

CITY OF MUSCATINE



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REMEMBERING FALLEN FIREFIGHTER MIKE KRUSE

Muscatine Fire Department to honor Firefighter Michael Kruse at Memorial Service

MUSCATINE, Iowa – On Sunday, Sept. 14, the Muscatine Fire Department (MFD) and community members will gather at the Firefighters Memorial on Cedar and East 5th streets to honor the life and sacrifice of Firefighter Michael Kruse, who gave his life in the line of duty 23 years ago.

The ceremony begins at 7 a.m., rain or shine, and will include a wreath-laying, the placement of firefighting gear, and a moment of silence. Family, friends, and community members are invited to join firefighters in remembering Kruse's dedication and courage.

Kruse, a 27-year veteran of the department, died on Sept. 14, 2002, at the age of 53 while battling a house fire at Orange and East 6th streets. He



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was working on the roof of the three-story structure when it gave way beneath him. His death marked the greatest tragedy in the department's history and remains a defining moment for Muscatine firefighters.

A Teacher, Mentor, and Friend

Former Fire Chief Jerry Ewers still recalls his early years as a young lieutenant at Station 2, working alongside Kruse.

"Mike was a true teacher and mentor to me," Ewers said. "His experience on the fire ground, his knowledge of the equipment, and his familiarity with the city helped me grow into the role. He was detail-oriented, professional, and committed to the job."

Ewers also remembers the night Kruse was lost.

"That night is etched in my memory for life," he said. "The tragedy suffered by Green Shift was felt by every firefighter on the scene. Relieving them so they could grieve was the hardest decision I've ever made, but we still had a job to do."

Lessons That Live On

For today's firefighters, Kruse's story remains central to the department's mission of safety and training.

Fire Chief Mike Hartman, who knew Kruse personally, said the department recognized over time that many newer members knew little about the 2002 fire. That realization led to the development of a detailed training presentation, now shared with every recruit class.

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"You cannot undo what happened, but you can use it to make us better," Hartman said.

"Sharing Mike's story not only keeps his memory alive but ensures that the lessons learned continue to shape how we train and operate."

Hartman carries Kruse's memory personally as well. Several years ago, he completed the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Memorial Stair Climb in Green Bay, Wis., carrying Kruse's photo.

"It is sad, but it also gives you the opportunity to reflect and rededicate yourself," Hartman said. "Mike would expect us to train harder, be safer, and take care of each other. That's how we honor him."

A Community's Loss

Kruse's death came just one year and three days after 343 firefighters were lost during the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. For the Muscatine community, the timing underscored both the risks of the profession and the closeness of loss.

"He was a true firefighter dedicated to protecting property and saving lives," Ewers said. "When we gather each year, it is not to celebrate, but to commemorate—to honor the courage, sacrifice, and legacy Mike left behind."

Invitation to the Community

The Muscatine Fire Department invites the public to stand with them in honoring Firefighter Michael Kruse on Sunday, Sept. 14, at 7 a.m. at the Firefighters Memorial.

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"As long as the Muscatine Fire Department exists, we will gather to remember," Ewers said.

Kruse will also be honored on Monday with the dedication of a new neighborhood minipark at the site of the fire. Created through the Ignite Vitality—Mulberry Project, the space has been transformed into the Kruse Memorial Park. A ribbon-cutting ceremony and dedication will take place at noon on Monday, Sept. 15, at the playground site.

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