



On February 18, 2022, Shiawassee County Central Dispatch received a 911 call of a fully involved house fire in the 1400 block of S. Chipman St., in Owosso. One of the callers reporting the house fire was a resident of the house who was trapped in an upstairs bedroom. The victim reported to Shiawassee County Dispatcher Kelsey Curtis that the fire was reaching the 2nd floor and they needed immediate rescue.

Owosso Fire Department (OFD) along with Owosso Township Fire Department (OTFD) and Corunna-Caledonia Fire Department were all dispatched to the fire.

Owosso Police and Fire personnel arrived on the scene within three minutes to find the main floor fully engulfed in flames extending to the 2nd floor. Dispatcher Kelsey Curtis was on the phone with the victim for over 19 minutes, who was going in and out of consciousness. Curtis told the on-scene fire personnel, “I’m losing him” in regards to the victim who was trapped upstairs.

Owosso Fire Personnel arrived on the scene and immediately began fire suppression. The main entry point to the house and the 2nd floor was fully involved with fire. OFD Lt. Matt Nowiski began fire suppression to do an initial knockdown of the fire. The fire had now advanced to the 2nd floor and was reaching the bedroom where the victim was trapped.

Dispatcher Curtis was yelling into the phone to talk with the victim and tell him that fire personnel was on the way. The victim continued to go in and out of consciousness as fire personnel worked to diminish the fire and attempt to rescue the victim.

OFD personnel set up a ladder to the 2nd story bedroom in an attempt to get the victim out of the house. Lt. Matt Nowiski and firefighter John McKay then entered the burning structure crawling through the burning structure to go up the 2nd floor.

Dispatcher Curtis was still on the phone with the victim and directed the interior firefighting crew to the SE bedroom to locate the victim. At this time over 14 minutes had elapsed from the initial 911 call to when firefighters were making entry to the 2nd floor.

OTFD firefighters Lt. Mike Gute and Whitney Ryan arrived and began to ascend ladders to help with the rescue of the victim. OFD firefighters Nowiski and McKay had now reached the victim in the 2nd story bedroom and began to move him to the ladder for rescue. The two OFD firefighters lifted the victim and began to move them to the window.

The victim who was now unconscious was picked up and lifted through the window to OTFD firefighters Gute and Ryan who were on ladders. The victim was pulled from the window by Gute and Ryan and eventually handed off to other firefighters who were on

the ground. Time elapsed from the initial call to the victim being fully extracted from the fire was over 23 minutes.

During the entirety of the rescue, Dispatcher Curtis was on the phone with the victim telling them what to do and relaying the information to ground command. The information from Curtis was vitally important to the overall success of the operation. For over 19 minutes, Curtis was on the phone obtaining crucial information that assisted the firefighters at the scene.

The victim was taken from the fire scene to Memorial Hospital for initial treatment and then to Hurley Hospital. Four days after the initial call the victim was released from the hospital.

There is no doubt that had OFD Firefighters Lt. Matt Nowiski, John McKay and OTFD Firefighters Lt. Mike Gute and Whitney Ryan not risked their safety and entered a fully involved house fire and ascended a ladder of a burning house, the victim would not have survived. Lt. Nowiski and FF McKay were swift and decisive in their actions when they entered the burning structure to save the victim.

Firefighters train for incidents like the house fire on Chipman St. Rescuing anyone from a house fire is a difficult task, rescuing a victim down a ladder is extremely difficult and extremely rare. The four firefighters involved in this rescue displayed a selfless act of heroism and bravery, risking their lives to save the victim.

The house fire on Chipman St. with a trapped victim is a rarity in that these types of calls occur very infrequently. The collective work by Shiawassee County Central Dispatcher Kelsey Curtis along with OFD personnel Lt. Matt Nowiski, John McKay and OTFD Lt. Mike Gute and Whitney Ryan at a mutual aid call was simply outstanding. They came together during a critical incident working as a team that saved a life.

In recognition of their heroic acts, the Owosso Fire Department is honored to issue the Citation of Valor to the following personnel:

Owosso Fire Lieutenant Matt Nowiski

Owosso Firefighter John McKay

Owosso Township Fire Lieutenant Mike Gute

Owosso Township Firefighter Whitney Ryan

Shiawassee County Dispatcher Kelsey Curtis