

08-04-2012 North Dakota – Jim Reardon Vol FF PSD Training Heart Attack

## **NORTH DAKOTA FIREFIGHTER DIES WHILE PREPARING FOR WATER RESCUE TRAINING DETAIL**

<http://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/north-dakota-firefighter-dies-while-preparing-for-water-rescue-training-detail/>

August 5, 2012

It is with deep regret that we advise you of the Line of Duty Death of Firefighter Jim Reardon of North Dakota. We received the following information from the Fire Academy of North Dakota ,Chief Darrell Graf:



**Jim Reardon**

“It is with deepest sorrow I inform you of the loss of one of our team

members at approximately 4:30 Saturday afternoon. Firefighter/Photographer Jim Reardon and I were on an exploratory dive starting at about 3:45 pm to pre-plan diving for interested team members on the weekend of August 18th.

After a short time of diving, Jim and I somehow got separated, and I started looking for his bubbles on the surface of the lake, and after finding none, returned to the dock. While en route, I found one of Jim’s fins (flippers) and tried for about 15 minutes to find his location. With ripples on the water, it was extremely difficult to find bubbles, and began to look with binoculars and continued to search the lake – presuming Jim was probably videoing underwater, but becoming highly concerned. A few minutes later, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Enslin showed up with a boat, and I explained the situation, and they offered to have me come aboard and search. After 10-15 minutes, I asked to go back to the dock, and while approaching the dock, in about 8’ of water about 30’ from the dock, Jim lied face up in the lake. This was “Lake 7”, a premier western Minnesota diving spot located near the city of Frazee, MN.

Jim had been to that lake on dives probably 25 times, as well as several other places. We were checking that renowned dive lake to conduct the pre-drill survey for a team dive, and had one lake other we were going to check on this morning.

I (along with his wife and responding rescuer’s) presume Jim had a heart attack or some other medical issue arise, as ALL equipment was in proper working order, and he had about 2/3 of his air left. The mask was in place, the buoyancy compensator worked excellent, as I used that to raise him from the bottom of the lake, and dragged him the short distance to shore. Although some efforts were made to revive him, it was clear to me upon first sight of Jim there was not chance. An investigation continues by the Ottertail County Sheriffs Department and Ottertail County Coroner on this matter.

I have been in contact with the family this morning, and we can expect to know probably Monday what the funeral arrangements are.

I will then pass the funeral arrangements on to all members as soon as I know them. Jim has been a lifelong friend of mine and joined up with us in April, 2010. Many of you met Jim on the April 2010 Superior Wisconsin Marine Fire Training program. Jim leaves behind his wife, Michelle and four children, Cole, Taylor, Paige and Clare. I will have follow – up information sent to you as soon as I receive it. Darrell Graf 0358 AM August 5, 2012.”

## **N.D. Firefighter Dies During Dive While On-Duty**

<http://www.firehouse.com/news/10755612/nd-firefighter-dies-during-dive-while-on-duty>

AUG 6, 2012 FIREHOUSE.COM NEWS

A Fire Academy of North Dakota firefighter died Saturday during an exploratory dive in preparation for a training exercise in a Minnesota lake.

Firefighter Jim Reardon, also a photographer for the academy, was on an was surveying the lake in preparation for the Aug. 18 dive when he died, according to a statement from Fire Chief Darrell Graf.

The USFA is considering Reardon's death as occurring while on duty.

Graf was with Reardon on the dive as they were planning the drill to attract interested team members.

In a prepared statement, Graf explained what happened Saturday afternoon on Lake 7, a premier western Minnesota diving spot near Franzee, Minn.

"After a short time of diving, Jim and I somehow got separated, and I started looking for his bubbles on the surface of the lake, and after finding none, returned to the dock."

While en route, I found one of Jim's fins (flippers) and tried for about 15 minutes to find his location. With ripples on the water, it was extremely difficult to find bubbles, and began to look with binoculars and continued to search the lake - presuming Jim was probably videoing underwater," he said in the statement.

He added that he was growing more concerned. Upon hearing about the missing firefighter, a couple on a boat offered to assist, and Graf climbed aboard.

They were headed back after searching, Graf spotted Reardon, floating face-up about 30 feet from the dock.



**Fire Academy of North Dakota  
Firefighter Jim Reardon**

"Jim had been to that lake on dives probably 25 times, as well as several other places. We were checking that renowned dive lake to conduct the pre-drill survey for a team dive," he added.

Graf said he and others suspect Reardon had a medical issue, possibly a heart attack. The diving equipment appears to have been working properly.

Efforts to revive him proved fruitless.

An investigation continues by the Ottertail County Sheriff's Department and Ottertail County Coroner, Graf added.

Reardon started working with the Fire Academy of North Dakota in 2010. He also was involved with Superior Wisconsin Marine Fire Training program.

Jim leaves behind his wife, Michelle, and four children, Cole, Taylor, Paige and Clare.

### **Funeral Arrangements**

Visitation will be held on Friday, Aug. 10 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at St. Michael Catholic Church, 9251 Highway 25, Buckman, Minn.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Aug. 11 at 11 a.m. at the church.

