

## 06-20-1997 Chicago - Michael Drobitsch – FF PSD Training

### Firefighter Record

[https://www.fsi.illinois.edu/content/library/IFLODD/search/firefighter\\_detail.cfm?ffid=83](https://www.fsi.illinois.edu/content/library/IFLODD/search/firefighter_detail.cfm?ffid=83)

#### Firefighter Details



Name	<b>Michael Drobitsch</b>
Agency	<a href="#">Chicago Fire Department</a>
Rank	<a href="#">Firefighter</a>
Type of Firefighter	<a href="#">Career</a>
Age Range	<a href="#">46 to 50</a>
Sex	<a href="#">Male</a>
Date of Birth	0/0/0
Date of Death	6/20/1997
Cause of Death	<a href="#">Stress/Overexertion</a> , <a href="#">Caught/Trapped</a>
Nature of Death	<a href="#">Asphyxiation</a> , <a href="#">Heart attack</a>
Attribute of Death	<a href="#">Drowning</a>
Type of Duty	<a href="#">Training duties</a>

#### Incident Details

Incident Name	N/A
Incident City	<a href="#">Chicago</a>
Incident State	<a href="#">IL</a>
Incident Date	6/20/1997 16:0

Incident Location	<a href="#">Water/Waterfront</a>
Incident Attribute	<a href="#">Training accidents</a> , <a href="#">Boating/Diving accidents</a>

### **Incident Summary**

On Friday, June 20, 1997, at approximately 3 PM, Firefighters Michael Drobitsch and John Ewald of the Chicago Fire Department were participating in a dive training exercise in the lagoon directly in the rear of the firehouse at Meigs Field. Proper diving equipment was being utilized including underwater radio communication devices. Firefighter John DiSilvestro was the on-shore safety lookout man.

According to Ewald, both divers were practicing communicating with one another underwater by swimming side-by-side along the bottom of the lagoon. The current in the water was a little strong so both divers decided to surface in order to gain their bearings. Upon regaining their bearings, both divers continued with their dive. Drobitsch told Ewald that the visibility was getting poor and Ewald thought that this seemed to bother him. Ewald suggested that they should surface when they encountered the next mooring car, and they did so.

Upon surfacing, Ewald noticed that Drobitsch began to drift away from him and seemed to be in trouble as he had removed his face piece. Ewald swam toward Drobitsch and inflated his buoyancy control device (BCD). Drobitsch asked Ewald to peel off his hood, which he did, and Ewald grabbed Drobitsch's tank valve and attempted to tow him to shore. Ewald also tried to release Drobitsch's weight belt, but was unable to do so. Ewald was rapidly becoming fatigued, and Drobitsch slipped from his grasp and sank to the bottom. Ewald then took off his own facepiece and called for help.

DiSilvestro heard his call for help and ran into the firehouse for assistance. Firefighter Douglas Carbol, Engineer John Strocchia, and DiSilvestro donned their diving equipment and jumped into the water. Carbol swam out to the location where Drobitsch went under and found him right away in about fifteen feet of water. Carbol released Drobitsch's weight belt and brought him to the surface. When he was brought to shore, Drobitsch had no pulse and was not breathing. His fellow firefighters started CPR until Ambulance 4 arrived at approximately 4:05 PM.

Advance Life Support efforts were continued by the crew of Ambulance 4, but Drobitsch was non-responsive. Ambulance 4 rushed Drobitsch to Northwestern Hospital's Emergency Room, arriving at approximately 4:32 PM. Efforts by the emergency room staff to revive Drobitsch were unsuccessful, and he was pronounced dead at 4:55 PM.

Summary provided by the Chicago Fire Department.

Ukn

<http://www.thediversassociation.com/index.php/sheets>

A veteran firefighter died Friday following a routine scuba practice dive in Lake Michigan, fire officials said. [The diver], 46, a firefighter for 17 years and an experienced member of the Air-Sea Rescue Unit, was pronounced dead at Northwestern Memorial Hospital shortly before 5 p.m. according to fire department spokesman Patrick Howe.

That was about an hour after [the diver] went out on a routine practice dive with [another team member] about 25 feet off Meigs Field, where the water temperature was 62 degrees. "[The team member] noticed his partner was moving rapidly to the surface," said Howe. The member followed [the victim] to the surface, where the victim removed his mask. Other firefighters brought [him] to shore and administered CPR, Howe said.

At that time, the victim did not have a pulse and was not breathing, Howe said. Paramedics were subsequently called and administered advanced life-saving techniques before transporting the victim to the hospital, Howe said. [The team member] also was admitted to the hospital as a procedural step and was listed in good condition. An investigation into the cause of [the diver's] death was underway.

"We don't know if it was an equipment failure, or a heart problem, or what," Howe said, adding that the divers were wearing the proper equipment. "We can't speculate right now."

An autopsy will be conducted Saturday. Fire officials also said they would examine the scuba equipment being used by [the diver] for any potential malfunctions. [The diver] is survived by a wife and two daughters, ages 13 and 16. Chicago Tribune

## Michael Drobitsch, 46

**Firefighter, Scuba Diver**

[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-06-23/news/9706230159\\_1\\_lake-michigan-25th-scuba-diver](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1997-06-23/news/9706230159_1_lake-michigan-25th-scuba-diver)

June 23, 1997 By Evan Osnos, Tribune Staff Writer.

Michael "Micky" Drobitsch, 46, spent 17 years as a firefighter and member of the Fire Department's Air-Sea Rescue Unit. A lifelong resident of the South Side's Canaryville neighborhood, he died Friday after a routine scuba dive exercise in Lake Michigan. Known among friends and relatives for his generosity and sense of humor, Mr. Drobitsch's ethic of helping others went beyond his career--including when, at the age of 16, he was

stabbed with a butter knife while trying to foil a restaurant holdup, according to his nephew Steve Ford

A construction worker before joining the Fire Department's Engine 117 unit, Mr. Drobitsch was known for his expertise and enthusiasm in helping friends with home-improvement projects.

"A pat on the back was all he needed and he was glad," his nephew said. "He was everyone's uncle in the neighborhood and also everyone's kid brother."

Before joining the Air-Sea Rescue unit two years ago, he had been with Tower Ladder 37 based in Hyde Park, according to a Fire Department spokesman.

He and his wife, Margie, had recently celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

During a diving exercise off Meigs Field Friday, Mr. Drobitsch lost consciousness and was taken to Northwestern Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Survivors also include two daughters, Katie and Maggie; two brothers; and three sisters.

Visitation will be from 2 to 9 p.m. Monday in McInerney's Funeral Home, 4635 S. Wallace St. Mass will be said at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday in St. Gabriel Catholic Church, 4522 S. Wallace St.