



California Fire Chiefs Association

Chief Ronny J. Coleman Fire Chief of the Year Award

Background

Ronny J. Coleman was a retired Fire Chief, California State Fire Marshal, and Deputy Director of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection. He was appointed State Fire Marshal under Governor Wilson and served honorably for more than eight years. During his tenure, the State Fire Marshal's Office was merged into the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, now known as Cal Fire.

Ronny devoted more than 60 years of his life to the fire service. In 1999, he was selected as one of the 20 Most Influential Fire Service Leaders of the 20th Century by *Fire Chief* Magazine. A prolific writer, dynamic speaker, and passionate leader, Chief Coleman was at the forefront of many advances in firefighter leadership, safety, fire prevention, code enforcement, training, and technical innovation.

He held numerous leadership positions, including President of the International Association of Fire Chiefs; Vice President of the International Committee for Prevention and Control of Fire (CTIF); and President of the California League of Cities Fire Chiefs Department. He served as Fire Chief in several cities, including San Clemente and Fullerton, and as Interim Chief in Fremont, Mountain View, and most recently Santa Rosa.

In 2010, Chief Coleman was appointed Chairman of the California State Firefighters Association Volunteer Committee, where he led a successful four-year, grant-funded series of workshops on leadership, recruitment, and retention for volunteer fire departments. He also served for nearly 20 years on the League of California Cities Public Safety Committee and chaired the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) from 1984–2005.

His leadership was recognized nationally and internationally. He served as Chairman of the International Accreditation Services Technical Advisory Committee for Fire Prevention Bureaus under the International Code Council, and in 2011, was appointed to the National Construction Safety Team Panel under the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The Center for Public Safety Excellence named a perpetual leadership award in his honor, and he was elected a Fellow of the Institution of Fire Engineers by the British Chapter.

Chief Coleman also contributed to major national initiatives, including the re-constituted *America Burning* panel and the U.S. Fire Administration Stakeholder Committee. He served as President of the National Fire Heritage Center, dedicated to preserving the written, photographic, and film history of the fire profession.

He authored or contributed to more than nineteen (19) textbooks and served as a columnist for *Fire Chief Magazine*, *Sprinkler Age Magazine*, and later *Fire Engineering*. His most recent project was co-authoring the textbook *Fire Marshal* for Jones & Bartlett Publishers.

Chief Coleman received countless honors, including:

- The Mason Lankford Award from the Congressional Fire Caucus Institute (2011)
- The Everett E. Hudiburg Memorial Award from the International Fire Service Training Association (2016)
- Recognition by the International Public Safety Leadership & Ethics Institute (2015)

In 2000, the California Fire Chiefs Association named its annual Fire Chief of the Year Award in his honor.

Criteria for Award Selection

Each year, the California Fire Chiefs Association accepts nominations for the **Ronny J. Coleman Fire Chief of the Year Award**. Nominees will be evaluated on their lifelong contributions to the fire service based on the following criteria:

Eligibility Requirements

- Nominees must be a current Fire Chief.
- Nominees must be current members of the California Fire Chiefs Association.
- Nominees may not currently serve on the CFCA Board of Directors (former Board members are eligible).
- Nominations must be submitted by an identified individual (anonymous or agency nominations will not be accepted).
- Letters of support will not increase chances of selection.
- Nomination letters must be signed by the individual nominating the chief, the fire chief's supervisor, and labor.

Evaluation Categories

- Impact and contribution at the Local/County Level
- Impact and contribution at the State Level
- Impact and contribution at the National Level
- Impact and contribution at the International Level

Submission Guidelines

- Nominations should not exceed three typewritten, double-spaced pages.
- If including supporting documentation or letters of support, reference the organization and contact person within the three-page submission.

Selection Committee

The Selection Committee is composed of the CFCA Executive Board of Directors and the two most recent recipients of the award. If no nominee meets the criteria, the award will not be presented that year.

Submission Timeline

Nominations are accepted **September 1 – September 30, 2025**.
All nominations must be received by **September 30, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.**

Submit nominations to:

Executive Director Jeff Meston

jeff.meston@calchiefs.org

Award Presentation

The recipient will be notified prior to the Annual Conference to allow time to invite family and special guests. The **Ronny J. Coleman Fire Chief of the Year Award** will be presented during the CFCA Annual Conference and Installation of Officers on **October 28, 2025, in Anaheim**.