



# Helen Burke

## Central Fire Academy

### MSC #72

On July 14, 1988, at about 9:05 p.m., Minimum Standards Class #72 was nearing the end of its mid-term practical test. Firefighter trainee Helen Burke was pulling a 1<sup>1/2</sup> inch hose line from the training engine up a 35-foot ladder to the third-story window on the north side of the training tower.

Helen performed her leg lock and called for water to knock down a simulated fire inside the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor room. After attaching the hose to the ladder with her hose strap, she got out of her leg lock and proceeded to advance a few rungs to where she could enter the room.

Before Helen's left foot came into contact with the window sill, her right foot slipped off the ladder rung. As she hung from the rungs, trying to regain her footing, her right hand slipped and her body shifted to the left. The weight of her SCBA pack caused her to roll off the ladder and fall approximately 25' to the concrete. Rescue 51 rushed her to ORMC ER.

When told that several anxious classmates were waiting outside, Helen said, "Tell them I'm a fighter and I'm going to make it." Unfortunately, she didn't. Shortly after midnight, she passed away.

Retired Deputy Chief Randy Tuten says Helen was "a 120 pound fireball," well liked by her fellow students and instructors. He says she did everything right that night, but when training exercises closely simulate real-life conditions, accidents can and do happen.

