

2026 EMS Award Recipients

Outstanding Action by a Citizen

Dakota Electric

Dakota Electric Linemen Greg Nelson, Jake Mortenson, Reid Wheeler, and James Hamblin were nominated for the Outstanding EMS Response award for their decisive, life-saving actions during a high-risk electrical emergency in Dakota County.

After a truck driver was electrocuted by live power lines and his vehicle caught fire in Miesville, the four Dakota Electric linemen acted immediately despite the active hazard. They removed the unresponsive driver from danger and initiated CPR, sustaining his life until EMS arrived.

Their rapid judgment, technical skill, and willingness to risk their own safety directly saved a life and exemplify the highest standards of emergency response and public service.

IGH Veteran's Community Center

Emma Zellmer, Steve Heinrich, Aaron Fitzloff and Katelyn Brown are being recognized for their swift action and life-saving response to a near-drowning incident at the Veterans Memorial Community Center in Inver Grove Heights. Upon being alerted of the incident, Emma immediately entered the 13-foot dive well, retrieved the submerged individual, and brought him to the surface with assistance from Aaron and Steve (a guest).

Emma initiated CPR and coordinated a seamless team response with Katelyn and Aaron, including compressions, airway management, and AED deployment. Their swift, coordinated actions restored the individual's vital signs prior to EMS arrival.

Together, their leadership, expertise, and decisive action—supported by a collaborative team effort—directly resulted in saving a life.

Outstanding EMS Response

Hastings Fire Off-Duty Paramedic

Hastings Fire Paramedic Lucas Knoll was off duty and at a restaurant in Hastings when he noticed a commotion at a nearby table where he found a man had become unconscious. Lucas immediately rendered aid after determining the man was in cardiac arrest. He started CPR and a bystander brought the on-site AED to him. Lucas applied the AED and delivered one shock. The man returned spontaneous circulation following defibrillation and was alert and oriented by the time EMS had arrived. The patient

was then transported to the hospital by EMS for further cardiac care. Lucas's response and quick action led to a positive outcome for this patient.

Burnsville Fire - High School Bike Race

Burnsville firefighter/paramedics Kait Shirk, Troy Kubista, Shawn Hill, Jonathan Erickson and Kyle Laughlin responded to a serious bike crash at Buck Hill, locating a high school patient with significant neck trauma and respiratory distress after a high-impact collision with a tree. Recognizing the severity, they initiated spinal precautions and rapid transport.

As the patient's airway deteriorated enroute, the crew made the critical decision to sedate and secure the airway, providing continuous manual support during transport to a Level 1 trauma center.

The patient was later diagnosed with a tracheal tear and bilateral pneumothoraxes but ultimately recovered without long-term health issues. The crew's rapid assessment, clinical judgment, and decisive airway management were instrumental in saving the patient's life and ensuring a successful outcome.