

LINE OF DUTY DEATH INVESTIGATIVE REPORT



Lt. Nathan Flynn

**7005 Woodscape Drive
Single Family House Fire
July 23, 2018**

Lieutenant Nathan Flynn



Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services Fire Fighter Nathan Flynn died in the line of a duty on Monday, July 23, 2018 while operating at the scene of a house fire in Clarksville, Maryland. Fire Fighter Flynn was a member of the Special Operations Team and assigned to Station 10. A thirteen-year veteran of the Department known for his attention to detail and passion for learning, Fire Fighter Flynn was posthumously promoted to the rank of Lieutenant.

A firm believer that excellent fire fighters are made, not born, Lieutenant Flynn both sought training to enhance his skills as a fire fighter as well as ways to pass his knowledge on to others effectively. This mindset motivated him to collaborate with other fire fighters to develop the real-world conditions training "Real Houses Not Doll Houses" provided at the Fire Department Instructor's Conference International (FDIC, International) in April 2018. Additionally, he volunteered with the Susquehanna Hose Company and Harford County Technical Rescue Teams, where he was always willing to take time to train and mentor younger volunteer fire fighters.

Outside of the Fire Service, Lieutenant Flynn also challenged himself to learn new skills through various home renovation projects. Although constantly driven to improve himself, Lieutenant Flynn always took the time to appreciate the present and greatly valued spending time with his family and friends. Remembered for his generosity and caring nature, friends and family recall Lieutenant Flynn as someone who placed others before himself. Lt. Flynn is survived by his wife, Celeste, and their five children.

Overview of the Internal Safety Review Board

Project Charter

On August 2, 2018 the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS) Fire Chief issued Special Order 2018.44 to establish the Internal Safety Review Board (ISRB). The ISRB was charged with conducting “a transparent, thorough, honest, and factual safety review of Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services incident F18025041, which occurred at 7005 Woodscape Drive on July 23, 2018.”¹ There are twelve members of the ISRB, including the Chairperson, with five of the members joining the board from neighboring fire departments. Additionally, the Chairperson reports directly to the Fire Chief.

In addition to the Special Order organizing the ISRB, HCDFRS established a project charter for the board on August 31, 2018. The Project Charter established the general plan for the investigation, outlined roles for ISRB members, and stated the agreed upon objectives for the investigation. The scope of the ISRB investigation, as stated in the Project Charter, include “all aspects contributing to the [incident at 7005 Woodscape Drive]” and “recommendations to the Department of Fire and Rescue Services’ Fire Chief.” Outside of the scope of the ISRB investigation are:

- Any criminal activity
- The origin and cause of the fire
- The direct cause of Lt. Flynn’s death
- The inspection of turnout gear
- Inspection of Lt. Flynn’s radio

The items specified as outside of the ISRB’s scope have been addressed through other investigative measures and agencies. Some of these associated reports and parallel investigations have been included in this report for reference.

Parallel Investigations into 7005 Woodscape Drive Incident

As contemplated in the Project Charter, the ISRB report is dependent on data and information collected from the following parallel investigations:

- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Investigation and Report (including testing FF Flynn’s Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus)
- Howard County Police Criminal Investigation
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives fire modeling investigation
- Medical Examiners Cause of Death Report

The ISRB gained access to information from several of the parallel investigations in real time, such as participating in the NIOSH interview process, while other sources of information were

¹ Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services, Special Order 2018.44 Internal Safety Review Board for Incident F18025041 (2018).

only available after the parallel investigations were completed, such as the Howard County Police Criminal Investigation.

ISRB Investigative Process

The ISRB began its investigation by conducting a series of interviews with personnel on the scene. The ISRB interviewed 57 HCDFRS personnel with direct knowledge of the events at 7005 Woodscape Drive on July 23, 2018. These voluntary, informal interviews were conducted by members of the ISRB in coordination with NIOSH and were designed to elicit the interviewee's memory of the incident in relation to FF Flynn's actions on the fireground as well as fireground actions and observations. None of these interviews were conducted under oath and are not subject to any penalty of perjury.

In addition to personnel interviews, the ISRB obtained data relevant to the incident. This included data from:

- HCDFRS Record Management System Data for incident: 18022036²
- Radio transmissions
- Motorola Solutions, Inc. radio network data log
- Mine Safety Appliances (MSA) Equipment Report (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus data)
- Bureau of Logistics, Ground Support Unit

Radio transmissions from the incident have been transcribed by ISRB staff and included in [Appendix C](#) of this report. From the interviews and data, the ISRB constructed a second by second timeline of the incident. The ISRB also obtained official photographs from the incident and subsequent investigations. Additionally, some of the HCDFRS personnel had taken photographs on their mobile devices during the fire incident and freely provided these photos to the ISRB to support their investigative efforts.

