

THE Hundred Call

***"The Club
with a Heart"***

**President: Paul Fitzgerald
Managing Director: James M. Thomas**

**Volume LII, No. 2
Summer 2021**

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Managing Director William Sydenham Retires

Managing Director William "Bill" Sydenham announced his retirement effective May 31, 2021. The longest serving Managing Director in The Hundred Club's history, Bill held the position for 27 years, fully half of the Club's existence.

When he notified the Board of Directors of Bill's decision, Club President Paul Fitzgerald said, "Words cannot express the respect, admiration and thanks that The Hundred Club feels toward his service to the Club and the surviving families that we support".

Bill was the third Managing Director in the Club's half century of operation. He was preceded by Carroll Shaw, a retired Major with the State Police, who served as the Club's first full-time Managing Director in 1974. Edward Funk, a veteran Sergeant of the Connecticut State Police, assumed the position in 1980. Bill, also a former State Police officer, retiring as a Lieutenant, was hired on November 1, 1994.



Bill and his predecessor Ed Funk in 1994

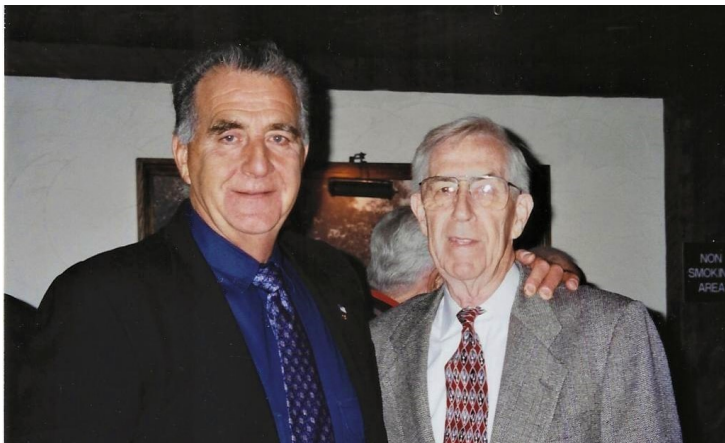
Past President Paul Young observed, "The position of Managing Director is multi-faceted and Bill had the background and personality to be very good at the job; but he did not stop at 'very good', he has gone on to become outstanding".

"His attention to detail made our job as Directors much easier", Young continued. "Whenever there was a matter that needed the Board of Directors' approval, Bill would present the facts in a neutral manner so that we could hear and understand the essential details and make an informed decision."

Past President Andre Charbonneau agreed, saying "Bill was always very thorough and informative with the Board, presenting the needs of the surviving families clearly and methodically. He was a great representative and advocate for the surviving families".

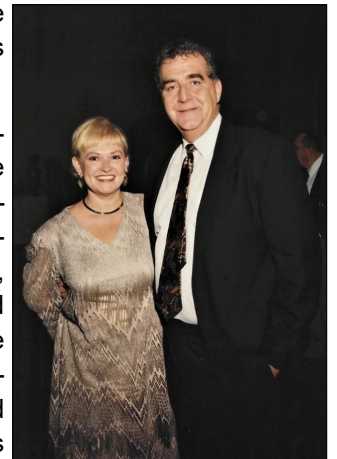
The admiration of the Club's volunteers for Bill was always reciprocated. Commenting on his experience with the organization, Bill observed, "I have been blessed in the numerous, rewarding associations that I have formed with the Officers and Directors. These men and women comprise the most unique, talented, unselfish, forward-thinking group of individuals to be found anywhere. I have come to see these leaders as family and dear friends."

Bill's tenure was marked by multiple achievements, including the acquisition of a new and permanent office, the expansion of services and benefits to families, and increased membership and financial stability. However, the distinction he will be best remembered for was his thoughtful and caring manner with the Club's family members.

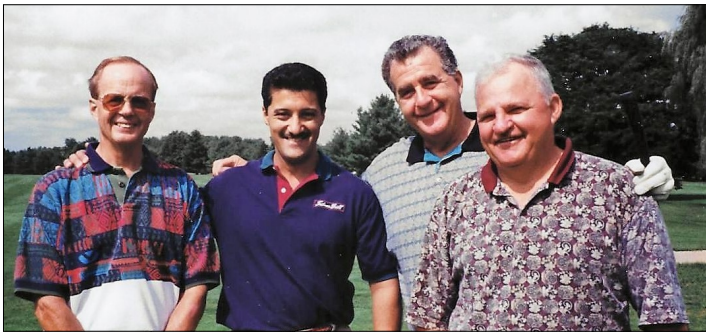


Bill with Club President Richard "Dick" Brown in 1994

Bill was appointed Managing Director between the Club's presidential administrations of Richard Brown and Phillip Cahill, eventually serving 23 different presidents – making an enduring impression on each and a long-lasting influence on the Club.



