

THE NEW ZEALAND BRAVERY MEDAL (N.Z.B.M.)

Shane Andrew COLE
Station Officer, New Zealand Fire Service

Date of action: 22 February 2011

Date of award: 23 June 2014

Citation

On 22 February 2011 a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Christchurch, causing the collapse of the Pyne Gould Corporation building, trapping around 30 people inside. Station Officer Shane Cole accessed the collapsed roof of the building via the ladder of a Bronto Skylift fire truck. On the roof Cole worked with civilians and other firefighters to create a hole and remove debris to reach a trapped woman. Cole and another firefighter went into the hole, extricated the woman and escorted her off the roof. Cole joined two firefighters at the rear of the building where he helped them release a man trapped by his ankle. During this time Cole's team heard three survivors inside the building and reported their locations. These survivors were rescued later in the day by different teams. Cole joined another two firefighters tunnelling on the second floor and assisted them in rescuing two trapped people. Cole then joined a second tunnelling team on the first floor. The team tunnelled around six to eight metres into the building, cutting through office furniture until they discovered a pocket of five survivors. Four survivors were able to exit through the tunnel on their own while the fifth man remained trapped under a desk. Cole re-joined his first tunnelling team on the second floor where they tunnelled down to reach the trapped man. During this time Cole was working near the stairwell of the building and was able to help another group of firefighters free a woman on the second floor. Cole joined a third tunnelling team where he assisted in clearing debris sent back down the tunnels until he was relieved. Shane Cole's rescue efforts were carried out in unstable, cramped conditions under the constant threat of aftershocks.