

REPORT OF UNIT CITATION

Marine Company

March 6, 2006 at 0938

Box 547 / Incident #162

On the morning of March 6, 2006, the Officer on duty at Marine 1 was alerted that cries for "Help" were heard coming from somewhere in the vicinity of Pier 53. Lt. D'Avolio proceeded to investigate and confirmed the cries. After transmitting a verbal alarm for a victim in the water, he gave the location at Pier 53 and West 12th Street, and ordered the launching of the 25-foot Boston Whaler. As the vessel headed toward pier 53, a civilian's head was seen just above the water, and the victim clinging to piling just under the end of the pier. FF. Klimchak navigated the vessel through and around several submerged, jagged, mostly non-visible pilings, in order to get the diver as close to the victim as possible. Once realizing the vessel could not get any closer, Lt. D'Avolio ordered the diver, FF. Krol, in the water. Attached to a Lifeline, and wearing an extreme cold weather suit, FF. Krol, seeing the obvious life threatening distress from the victim, entered the water without any hesitation. FF Krol then swam through the remaining pilings toward the victim, which was approximately 12 feet from the front of the vessel. It must be noted that at this time, the temperature of the water was 35 degrees, wind was coming from the South at 18 knots, and was seriously pushing and rocking the boat and FF Krol. These conditions created a very dangerous work environment. Upon reaching the victim, FF Krol took hold of the victim and attempted to set the victim free from the death grip she had on the piling. She was severely shivering and shaking from extreme hypothermia. Once released, FF Krol grasped the victim with a life saving hold, while CME Fornuto maintained a steady pull on the life line, attempting to reel them away from the pier, which was now acting as the umbilical cord between the rescuer, victim and the Boat. Seeing this, FF Klimchak was ordered to slowly and cautiously back the vessel away from the threatening partially visible pilings. Once at a safe distance, the 150 Evinrude engines were ordered shut off, and the victim and diver were towed to the rear of the vessel. There FF's Gary and Rizzo reeled them away from the pilings and they were both brought on board. Once onboard, the members administered first aid to the victim, wrapping her in blankets and attempted to comfort her as much as possible. EMS was requested to meet Marine 1 at their quarters. Members assisted the victim off of the vessel, and patient care was transferred to EMS.

In the face of great danger, in the finest tradition of the New York City Fire Department, the members of Marine 1 operated with professionalism, dedication and bravery. In this situation, being pressed into action without hesitation, they performed above and beyond the call of duty.

The members of Marine 1 exhibited tremendous bravery, exceptional teamwork and great professionalism during an incident that presented extremely dangerous circumstances. For this, they should be recognized by the department and awarded a Unit Citation.