Bill with his wife, Diane, at the 1995 Annual Meeting



Bill (third from left) with members at annual golf outing

Demonstrating his dedication and devotion to the surviving families, Bill was insistent that he have the opportunity to notify them directly of his leaving. In a letter to each of the spouses, he wrote, "I want to thank you for allowing me, on behalf of The Hundred Club, to acknowledge your loss, to assist you and your family when the need arose and to remember you throughout the year with our programs."

Ever humble and selfless, Bill tried to decline any attention to himself or recognition of his retirement. However, his many friends and associates, while respecting his wishes for moderation, could not let him leave without some acknowledgement of his service and best wishes for his future.

An "open house" reception was held at the Club's offices on May 13, permitting members, friends and colleagues to visit and congratulate Bill. A series of video greetings was also compiled beforehand, from people unable to attend, but who wanted to thank Bill for his outstanding contributions to the Club.



Pam Lavery, Kim Hassiak, Bill, Lisa Sachetello and Sue Hanley (L-R)

Among those in attendance were several surviving spouses, who expressed their gratitude to Bill for his continuing care and compassion shown to the families over the years. Their stories of Bill's gentle, affirming and comforting presence in their lives were representative of the oft-expressed feelings of all our surviving family members.

Paul Young observed, "Bill would work with our families in such a caring way that we have received many comments about his compassion and thoroughness which made their lives a little bit better."

During the get-together, it was revealed that the Board of Directors had approved naming the boardroom at Club headquarters in his honor. The glass wall, partitioning the room from the building entrance, is now etched with its new name and the Club's logo.



Past President Peter Guerra with Bill in 2015

At their meeting on April 15, when the Board of Directors formally accepted Bill's notice of retirement, they appointed him Director Emeritus. This unique and rarely conferred honor, permitted by the By-Laws, grants Bill the same privileges as a Director.

The Stonington Board of Police Commissioners also honored Bill with a legislative proclamation that recognized his many years of service "as an innovative leader and role model". The award was presented at their meeting on June 10 by State Representative Greg Howard of the 43rd General Assembly District, who is also a Detective with the Stonington Police Department.



Bill with Representative Greg Howard

Past President Peter Guerra may have summarized what Bill meant to The Hundred Club best when he said, "Bill Sydenham was the 'quiet man', a figure whose monumental physical stature is matched only by his impressive integrity, ability, good humor, and resilience. I am proud to have known him as the Managing Director, and prouder to call him my treasured friend."



The William E. Sydenham, Jr. Boardroom

New Haven Firefighter Dies in House Fire

New Haven Firefighter Ricardo "Rico" Torres, Jr. died on May 12, 2021, when he responded to a house fire on Valley Street in New Haven. A second firefighter, Lt. Samod Rankins, was admitted to the Connecticut Burn Center at Bridgeport Hospital in critical condition.



New Haven Firefighter Ricardo Torres, Jr

Fire Chief John Alston said that firefighters were called to the home at 190 Valley Street about 12:45 on Wednesday morning. When crews pulled up they encountered heavy smoke and fire, he said.

Firefighters arrived to find the first floor and basement of the two-family house engulfed in smoke, according to Alston. Two people were trapped, one on each floor. Firefighters rescued the 84-year-old owner of the property, who lived on the first floor, and a second-floor tenant. One was taken to the hospital and treated for smoke inhalation, while the other was treated at the scene.

Department leaders called for a second alarm at 1:15 am, which brought a second team of firefighters and equipment to the scene. Not long after that, a firefighter in the burning house "reported being lost and disoriented," Alston said.

"It turned out there were two of them on the second floor," he said of the firefighters. Responding to the "Mayday" message, rescuers from various fire companies worked under "intense conditions" to get the men out of the house. Both Torres and Rankins were found in an unconscious state, removed from the house and transported to the hospital. Torres succumbed to his injuries.

Firefighters continued to fight the blaze until finally bringing it under control at 3:23 am.

