



National Smokejumper Association
Keepers of the Flame

Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award Winners – 2025

USFS: Keith Suemnick (MYC '07)

BLM: Isaiah Fischer (RDD '05)



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John Quincy Adams:

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

On behalf of the NSA, congratulations to Keith and Isaiah for their outstanding example of excellence in smokejumping leadership

The **Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award** is presented annually to one **BLM** and one **USFS** smokejumper who goes beyond the requirements of the job and demonstrates excellence in leadership in the Wildland Fire Leadership Principles. Candidates are nominated by jumpers at their base, and winners are chosen by a selection committee comprising one BLM and one USFS base manager, as well as a member of the National Smokejumper Association Board of Directors. A plaque with the names engraved is kept at the base of the winner for the fire season, and a certificate signed by the NSA president is given to each in recognition of their outstanding leadership.



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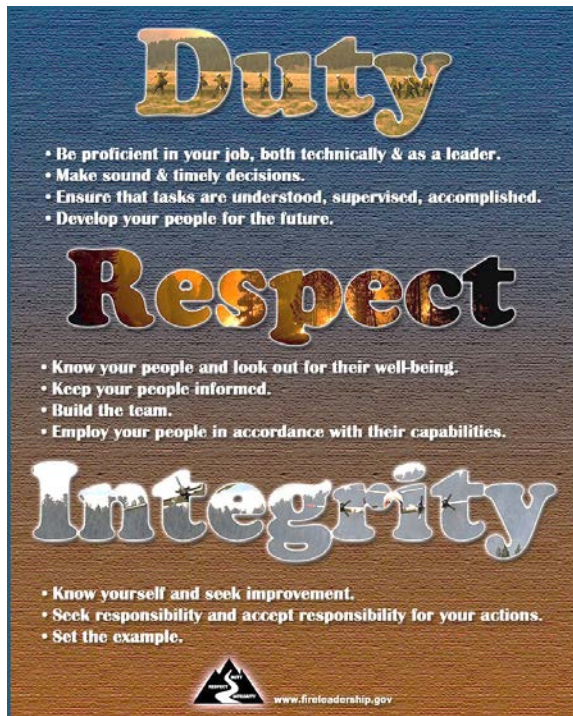
- The “Al Dunton Award” was established in 2012.
- Dunton was a rookie smokejumper in Fairbanks in 1967.
- He managed the smokejumper base there from 1972 through 1984 and remained active in fire management throughout his career.
- Much of BLM’s success in fire management can be traced back to Dunton’s work and innovations.
- The interagency smokejumper base managers and the National Smokejumper Association established the award with the support of Al Dunton’s wife, Mary, and other family members.





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Duty

- Be proficient in your job, both technically and as a leader
- Make sound and timely decisions
- Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, accomplished
- Develop your people for the future

Respect

- Know your people and look out for their well-being
- Keep your people informed
- Build the team
- Employ your people in accordance with their capabilities

Integrity

- Know yourself and seek improvement
- Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions
- Set the example

Certificate of Achievement for Keith Suemnick 2025



Keith Suemnick (USFS, MYC '07), currently based at the **McCall Smokejumper** base in Region-4, serves as Training Manager for the McCall Smokejumpers. Through his leadership at the local, regional, and national levels, Keith played a pivotal role in advancing the Smokejumper program, fostering true interoperability across bases, and positioning it for long-term success.

Technically proficient as a smokejumper, Keith combines strong operational expertise with exceptional leadership. Above all, he is committed to sharing knowledge and mentoring younger jumpers.

For the past three years, Keith has led **Project Proposal 29**—the **Entangled Drogue Procedure**—a critical safety initiative addressing a potentially hazardous ram-air parachute malfunction. He assembled a dedicated team and systematically developed and refined the proposal, culminating in a detailed implementation plan for the Smokejumper Program.

Thanks to Keith's tireless dedication, accountability, and persistent follow-through, all USFS Smokejumper programs have now successfully implemented this essential malfunction procedure. His work has measurably raised safety standards nationwide and stands as a powerful example of excellence, collaboration, and commitment in one of the most demanding and high-risk professions.

