

CORPORAL TOM LEE



The Purple Heart is awarded to employees injured in the performance of their duties to such a degree that they require hospitalization or immediate care from a physician. The injury must be of a serious nature capable of causing death or extended disability.



On March 29, 2001, at approximately 1000 hours, while responding to a possible suicidal subject in the area of W. 1600 Chestnut, Corporal Tom Lee, Officer K. Bunch, and Officer M. Fetcho were attempting to keep a subject in sight from a bluff above Latah Creek.

While attempting to maintain surveillance of the subject as he made his way down the shoreline of the creek and out onto rocks in the creek, Corporal Lee lost his footing. Corporal Lee slid or tumbled 50 to 60 feet before going airborne over a rocky outcropping, falling over 30 feet and landing on jagged rocks below. No one saw Corporal Lee fall. Initially, his yelling was thought to be that of the subject of the call, as he was now out of the other officers' sight. It was shortly thereafter determined to be Corporal Lee calling for help.

After a 45 to 60-minute rescue process, Corporal Lee was airlifted to Sacred Heart Medical Center for medical treatment. Corporal Lee suffered a broken shoulder and broken arm. He also suffered severe lacerations to his head and external injuries to his torso and leg. The same day he was injured, he was operated on twice. The long-term effects of his injuries have yet to be determined, but there is no doubt his convalescence and rehabilitation will be a lengthy one.

Police officers are often called upon to respond to persons in an unstable or altered state of mind, whereby they have made statements or threats to do themselves or others harm. This was such a case. As a result of the aforementioned subject's self-destructive behavior and our attempt to assist him, Corporal Lee was severely injured. It was a miracle the fall was not fatal, given the height from which he fell and the jagged rocks he landed on. Therefore, according to Policy 060P, Corporal Lee surely qualifies, and should have bestowed upon him, the Purple Heart.