Two other firefighters, Tyrone Reed and Tyler Skowlink, were treated for non-life threatening injuries at a local hospital, Alston said.

"This is a rough time. Firefighters face dangers every day. They stand between natural law and people who are in need, and sometimes when you stand between natural law, we have to respect that," Alston said. "We suffered a great loss today. I read somewhere that nobody hath love a man or woman, more than they, who lay down their life for friends. The New Haven Fire Department understands that today."

He said he hired Torres in July 2019.

"Since he was a child he wanted to be a firefighter," the Chief said. "I want him to be remembered for doing what he loved to do. And that he sacrificed his life to save someone else."

Governor Ned Lamont directed flags to half-staff in honor of Torres.

"Today's tragedy is a heartbreaking reminder of the dangers that firefighters face each and every day when responding to emergencies," he said, in a written statement. "Firefighter Torres is a hero, who dedicated his life to the safety of the people of New Haven. My thoughts are also with the firefighters who were injured while responding to this emergency, and I pray for their speedy recovery."

Mayor Justin Elicker said at the news conference he was at the hospital early Wednesday "and witnessed firsthand the compassion and leadership of the chief and his team, the camaraderie and support of the firefighters." He said he was "deeply proud of our fire department and the support you give each other that you give each other during this incredible challenging time."

Torres "is a son, he's a brother, he's a husband, he's a father," Elicker added. "And he ran inside a building to save other people and lost his life. And his family lost him."

From Stamford to Tolland, fire departments across the state mourned New Haven's loss, extending their condolences on social media. Tolland firefighters tweeted: "We are heartbroken at the news coming out of New Haven this morning. Know that you are all in our thoughts."

Alston said he had received "many phone calls and emails and well wishes from all over the nation, from every walk of our industry."

Hartford Firefighters Local 760 said they have New Haven firefighters in their thoughts and prayers and also are praying for the speedy recovery of the hospitalized firefighter. Hartford lost a firefighter in October 2014 when firefighter Kevin Bell was unable to make it out of a second-floor room while working to put out a house fire on Blue Hills Avenue.

Firefighter Ricardo Torres, Jr. Laid to Rest

The New Haven firefighter was remembered as a hero during his funeral on Thursday, May 20.

Ricardo Torres, Jr. was born in New Haven on November 11, 1990, the son of Cathy Foster-Mendez and the late Ricardo Torres. He followed his passion of becoming a firefighter when he joined the New Haven Fire Department in July 2019 and was assigned to Engine 6, Third Division. It was there that he experienced and enjoyed the camaraderie of his second family and realized his dream, held since he was two years old.

He is survived by his wife, Erica Martinez, and his one-year old son, Oliver Torres. The young firefighter was also expecting a baby boy, Crew Torres, to be added to his family of three in August.



Erica Martinez, the widow of fallen Firefighter Ricardo Torres, passes in front of New Haven Fire Department personnel

Thousands of firefighters from across the state and country, including personnel from Tennessee, Texas, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico, traveled to New Haven for a procession that carried Torres' body from the New Haven Fire Department headquarters to St. Mary's Church on Hillhouse Avenue in New Haven.

During the procession, officers who stopped traffic saluted the passing vehicles as community members got outside their cars to pay their respects. One woman wiped tears with one hand, as her other rested across her heart.

The thousands of fire personnel who gathered outside the historic church filled the road with their navy blue suits, white gloves and individual badges representing their respective communities.

Regional firefighters, including some from UConn, helped cover firehouses across the city so hundreds of Torres' grief-stricken colleagues could attend the service.

During the service, Torres was eulogized by family members, including his wife, mother and colleagues from the Fire Department.

Torres was memorialized at the church by his mother, Cathy Foster-Mendez, who raised him as a single mom.

She said she still can't understand what happened to him, but she felt the need to speak at his funeral on his behalf.

"You almost always had a smile on your face, and God knows how I miss that big smile," Foster-Mendez said.

Torres' stepfather, Armand Mendez, remembered him for the high energy that earned him the nickname "Tornado" as well as his dedication to the city, his job and his family.

"When I met you, you were this little 13-year-old teenage boy that had so much energy that I don't think the Energizer Bunny had anything on you," he said. "And from the stories I've heard at the firehouse from your brothers and sisters, that hasn't changed."

Torres' supervisors at the Dixwell Station spoke during the service and remembered him as fast-paced, self-motivated and with a strong work ethic. Capt. Kendall Richardson was Torres' instructor at the fire academy.