Since stepping into the Training Manager role, Keith has embraced its responsibilities with enthusiasm and rigor. He identified gaps in both personal technical knowledge and broader unit-level vulnerabilities, then worked methodically to close them.

Unhindered by pride or rigid interagency boundaries, Keith actively reaches across organizational lines—partnering with colleagues in the smokejumper community, including BLM and USFS bases—to exchange best practices and adopt innovations. His collaborative approach promotes greater standardization, safety, and improved operational effectiveness nationwide.

Originally from Weiser, Idaho, Keith is married to Brandi, and together they are raising two wonderful daughters, Scarlett and Evie. Outside of work, his passion is big-game hunting across the West, especially in the rugged landscapes of Idaho.



Certificate of Achievement for Isaiah Fischer 2025

Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award - BLM

This certificate is proudly presented to

Isaiah Fischer – RDD '05

The Al Dunton Smokejumper Leadership Award is presented to the BLM Smokejumper, selected by his peers, who goes beyond the job requirements and demonstrates excellence in Leadership in Wildland Fire Leadership Principles.

The National Smokejumper Association award for the 2025 fire season.



Michael Bina
Mike Bina
President
National Smokejumper Association



Isaiah Fischer (BLM, RDD '05) serves as the **Paracargo Manager** for the **BLM Alaska Fire Service** smokejumpers based in Fairbanks. Widely respected for his exceptional leadership, Isaiah has a proven track record of forging highly effective wildland firefighting teams. His vision and drive have significantly advanced Paracargo infrastructure, deployment methods, and equipment reliability.

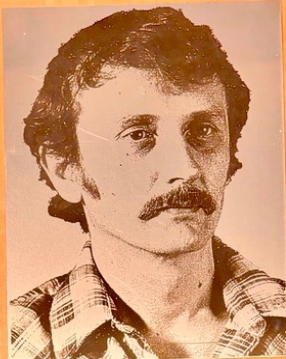
Despite tight budgets and complex procedures for facility upgrades on a military installation, Isaiah led the effort that resulted in substantial progress in Paracargo systems and deployment. A key achievement was overseeing the conversion of more than 2,000 Paracargo chutes from the older canopy-first deployment method to a safer, more dependable line-first system that incorporates direct-deployment bags. This upgrade markedly reduced safety risks during cargo drops. He also spearheaded efforts to standardize the entire Paracargo inventory, eliminating the risk of static-line interference with CASA 212 aircraft control surfaces. Isaiah developed and implemented a “weak-link” mechanism for all cargo static lines, mitigating potential hardware hazards that could endanger spotters or Paracargo personnel.

Isaiah leads by example. He has cultivated a strong, cohesive team and consistently excels at assembling ad hoc groups during fire assignments while mentoring junior smokejumpers. His collaborative outreach extended to the U.S. Air Force 212th Rescue Squadron, where he secured five **JPADS** (Joint Precision Airdrop System) units for the Alaska Smokejumpers. JPADS is a GPS-guided, autonomous precision airdrop technology that enables accurate cargo delivery even in low-visibility conditions like heavy smoke—greatly enhancing resupply capabilities in remote Alaskan terrain. A consummate professional, Isaiah is the kind of jumper everyone wants on their load: tough, physically strong, grounded in practical common sense, and radiating quiet confidence that inspires rookies and seasoned veterans alike.

Raised on his family's cattle ranch along the John Day River in Eastern Oregon, Isaiah earned his bachelor's degree in health science from Corban University in Salem, Oregon, in 2003. He began his firefighting career with the U.S. Forest Service in 2001 on the Umatilla National Forest and rookied at the Redding base in 2005. In 2008, he transferred to the BLM Alaska Smokejumpers. Wildland firefighting runs in the family. **Isaiah's wife, Melissa, is a fire specialist for the Upper Yukon Zone** in Fairbanks, his brother Jake is a smokejumper at RAC, and his brother Ed works for the Wildland Fire Service in Oregon.



