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Firefighters honor comrade

Shoemaker hurt in 1986 accident, died in '01

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About 50 Mesa firefighters are in Colorado Springs today to pay tribute to a colleague who died in 2001, 15 years after he was involved in an on-duty traffic accident that killed another firefighter.

Carl William Shoemaker's name will be added to the International Association of Fire Fighters memorial wall along with more than 100 other fallen firefighters from across the United States and Canada.

The U.S. Department of Justice's public safety benefits program originally ruled that Shoemaker's death was not tied to the 1986 accident and thus was not in the line of duty. In February, it reversed that ruling after a hearing officer reviewed Shoemaker's medical history.

The ruling provides monetary assistance for his family and educational benefits for his children.

"This really puts some very joyous closure in our hearts," United Mesa Fire Fighters Association President Bryan Jeffries said. "All of us in our department have known what happened to him on that day was in the line of duty."

Shoemaker's name joins two other Mesa firefighters, Capt. Jack Stevens, who died in 1986, and Gary Peters, who died in 1987.

Shoemaker, a fire engineer, was severely injured when the ladder truck he was driving was struck by a 26-ton dump truck that ran a red light June 30, 1986. Stevens died in the crash and Shoemaker suffered a fractured skull and broken bones in an arm and both legs. He took a medical retirement in 1987 and died Feb. 7, 2001, at age 45.

Shoemaker's name is engraved on the black granite memorial semi-circle wall, which lists 1,775 firefighters who have died in service since 1975.

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