"When he graduated, I was blessed with the opportunity of becoming his commanding officer," he said. "I thought to myself, this is going to be a challenge. I know his energy. He had a motor unlike anybody."

Richardson said he would look for Torres during morning roll call at the firehouse and find he that had already raced to complete tasks like cleaning and other housework. "He wanted to get right to the training, he wanted to keep learning," he said. "He wanted to be the best firefighter he could be."

The captain said he could recall 10 instances off the top of his head where Torres was part of life-saving efforts. "Rico was one of those high-strung firefighters who wanted to get in there and he wanted to save as many lives as possible."



Pallbearers escort the casket of New Haven firefighter Ricardo Torres Jr. in an antique firetruck to St. Mary Church

Following the funeral service, Torres' fire academy class carried his flag-wrapped casket to a white Engine 4 truck that was surrounded by his saluting New Haven Fire Department family. The truck brought Torres to Cedar Hill Cemetery in Hartford as his final resting place, where he was buried with full departmental honors.

State Begins PFAS Fire Fighting Foam Take Back Program

In an effort initiated nearly two years ago, tens of thousands of gallons of firefighting foam containing dangerous chemicals are being picked up from nearly 150 Connecticut fire departments.

A chemical spill into the Farmington River became the catalyst for one of Connecticut's most pressing environmental health threats. On June 8, 2019, 50,000 gallons of firefighting foam was accidentally released from the Signature Flight hanger at Bradley International Airport. The foam went into the hanger's drains and traveled to the nearby Metropolitan District Water Pollution Control Facility, eventually dumping out into the Farmington River.

The foam contained a chemical called PFAS - short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances - a group of more than 4,700 man-made chemicals used for their heat resistance and water, oil, and dirt-repellence. Because of their stability, PFAS resist breakdown by natural processes and persist in the environment indefinitely, earning them the nickname "forever chemicals". PFAS chemicals have been widely used in the United States since the 1940s and are commonly found in fire-suppressant foam and many other commercial sources, such as food packaging, stain resistant carpeting and upholstery, non-stick cookware, and waterproofing material for raincoats, boots, and other items. The chemicals have also been linked to health risks ranging from developmental effects in fetuses and infants and certain forms of cancer.



Following the spill, Governor Lamont created the Connecticut Interagency PFAS Task Force, charged with making recommendations that address contamination and the harmful effects of the widely-used class of chemicals. Their final Action Plan was published and presented to the Governor in November 2019.

The plan recommended testing water supplies across the state, reducing the sources of PFAS in the environment, minimizing occupational exposure to PFAS by identifying workplaces where the chemicals may be used and helping employers implement strategies to control exposure, and cleaning up known contamination, including reducing or preventing future releases of PFAS-containing firefighting foam into the environment.

The State Bond Commission recently released funds to ad-

vance the initial step in the remediation process – a Take Back Program to collect aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) concentrate from fire services. The collection of containerized foam is the first stage of the Take Back Program.

The Take Back program is an initiative of the Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Commission on Fire Prevention and Control (DESPP/CFPC) and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). The CFPC is coordinating the collection process between the state's permitted contractor, Clean Harbors Environmental Services, and individual municipal and volunteer fire departments and state agency fire departments.

Jeffrey Morrisette, the State Fire Administrator, said, "The CFPC did an initial inventory of containerized foam back in 2019, with approximately 40,000 gallons reported. I would expect Stage 1 of the Take Back Program to last 30-60 days".

A second stage of the Take Back Program will involve the removal of AFFF from fire apparatus on-board systems and decontamination of the apparatus and other equipment. According to Morrisette, this phase will occur later this summer and fall. The DEEP issued an RFP for the project and proposals are currently being evaluated in anticipation of a contract award.

Jay Kelly, an equipment technician for the Bristol Fire Department said the process "Kind of equated to you emptying out your soap jug. It's empty, but there's still some product in there".

Kelly said he looks forward to clearing the chemical out of his trucks and learning about the alternative foam recommendations the state will make next. These changes, he said, will help eliminate firefighters' exposure to the harmful substance in the foam known to cause adverse health effects including some cancers.

The final stage of the process is the evaluation, selection and procurement of PFAS-free alternatives for fire suppression foam. The Department of Administrative Services has issued a purchase contract for National Foam Universal F3 Green firefighting foam, which municipalities may use to acquire their own.



