2016 National Homeland Security Conference

Fire Commissioner Salvatore J. Cassano

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Salvatore J. Cassano served as the 32nd Fire Commissioner in the 149-year history of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), leading the United States' largest fire department with more than 16,000 fire, EMS and civilian members, and an annual budget of $1.6 billion.

Commissioner Cassano spent over 44 years in the FDNY and held every uniformed rank prior to his appointment by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in January, 2010. Commissioner Cassano served as the FDNY's Chief of Department - the highest-ranking uniformed officer - from 2006 through 2010, overseeing many of the agency's most important bureaus including Fire and EMS Operations, Training, Safety, Fire Prevention and Communications. From 2001 to 2006, he served as Chief of Operations - a position to which he was appointed immediately after Sept. 11, 2001. Both as Chief of Operations and Chief of Department, Commissioner Cassano played a crucial role in rebuilding the Department in the wake of Sept. 11 and the loss of 343 members of the Department. In the years that followed, more than 6,800 new firefighters were hired and more than 6,000 others were promoted to various officer ranks as the Department went through a difficult but remarkable resurgence. Under his leadership, the FDNY became better equipped, trained and prepared than ever before in its history, and achieved unprecedented success with the fewest civilian fire fatalities ever and the fastest response times on record.

Commissioner Cassano's career with the FDNY began with his appointment as a firefighter on Nov. 29, 1969. He steadily rose through the ranks with promotions to lieutenant (August 1977), captain (April 1984), battalion chief (August 1987), deputy chief (June 1993), deputy assistant chief (November 1999) and assistant chief (April 2001). Five times during his career he was cited for bravery.

Prior to joining the FDNY, Commissioner Cassano served in the U.S. Army from October 1965 through July 1967 and was deployed to Vietnam in September 1966.

While a firefighter, he attended John Jay College of Criminal Justice and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Fire Science. Commissioner Cassano also received an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from St. John's University in May, 2013.

In September 2009, Commissioner Cassano was awarded France's highest decoration, the Legion D'Honneur by French President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Commissioner Cassano grew up in Brooklyn and is a lifelong resident of New York City. He and his wife, Theresa, reside in Staten Island. They have five children and seven grandchildren.