

## *International Firefighters' Day*

Dear All

*Please copy this letter and forward it to anyone who might be able to assist in making this resolution come true: Fire organisations, brigades, magazines, Internet links and sites, all media, educational institutions, industries associated with fire, etc.*

*For this to become reality we need support from ALL areas of the community - and it all starts here, with us now.. Please pass on any successes you might achieve in this, as I will endeavour to keep a record of the growth of our "International Firefighters' Day".*

Regards  
JJ Edmondson

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Dear Firefighters and supporters

Let us hope that this year will be a prosperous and safe one for all. Last year we faced times of tragedy and triumph, arguments and lessons, reflection and celebrations. These varying in their impact and influence on each individual are now a part of our lives and in many cases cannot be easily dismissed.

One event that had such a major influence on myself was the loss of five fellow firefighters in early December 1998. I was always aware of the dangers of firefighting, I have had the safety and training drills ingrained into me over the years and have always been aware that my friendship with other firefighters could lead me to joy and the sense of being part of a greater family as well as to potential loss.

When Matt, Stuart, Jason, Garry and Chris of Geelong West lost their lives in the fire at Linton on December 2nd, 1998 all of this struck home hard. It didn't matter that these five were from a different brigade or in another region, they could have been from another state or country for all that mattered. What was important was that they were firefighters, who lost their lives doing something that we have all been trained and are proud to do - they died trying to save life and property.

As a mark of respect to the lost firefighters and support to their families, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Victorian community adopted the wearing of a red ribbon.

When I first mentioned this to the wider Internet community the response was loud, positive and immediate with crews as far away as the USA adopting to wear this symbol as well at that time.

This, and the letters of support and fellowship that flowed from the tragedy spurred me to set a New Year's resolution for 1999: to organise an internationally recognised symbol of support and respect for ALL firefighters and a date for which this could be co-ordinated world wide.

When I asked the national and international community for their comments and suggestions as to whether it should be done, what symbol to use and when we could do it, the response was overwhelmingly positive. For weeks discussions ensued as to the appropriate symbols and their associated meanings and also in regard to an appropriate date (which was more difficult due to the difference in timing of fire seasons worldwide).

Finally sifting through the responses which came from ALL over the world I was able to choose a symbol and date that appears to be acceptable to all: The choice of ribbons was finally linked to colours symbolic of the main elements we work with - **red** for fire and **blue** for water. These colours also are internationally recognised as representing emergency service.

The date was linked to the feast day of **St Florian**. St Florian (the patron saint of all firefighters) was the first known commander of one firefighting squad in the Roman Empire. He lost his life, as well as those of his colleagues, for protecting the same humane ideas which firefighters all over the world share even today.

Firefighters in most of the European countries celebrate their day on **4th of May** as a 'Day of Fire Service' as well as St. Florian's Day. This date is also known as St Florian's Day worldwide and has been tradition for more than 150 years in Europe.

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**What:** International Firefighters' Day

**When:** May 4th (St Florian's Day). This date could be used for emergency services to run significant events.

Events could include: memorial services; fetes, open days and fundraisers for relevant campaigns; long service and other presentations; and a media campaign to focus attention on the role, activities and key messages of firefighters and fire organisations.

**Reasons:** For the community to: show support for all firefighters worldwide;  
recognise their level of commitment and dedication;  
remember those lost or injured in the line of duty;  
say "Thankyou";  
and, as a mark of respect.

**Symbol:** A piece of red and a piece of blue ribbon pinned together at the top.

The combination of the two ribbons (~5cm long x 1cm wide) pinned together should form an internationally common recognised symbol when worn. Ribbons could also be used to decorate trees, car antennas, letterboxes and other display areas by the community to show their support for the day and firefighters.

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*The above could only have been developed with the input from numerous people worldwide helping to ensure that this has been truly an international decision. Without their comments, suggestions and endorsements I could never have progressed to this stage. To all of you my sincere and complete thanks.*

*This dream can now become reality with your support. Please think of ways of promoting this day and adding it to your annual calendars. Memorial services, parades or even just the wearing and displaying of ribbons will assist in helping remember and thank the firefighters of your community.*

*With many thanks*

JJ

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