Foam Tender

Annual Law Enforcement Memorial Service

Connecticut's 33rd Annual Law Enforcement Memorial Ceremony was held on Thursday, May 20, 2021, on the grounds of the Connecticut Police Academy in Meriden. The ceremony, honoring the police officers killed in the line of duty in Connecticut, was led by former Meriden Police Chief and Chairman of the Memorial Day Committee, Robert Kosiencki.

Due to continuing concerns about COVID-19, a scaled down version of the service was presented. Invitations to the normally open event were limited to the families of the fallen heroes and the members of the foundation. The Committee also followed CDC guidelines with mask-wearing and social distancing mandates in place.

Dignitaries attending the ceremony included James Rovella, the Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection; Colonel Stavros Mellekas, the Commanding Officer of the Division of State Police; James Thomas, retired Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Safety and Chair of the Connecticut Police Chiefs' Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation; and Chief J. Darren Stewart, Chief of the Stonington Police Department and President of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association.

This year's ceremony, honoring 145 law enforcement heroes, recognized the passing of Trooper First Class Eugene Kenneth Baron Jr. of the Connecticut State Police.



TFC Eugene Baron, Jr.

Trooper Baron, died on May 25, 2020 at the age of 56, from cancer resulting from his response to the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Trooper Baron served in the state police for 18 years, before having to retire with a partial disability as a result of his cancer. He entered the State Police Training Academy in November 1989. His first assignment was at Troop A in

Southbury, followed by Troop G in Bridgeport and then the State Police Traffic Services Unit.

Trooper Baron, along with other members of the State Police Traffic Services Unit, responded to the World Trade Center following the terrorist attacks to search for survivors and serve as a liaison to Connecticut families whose members worked in the building and were missing.

Baron is the second member of the State Police Traffic Services Unit to contract and die from cancer related to their rescue and recovery efforts at the World Trade Center site.

This year's service began with a procession by the Connecticut Law Enforcement Unity Bikers.



Members of the Connecticut Law Enforcement Unity Bikers Assemble in front of the Memorial

Every year during Police Week, a group of active and retired police officers from Connecticut participate in the Police Unity Tour - a 300 mile bike ride to the National Police Memorial in Washington DC. For the past two years the ride has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because the Police Unity Tour raises funds to add and maintain names on the Memorial wall, the cancellation has had a financial impact. Consequently, the Connecticut Law Enforcement Unity Bikers, as well as several other groups around the country, decided to hold smaller bike rides to help the National Memorial. At 7:00 am on the morning of the memorial service, the Connecticut riders left the Hartford Police Department and cycled to the Connecticut Law Enforcement Memorial.

The arrival of the cyclists signaled the beginning of the service and the presentation of the memorial wreath. The floral tribute, in the shape of a badge, was placed at the foot of the monument. A single red rose, affixed to the wreath with black bunting, acknowledged the loss TFC Baron. The rose was later presented to Victoria Kean-Racamato, TFC Baron's partner.

Chief Stewart and William Sydenham, Managing Director of The Hundred Club, alternated reading the names of each fallen officer, punctuated by the tolling of a bell. The Roll of Honor was followed by a rifle salute, the playing of Taps and the retirement of the Flag of Honor.

Keeping with tradition, at the conclusion of the ceremony, family members were invited to take a flower from the memorial wreath as a token of remembrance.



James “Skip” Thomas Appointed as Managing Director

James “Skip” Thomas, a well-known and highly regarded fixture in Connecticut’s public safety community, is The Hundred Club’s new Managing Director.

Shortly after Bill Sydenham notified him of his intention to retire, Club President Paul Fitzgerald convened a nominating committee from the Board of Directors to recommend a replacement. The committee, chaired by Director and Past President Peter Guerra, considered possible options, but quickly confirmed that the best candidate for the position was Skip Thomas. The committee approached Thomas with the idea of assuming the Club’s chief administrative position and he readily agreed. His nomination was presented to the Board of Directors at their meeting on April 15 and was unanimously approved.

Chief among the many reasons that made Thomas such a desirable prospect for Managing Director is his tireless commitment to the families of the fallen. He has been an active and engaged member of The Hundred Club since 2009. He was elected to its Board of Directors in 2010 and served as its President in 2016-17.

Beyond his service to The Hundred Club, Thomas was appointed Chairman of the Connecticut Law Enforcement Memorial Foundation in 1987. He has remained in that post for 34 years. In that time, he oversaw the effort, initiated by members of the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association, to create a permanent memorial to honor law enforcement officers who had lost their lives while serving the citizens of Connecticut. Financed entirely by private donations, the monument was built and dedicated in 1989. An annual service, honoring the fallen heroes, takes place at the Memorial each May.

