

Stand, Salute and be Saluted

The Honor Guard Primer for Volunteer Firefighters

Part of the DrillMaster BlueBook Instructional Series



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Forward

'Taking Care of Our Own'[™] is not a misstatement, it is a half statement. 'Taking Care of Our Own' was a hallowed American Fire Service precept long before it became a mantra and trademarked by the Nation Fallen Firefighter Foundation. It really operates on more than one level.

Anyone who has ever spent any time around firefighters knows that to them 'taking care of our own' has a broader definition than what's on its face. It also means taking care of folks who are not our own, but rather our neighbors, victims of tragedy and anyone else who might need the kind of assistance they can provide.

Firefighters are driven by a creedless compassion. This compassion reflects an intrinsic understanding of the social covenant that makes America what it is and in today's world, it is very special.

Stand, Salute and be Saluted is an attempt to recognize those firefighters and it is beginning to attract others who feel the same way. One such person is retired Air Force TSgt John Marshall, the author of [The DrillMaster](#) educational series of books, a renowned educator and *the* 'how to' Honor Guard Drill instructor.

John has very generously agreed to develop the Volunteer Fire Department Honor Guard Primer. The Primer encompasses and provides links to all facets of Honor Guard and Color Guard Ceremonies, but is geared toward those departments that might have only two, three, or four members available.

It comes to you at no charge and with the hope that you find it useful, adaptable to your department's specific situation and that it enables you to do your own 'standing guard'.

If you have any 'standing guard' questions or would like help in developing a 'working' Honor Guard team, John can be reached through his website [The DrillMaster](#).

The ultimate goal of Stand, Salute and be Saluted is to put every firefighter in a position to pay respect and receive recognition in a 'dress appropriate' mode.

The goal of this Honor Guard Primer is to enable you to 'take care your own'.

Steve Cohen, Pres.

Lighthouse Uniform Company

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Standing Guard

Being an honor guard member in a full-time funded department is tough: you have your firefighting job and its requirements and demands. Being a member of an honor guard in a volunteer department creates a unique situation: A full-time job with its demands and requirements, your volunteer firefighting job and its demands and requirements, and going even further, you have your ceremonial responsibilities.

For those who step up, it is a sacrifice at many levels. It is also a 'labor of love' and a demonstration of the understanding 'taking care of our own'. This Honor Guard Primer for Volunteer Firefighters was crafted with the understanding that for many volunteer fire departments, love and desire to honor are all the 'tools' at hand.

The following information can help you and your department leadership understand just what can be accomplished with a small volunteer team. Here is information on [How to Start an Honor Guard](#).

Team Membership

- **Two** Team Members: Casket Watch, 2-Man Flag Fold, and the Bell Ceremony.
- **Four** Team Members: Colors, Casket Watch, 2-Man Flag Fold, and the Bell Ceremony.
- **Six** or more Team Members: All ceremonies listed below.

Ceremonies and Equipment

- **Color Guard**. Probably the most requested function of any ceremonial team.
 - **Equipment**- you need, at a minimum, two flagstaves, two flags (US and your choice of state, city, fire, etc.), and two (ceremonial) fire axes. Click here for specifics on [Color Guard Equipment](#).
- **Pallbearers**. You can carry the casket and perform the six-man flag fold. The six-man flag fold takes much training and constant practice. It may be best to have two members of your team stay at the ready with the two-man flag fold since this technique only requires two team members to maintain qualifications.
 - Equipment- you should obtain at least one interment flag for practicing.
 - Click here to watch the video, [Two-Man Flag Fold Detailed Techniques](#).

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- **Casket Watch**. The minimum for Casket Watch is one team member stationed at the head of the casket.
 - Equipment- none.
 - Click here to watch a video on [Casket Watch](#).

- **Bell Ceremony.** There are many configurations for this, but an emerging standard is to have one team member at the bell and two just in front and to each side as guards with ceremonial pike poles.
 - Equipment- Bell/fire extinguisher, two pike poles.

Click here to read about an [Honor Guard Equipment Checklist](#).

Uniform

The Class B uniform (blue dress trousers, long sleeve shirt, and even a bell cap) is a fine standard and not as expensive as the Class A or Ceremonial uniform.

The Stand, Salute, and Be Saluted Program of Lighthouse Uniform Company is a winner with its aim to clothe volunteer firefighters (at least) with a Class B and cap at an affordable price. This is a true win-win.

Here is an article about the [First Responder Ceremonial Uniform](#) and another regarding what to wear as a [funeral procession passes](#).

Training Time

The team, no matter the size, needs to commit to at least a monthly practice. A couple of hours one afternoon can be a good way to keep team members current. Click here for information on [how to run a practice session](#).

- Something to consider: many department honor guards make themselves available for events in the community (e.g. parades, colors presentations, etc.) and many, due to manning and job commitments, do not.
- When you feel ready for formal training, please do not to hesitate to contact me through my website or email. Whether you receive my United States Ceremonial Guardsman Certification Training or not, I am always available to answer questions and help where needed.

Whatever your circumstances, there is always something that you can do to take care of your own and others.