After establishing the timeline of events that occurred during the incident at 7005 Woodscape Drive from the informal interviews, radio transmissions, and photographs from the scene, the ISRB conducted a review of all applicable HCDFRS General Orders, industry standards, and best practices. Over the course of the review, ISRB members were tasked with both determining the relevant facts from this incident as it pertained to their assigned topic area as well as determining how HCDFRS practices align with industry standards.

² This is the RMS Incident Number for the July 23, 2018 incident at 7005 Woodscape Drive, Clarksville, Maryland.

ISRB Investigation Timeline

- **July 2018**

- Incident at 7005 Woodscape Drive occurs
- HCDFRS personnel are provided an opportunity to walk the scene of 7005 Woodscape Drive immediately after the incident to visualize the structure and incident scene
- ISRB meets with Motorola Solutions, Inc. systems engineer and discovers Bravo 2 transmission made by FF Flynn
- HCDFRS Fire Chief preliminarily nominated the ISRB chair and requested the chair to select the ISRB members
- Obtained Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) fit testing and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1582 physical data

- **August 2018**

- HCDFRS Fire Chief issues Special Order 2018.44 establishing the ISRB
- ISRB members began informal interviews with HCDFRS personnel on the scene
- ISRB members obtain access to radio transmissions from the incident scene
- ISRB members agreed on a report framework and ISRB members were designated to investigate specific topic areas within that framework
- Members of the National Institute for Occupational Safety (NIOSH) visit to begin data collection and interviews
- ISRB members, along with the HCDFRS Medical Director and NIOSH, met with the State Medical Examiner
- Obtained training records from HCDFRS Training Academy, the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI), National Fire Academy (NFA), and Pro Board® Fire Service Professional Qualifications System (Pro Board®)

- **September 2018**

- ISRB members continued informal interviews with HCDFRS personnel on the scene
- ISRB members complete transcription of radio transmissions
- ISRB constructs timeline of incident based on radio transmissions and informal interviews
- ISRB members traveled to NIOSH in Morgantown, West Virginia for SCBA testing
- ISRB members attended the ATF simulated burn of the incident in Beltsville, MD
- ISRB members attended evaluation of FF Flynn's radio by Motorola Solutions, Inc. in Ellicott City, Maryland

- **October 2018**
 - ISRB members complete informal interviews with HCDFRS personnel present during the incident
 - ISRB provides the Fire Chief with a preliminary statement to HCDFRS membership to provide a general update on the investigation
 - ISRB members review HCDFRS General Orders and NFPA standards related to assigned investigative portions
 - ISRB members begin drafting findings for investigative portions
 - SCBA report received from NIOSH
 - NIOSH personnel made a second visit to finish conducting interviews
 - Received a third-party evaluation report of FF Flynn's turn out gear
- **November 2018**
 - ISRB members facilitate an Incident Review with crews from the Incident Scene to discuss preliminary findings
 - Members of the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue made a presentation regarding their Department's experience of moving forward from a Line of Duty Death
 - An ISRB member attended an evaluation of FF Flynn's radio at Motorola Solutions, Inc., forensics facility in Plantation, FL
 - ISRB members continue to draft sections of the report
- **January 2019**
 - ISRB completes first full draft of the report, bringing together independently written sections for the first time
 - ISRB members met to discuss overall findings from first draft
 - Personnel from NIOSH, ISRB, HCPD meet, tour, and interview the Howard County Communications Center
- **February 2019**
 - ISRB completes a section by section review of the report
 - Evaluation of nozzle completed and report received from Elkhart Brass
- **March 2019**
 - ISRB continues section by section review of the report, completing second full draft
 - ISRB obtains access to Howard County Police Department interviews from the incident scene, using the information from the interviews to enhance their understanding of the incident

- ISRB invites an outside, peer review panel to confidentially review the draft of the report
- **April 2019**
 - ISRB completes the third full draft of the report
 - Third draft of the report is sent to peer review
- **May 2019**
 - ISRB reviews comments from peer review
 - ISRB finalizes the report content
- **June 2019**
 - ISRB completes final technical review
 - ISRB sends final report to the Fire Chief
 - ISRB publishes final report
 - ISRB members conduct HCDFRS member informational sessions about the report findings