### **Scuba diver for Fire Academy dies**

[http://bismarcktribune.com/news/local/scuba-diver-for-fire-academy-dies/article\\_9b516314-e000-11e1-ae7e-0019bb2963f4.html](http://bismarcktribune.com/news/local/scuba-diver-for-fire-academy-dies/article_9b516314-e000-11e1-ae7e-0019bb2963f4.html)

Aug 6, 2012 By LEANN ECKROTH | Bismarck Tribune

A North Dakota native who volunteered with the nonprofit Fire Academy ND in Mandan died Saturday in a Minnesota lake while scuba diving. An autopsy for Jim Reardon, 51, of Pierz, Minn. is being done by the Otter Tail County coroner.

Reardon, formerly of Medina, was videotaping during a scuba dive at Lake Seven or Scrap Lake near Vergas, Minn. He was conducting a "pre-drill survey" for the training session scheduled a few weeks later, according to Darrell Graf, who was his diving partner Saturday.

Graf, who is chief of the nonprofit Fire Academy ND, believes Reardon had a massive heart attack.

"We found him about 40 feet from the dock on the lake bottom. All of his gear was on and his tank was working. He was an experienced diver," Graf said.

Graf said the Minnesota lake was selected for the training exercise because it was clear and allowed for better training for those interested from the North Dakota program.

"We were doing an exploratory dive for a group dive for people interested in rescue diving," Graf said.

He and Reardon somehow became separated during the scuba dive. "He had been videotaping. I couldn't see him. I came up and couldn't find his bubbles. When you lose track of your (diving partner), you look for the bubbles," Graf said.

A boat search soon followed. Emergency 911 was called and the Vergas Rescue Squad responded to the scene shortly after 5 p.m.

The Otter Tail Sheriff's Office reported that Reardon's body was found about 20 minutes after he disappeared, at the bottom of the lake.

Reardon was the marine photographer for the Fire Academy ND and a seasoned scuba diver of 30 years, Graf said. When Reardon's body was found, Graf said, there was nothing near him to entangle him. The face mask was in place and the air tank was three-fourths full, he said.

Efforts to revive Reardon were unsuccessful and he was pronounced dead at the scene, the sheriff's report said. The Perham ambulance, the Vergas Fire and Rescue and the Otter Tail County Water Patrol assisted at the scene.

Graf called Reardon "a sharp guy" who was "light-hearted." He said Reardon had been a firefighter in Medina before moving to Minnesota.

Because Reardon was busy raising four children, he didn't have time to be a firefighter, but joined the academy two years ago as its marine photographer, Graf said.

The incident remains under investigation, according to a report from the Otter Tail Sheriff's Office. Lt. Barry Fitzgibbons of the Otter Tail County Sheriff's Department, said there appears to be no evidence of foul play in the death.

Reardon is survived by his wife, Michelle, and four children — Cole, Taylor, Paige and Clare.

The nonprofit group Fire Academy ND focuses on upgrading skills for firefighters all over the state but also offers marine training for ship fires and water rescues and recovery, Graf said. North Dakota's central location makes it ideal to move backup divers and those trained to fight ship fires to other parts of the country, he said. Firefighters can hone their skills when older buildings are burned.

The Fire Academy ND started up in Medina and most recently moved its training services to Mandan.



## Jim Reardon - Firefighter - North Dakota

<http://sanctuaryofmary.blogspot.com/2012/08/jim-reardon-firefighter-north-dakota.html>

August 8, 2012



Firefighter Jim Reardon, age 51, died in the line of duty on August 4, 2012, at Scalp Lake, Minnesota.

Jim was a volunteer member of the North Dakota Fire Academy and served as a photographer. While participating in an exploratory dive in preparation for an upcoming North Dakota Fire Academy Scuba exercise, Jim passed away from a cause still to be determined. It is presumed that Jim had a heart attack during the exercise.

Jim started working with the Fire Academy of North Dakota in 2010.

He was also involved with the Superior Wisconsin Marine Fire Training program.

Jim is survived by many loving friends and relatives including his wife, Michelle, and four children - Cole, Taylor, Paige and Clare.

Let us pray that Jim Reardon is in heaven. Let us pray that he is at peace and is with God. Amen.

## Reardon lived with laughter and served with honor

<http://mcrecord.com/2012/08/16/reardon-lived-with-laughter-and-served-with-honor/>

August 16, 2012 By Jennie Zeitler, *Staff Writer*

### ***James Reardon's 'line of duty' death caused by heart attack***

James Reardon died as he lived — with a camera in his hand, giving his time to help others.

Saturday, Aug. 4, Reardon, a Pierz resident, and Fire Academy of North Dakota Chief Darrell Graf were diving in Lake Seven in Otter Tail County when Reardon suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. No water was found in his lungs, which means death was instantaneous.



Saint Florian, Patron  
Saint of Firefighters,  
pray for Jim

Graf, a close family friend of the Reardons, and Reardon had met in Perham that morning and stopped for a sandwich in town. "It was a wonderful day to be with a friend, laughing and talking," said Graf.