Thomas’ understanding of and empathy for the surviving families of public safety officers lost in the line of duty comes, in part, from his long and varied career in law enforcement. He was hired by the Glastonbury Police Department shortly after graduating from St. Louis University in 1969. He rose progressively through the ranks, while earning a Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice. He served in a variety of positions in the agency until December 1985, when he left Glastonbury to become the Chief of the Vernon Police Department.

During his two and a half year tenure there, they started the first Citizen Police Academy in Connecticut and initiated the first law enforcement torch run in Connecticut for the Special Olympics. In 1987 he returned to Glastonbury as the Chief of Police. During this time, Thomas also served as Pres-



James “Skip” Thomas

ident of the Capitol Region Chiefs of Police Association, and the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association and served on many boards and commissions representing the Connecticut law enforcement community.

In 1998, Skip retired from the Glastonbury Police Department to become the Director of Justice Planning for the State of Connecticut.

In 2005 he was appointed the Commissioner of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for the State of Connecticut by Governor Jodi Rell. In this position he successfully developed and sustained close relationships with all of the municipal fire, police and emergency managers, state police, other state agencies with emergency responsibilities, as well as the federal authorities such as the FBI, Customs, Coast Guard, and Transportation Security Administration.

Thomas retired in 2009, but his departure was short-lived. In June 2010 he accepted Governor Rell’s request to serve as Commissioner of Public Safety, retiring again in 2011.

Thomas observed that, throughout his remarkable and professional life, “It is the Hundred Club that is the one constant factor that has been there for the families of the police officers, firefighters and correctional officers that have died in the line of duty.” He added, “Being appointed Managing Director of ‘The Club with a Heart’ is the crowning achievement of my career”.

MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL VOCAL CHORDS

20th Anniversary 911 Patriotic Tribute

Saturday, September 11th, at 2:00 pm

The Bushnell Center for the Performing Arts, 166 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106

Tickets—\$30.00

www.bushnell.org

A portion of the proceeds to benefit The Hundred Club of Connecticut



"The Club with a Heart"

The Hundred Club of Connecticut
119 Oakwood Drive
P.O. Box 419
Glastonbury, CT 06033

SAVE THE DATE!!

The Hundred Club of Connecticut Annual Meeting & Luncheon
Wednesday, October 27, 2021, 11:30 am—2:00 pm

Testimonials to a Hero

State and local officials praised the heroism of Firefighter Ricardo Torres, Jr. and his colleagues following his tragic death.

Governor Ned Lamont directed all U.S. and state flags in Connecticut lowered to half-staff in honor of Torres.

The governor also released a statement sending his deepest condolences to Torres' family, friends, and colleagues.

"Today's tragedy is a heartbreaking reminder of the dangers that firefighters face each and every day when responding to emergencies," Lamont said. "Firefighter Torres is a hero, who dedicated his life to the safety of the people of New Haven. My thoughts are also with the firefighters who were injured while responding to this emergency, and I pray for their speedy recovery."

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz added that she grieves for the tragic loss of Firefighter Torres.

"He sacrificed his life for the lives of others. His bravery and courage in service to his community and our state will always be remembered. My heart goes out to his family, friends, and the New Haven Fire Department."

Mayor Justin Elicker joined the fire department at a press conference following the tragedy to express how proud he was of the way the Chief and entire department came together to support the family at the hospital.

"To lose someone who is truly a hero, who went into harm's way to ensure the safety of others, it's something that will impact us for months and years to come," Elicker noted.

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro also acknowledging Torres' death, said in a statement she is heartbroken.

"He made the ultimate sacrifice and will be remembered as a hero, a person who went above and beyond for the people of New Haven. My prayers are with his family, friends, and loved ones," DeLauro said.

Her statement continued: "I pray for the full and speedy recovery of Lt. Samod Rankins as he fights the critical injuries he sustained. My thoughts are with all of our community's first responders, the New Haven Fire Department, and the entire New Haven community as we mourn this tragedy and seek to heal from this horrific incident."

Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin tweeted that the Hartford community is also mourning.

"Our hearts and our prayers are with the family and loved ones of New Haven Firefighter Ricardo Torres who tragically died in the line of duty this morning," he tweeted.

