire, Mitskavich began to search for the victim. He quickly located a male, unconscious and barely breathing. Fire Command was notified and the firefighters carried the male outside where advanced life support was immediately administered.

As this rescue effort was going on, Lt. Lloyd assigned Firefighter Kirkner to begin efforts to rescue the second victim. Due to manpower assignments, Kirkner, working alone, retrieved a 24 foot ladder from the fire truck, and accessed the second floor. He was able to rescue the panicked female, and remove her to safety.

Due to the efforts of these three firefighters, the male victim, who was initially admitted to the hospital in critical condition, recovered from the ordeal.

Eastlake Fire Chief Theodore Whittington commended the entire shift that worked this incident, along with the assisting area fire agencies that responded. He stated that “on this day, the Eastlake Fire Department shined. It is a humbling experience, and I could not have been more proud in everyone that operated at that fire.” However, he felt that these three firefighters, directly involved in the rescue of the victims, deserved to be singled out for the Jorge Medina award.

Obviously, the Blue Coats agreed, and these three men received their awards on February 24, 2010, at the La Malfa Center.

Federer, a rookie firefighter with three months on the job at the time of this incident, credited his training which prepared him for his actions. After it was over, “I looked back on it and was shocked that it happened to me. But the training took over.”

Mitskavich commented that it was a group effort that allowed for the successful conclusion to the incident. “If the people on the outside weren’t doing their job, I couldn’t do my job on the inside.” He felt that the award was for the entire Eastlake Fire Department. “It was for everyone who was there, from Lieutenant Lloyd who was running the situation, to the guy who was running the hydrant. We were all just doing our jobs.

These three men became the first firefighters from the City of Eastlake fire department to be honored with the Jorge Medina Distinguished Service Award. Jeffrey Kirkner was promoted to Lieutenant in 2011. He passed away on April 4, 2021.