Their first dive was planned for Lake Seven, between Frazee and Vergas. They were doing a pre-drill survey of the lake for the Fire Academy. Reardon took a few photos of Graf near the bottom, but the next time Graf looked up he couldn't see Reardon.

"I came up to look for his bubbles, but the lake surface was ripply and I couldn't find any," Graf said.

Graf swam back to shore to the public access dock and scanned the entire lake surface intently for 10-15 minutes. He was growing more concerned and went to his pickup for binoculars.

At about that time, Eric and Katie Enslin drove up to launch a boat. When Graf shared his concerns, Eric volunteered to take him out in the boat.

"I left my scuba gear on the dock and we went out on the lake to look. It was when we were coming back in that I saw Jim about 30 feet from the dock, face up in the water," said Graf.

"It was immediately obvious that he was gone."



**James Reardon**

Graf and Eric Enslin pulled Reardon to shore. Graf found that Reardon's buoyancy compensator had not been activated, but was working perfectly. Reardon's mask was intact and perfectly installed.

"It appeared that this was a medical situation. I knew he'd been under about 40 minutes at this time," Graf said. "It wasn't a drowning."

The Fire Academy of North Dakota is a 501 (c) 3 team of volunteers who fight fires and also instruct smaller departments. They have one aerial truck and three fire engines and have helped fight fires all over North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota.

"We conduct large mutual-aid drills, where we bring in 10 - 20 neighboring fire departments to get rid of a structure," Graf said.

Twenty team members are marine-trained to fight ship fires at sea. As partners of T and T Bisso of Houston, Texas, they go anywhere, any time. They have fought fires from Alaska to Florida, regularly training on an ore ship at Superior, Wis.

The team has eight members who are scuba-trained for underwater rescues. The scuba-diving drill which he and Reardon were planning has been scrapped due to the tragedy.

Reardon first trained with the team in the late 1980s when he and Graf both lived in Fargo, N.D. Reardon joined the team again in April 2010 when he had more time available, this time as a photographer and videographer. He attended many drills.

"If we needed a hand with anything he'd help, because he was trained," said Graf.

"The Fire Academy is so grateful for his help; we've done everything we can."

Reardon's casket was draped with a United States flag and carried his helmet.

Flags at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial on the campus of the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland, were flown at half-staff Monday, Aug. 6, in Reardon's honor.

"My daughter is the same age as his daughters and it was always the best of times when we got together — lots of laughing," said Graf. "He was a character with a bubbly personality, a sharp guy — a nice guy. He made friends instantly. He was very family-oriented, a great father and husband and a great friend. He will be deeply missed."

Reardon leaves behind his wife, Michelle, son, Cole and daughters, Taylor, Paige and Clare.

Those wishing to contribute to a memorial fund that benefits Reardon's family can send donations to: Jim Reardon Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 5502, Bismarck, ND 59506-5502.

## **Pierz firefighter honored after Line of Duty Death**

<http://www.parkrapidsenterprise.com/news/region/501750-pierz-firefighter-honored-after-line-duty-death>

Aug 24, 2012 By [news@parkrapidsenterprise.com](mailto:news@parkrapidsenterprise.com)

A Pierz, Minn., firefighter who died while scuba diving on Seven Lake near Frazee was given a great honor recently when flags at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial flew at half-staff in his memory.



**Submitted photo: The Fire Academy of North Dakota honored James Reardon by presenting his helmet and the U.S. flag, which had covered his casket, to his family at the burial held Saturday, Aug. 11 in Buckman, Minn.**

It was originally suspected that Jim Reardon, 51, had drowned while out with his diving partner on Aug. 4. Reardon, a member of the Fire Academy of North Dakota, was conducting a 'pre-drill' survey of the lake in preparation for a later training session.

In an email to the Focus, his diving partner and the fire academy's chief, Darrel Graf, said the cause of death was not drowning, but rather cardiac arrest while underwater.

Reardon was the academy's photographer and was videotaping the bottom of the lake. Graf assumed all was well, until he realized there were no visible bubbles in the area. A passing boat joined him in a search and the boater called 911. From the boat, Graf spotted Reardon's body on the lake bottom, in about eight feet of water.

According to Graf's email, the Otter Tail County Sheriff's Department, Vergas Rescue Squad and Perham Ambulance Service immediately responded to the scene, but attempts at resuscitation were unsuccessful.

All of Reardon's scuba gear was working properly, his face mask was in place and the air tanks were three-quarters full. It was later discovered that Reardon's lungs were dry, indicating he did not drown.

Reardon had taken about 25 dives on Seven Lake throughout his career.

He leaves behind a wife and four children. His death is considered a Fire Academy Line of Duty Death.

On Monday, Aug. 6, the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Md., flew their flags at half-staff in his honor. Graf called this, "the most honorable and awesome honor anyone could ever ask for."

A memorial has been established in Reardon's name. Contributions may be made to: Jim Reardon Memorial Fund, Wells Fargo Bank, P.O. Box 5502, Bismarck, N.D. 58506.