

# Fire department turns over truck keys to 29 Promotes firefighters to driver positions

By Hank Dudding  
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Anthony Hodges earned the right to drive Friday morning.

The 37-year-old Memphis firefighter and 28 of his colleagues were promoted to driver during a ceremony that also saw several other key promotions.



Lovie Hodges gives her son, Anthony, a teddy bear after he was promoted to driver with the Memphis Fire Department during a ceremony on Friday.

"It's a blessing to be able to give back to the Memphis community," said Hodges, a 10-year veteran with the department.

The flood of driver promotions resulted from the settlement of a dispute over driver testing, which meant there'd been no promotions to the position in more than a year.

Chris Desmon  
Special to The Commercial Appeal

The department filled driver slots with temporary "out of rank" replacements in the interim, said deputy director Michael Putt, which put a stress on staffing.

"Any time you don't have a regular person in that position, it causes a hardship on the rest of the company," he said.

Hodges saw the temporary duty as a way to move up.

"The more you do, the better you become," he said.

Several key positions were also filled during the standing-room-only ceremony at the fire training academy, including promotions to air rescue chief, lieutenant and battalion chief.

Fire director Alvin Benson reminded the firefighters and their families of the privilege of serving the department, especially during hard economic times.

"We're still hiring and still promoting, while others are not so fortunate," he said.

While firefighters, their families and friends gravitated toward refreshments at the back of the room, Hodges said driving a fire truck is more than just a school kid's fantasy.

"It's not just sitting behind a desk typing. You know every time you go out there, there's a potential you won't make it home."

## STEPPING UP

Those promoted Friday were:

Dennis Boyce to air rescue chief.

Phillip Dix, Aaron Ford and Sue McManus to battalion chief.

Gordon Ginsberg, Michael Hudson, Robert Franks Jr., Percy Jones Jr. and Richard Johnson II to lieutenant.

Concetta Harris to OSHA coordinator.

Russell Morgan, Kelly Crofford, John Cabrera, Dan Burgess, Michael Smith, Ronald Mitchell Jr., Brett Adams, Robert Martin, Tony Gallo, David Harris, Christopher Stewart, Tyrone Ware Sr., Stephen Sands, Nick Dunning, Antonio Smith, Dennis Stevenson, Mark Biggs, Donald Crane, Timothy Montague, Zaavias Hill, John Williams, Kimo Naumann, Aubrey Miller, Bryce Gilbert, Donald Hanson, Steven McBride, Brent McKinness, Corey Allen and Anthony Hodges to driver.

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