SMOKEJUMPER



2011	Frankie D. Romero MYC 1989	2011	Gary L. Baumgartner FBK 1989
2012	Joshua Mathiesen RDD 1984	2012	Ben Oakleaf NRC 2005
2013	Hans Ohme MYL 2001	2013	Chris Swisher FBK 2003
2014	Sam Pfahler MSO 2003	2014	Mark Urban BOI 2003
2015	Eric Messenger GAC 2009	2015	Todd Johnson NIFC 1998
2016	Eric Messenger GAC 2009	2016	Ezra Butterfield AK 2005
2016	Dan Booth MYL 2007	2016	Porter McQueary AK 2006
2017	Kyle Hoyt GAC 2012	2017	Chris Wennogle FBK 2007
2018	Mitch Hokanson RDD 2000	2018	Dan Staab NIFC 2011
2019	Ed Lynn MSO 1995	2019	Seth Alberts NIFC 2012
2020	Naomi Mills MSO 2016	2020	Kevin Norton NIFC 2015
2021	Joe Rock WYS 2005	2021	Matt Bowers MYL 1995
2022	Sam Bullington MSO 2011	2022	Brandon Kobayashi AK 2005
2023	Erik Berke RDD 2016	2023	Ben Faust NCSB 2015
2024	Bo Brooks GAC 2016	2024	Jacob Budd AK 2017
2025	Keith Suennick MYL 2007	2025	Isiah Fischer RDD 2005

Al Dunton rookied in FBX in 1967 and was a jumped for the BLM through 1984. He was the base manager from 1972 thru 1984. The impact of his vision, ideas, and inspired leadership carries through to the present.

He inspired many smokejumpers to practice a style of leadership that built strong, loyal, effective teams.

After leaving the Alaska Smokejumpers, Al served as the BLM's State Fire Management Officer in Nevada and as National Fire Director at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho.

This award was established by the interagency smokejumper base managers in conjunction with the National Smokejumper Association to recognize outstanding leadership among the ranks of current smokejumpers and to encourage the kind of inspired leadership that Al Dunton practiced and taught.



Al Dunton rookied in Fairbanks, Alaska in 1967 and was a smokejumper for the BLM through 1984. He was the base manager from 1972 thru 1984, and the impact of his vision, ideas, and inspired leadership carries through to the present. He created a jump base where a widely diverse group of smokejumpers could combine their many strengths, voice their concerns and ideas openly, pursue new ways of firefighting and parachuting, and work together for the best overall results. He inspired many smokejumpers and other firefighters to practice a style of leadership that built strong, loyal effective teams. After leaving the Alaska Smokejumpers, Al served as the BLM's State Fire Management Officer in Nevada and as National Fire Director at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho. This leadership award was established by the interagency smokejumper base managers in conjunction with the National Smokejumper Association, to recognize outstanding leadership among the ranks of current smokejumpers and to encourage the kind of inspired leadership that Al Dunton practiced and taught.



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• Nominations

- Any current or former smokejumper can nominate a smokejumper to the base manager. The base manager will forward the name of the nominee and narrative to the Selection Board. The nomination should include a narrative of at most two pages describing how the individual went beyond duty and exemplified excellence in one or more of the Wildland Fire Leadership Principles during the preceding fire season.
- Nominations are due by [December 15](#) and can be submitted electronically through any Smokejumper base managers.
- A picture suitable for publication with permission to publish in Smokejumper Magazine is requested to be included with each application.



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• Selection Panel - 2025

- At the Fall NSA Board of Directors meeting, the NSA will appoint a board member to lead the selection panel consisting of
 - One NSA board member – Denny Breslin
 - One USFS Base Manager – Chris Haynes
 - One BLM Base Manager – Dan Staab & Bill Cramer
- The selection panel will review the candidate applications and choose a winner by **January 15** each year.
- The winner's names will be forwarded to the NSA for public announcement.
Smokejumper Magazine will feature the winners and promote them on the NSA website and our social media.