



SAFETY AWARDS 2025

Impact Award Jamie Kovacs

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— Jamie Kovacs, Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council

Harnessing Passion to Drive Fire Safety

Jamie Kovacs is no stranger to the fire service. As the Executive Director at the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council in Brockville, Ontario, Kovacs leads a dedicated team and partners with fire departments across Ontario to advance fire safety and prevention.

Kovacs' passion for safety resonates even through a virtual interview. His advocacy on fire safety that goes beyond professional duty has earned him the Technical Standards and Safety Authority's Impact Award for 2025. The award recognizes individuals' and organizations' significant contributions to safety in Ontario that go above and beyond regulatory compliance.

Since 2018, Kovacs has served as a volunteer firefighter with Central Elgin Fire Rescue in Union, Ontario. He holds certifications in NFPA 1001 and NFPA 1072 and works with advocates in raising awareness about smoke and carbon monoxide (CO). His passion for fire safety and prevention is partly fueled by what he saw on the ground as a volunteer firefighter serving the Central Elgin community.

"When I became a volunteer firefighter, I started to see families impacted directly. I saw carbon monoxide sickness. I saw what fire can do and how it can ruin somebody's life," said Kovacs. "I had to jump and leave what I had known over half my life and get right out of my comfort zone. I just wanted to make a difference and help people. It was an overwhelming drive."

In addition to responding to more than 100 fire and CO calls each year, Kovacs also participates in public education events to raise awareness about the importance of smoke and CO alarms. "There are no days off as a volunteer. There's no schedule," he said, adding that the biggest payback of being a volunteer firefighter is the ability to go and help anywhere, anytime. "That's what feels the best."

Troubling statistics are also what drive Kovacs to promulgate fire-safety messages. In Ontario, CO poisonings hover at 40 fatalities a year, even more than a decade after the Hawkins-Gignac Act came into effect in 2013. The act mandates CO alarms in all Ontario homes with fuel-burning appliances or heating systems, fireplaces, or attached garages. The act was named after a family of four who died in 2008 from carbon monoxide poisoning at their home in Woodstock, Ontario.

Before his current role, Kovacs spent more than two decades in various leadership roles, including more than two decades at Coca-Cola Canada, gaining extensive experience in sales. Kovacs credits his ability to engage and listen to people in his safety work today to the years he spent leading diverse teams and collaborating with distributors and customers.

"A lot of what I do is listen to what they need. Each fire department is different, and I try to take the ideas they have and share them amongst other fire services and departments in Ontario to help get the message out as best we can."

When asked what leaders or organizations can do to strengthen their safety leadership and practice, Kovacs encourages them to look beyond seniority and tenure. "I'd like to see more leaders hire because you see passion and energy in the person that comes across in a conversation," said Kovacs, adding that age should not be a determining factor. "Take a look at what they're giving you and take that energy, harness it, and then you can teach them."

Ultimately, passion is the X factor that might not be apparent on a resume. "You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you," said Kovacs, quoting the English writer, Paul Bunyan. "We all have the power to do that."