

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

Michael John LENNARD
Senior Firefighter, New Zealand Fire Service

Date of action: 22 February 2011

Date of award: 23 June 2014

Citation

On the 22nd of February 2011 a magnitude 6.3 earthquake struck Christchurch, causing the collapse of the Pyne Gould Corporation building, trapping around 30 people inside. Senior Firefighter Mike Lennard was part of a team of firefighters who tunnelled into a space of around 30 centimetres between the building's collapsed floors to rescue a trapped woman. The cramped conditions meant that no breathing apparatus or helmets could be worn. Lennard followed two other firefighters into the tunnel and acted as a messenger, passing information between the Officer in Charge outside and the team inside the building. The trapped woman had previously called for help on her cellphone and Lennard arranged for the Officer in Charge to call her in order to help pinpoint her position. The woman was found trapped behind an immovable large concrete beam. As the firefighters left the tunnel an aftershock hit and the team reported feeling concrete pressing simultaneously against their chests and backs. An engineer was consulted and advised that the beam was not safe to move. Urban Search and Rescue personnel had arrived by this point and a plan was formulated to tunnel down to the woman from above. The woman was rescued by USAR later that day. Mike Lennard's rescue efforts were carried out in cramped and unstable conditions under the constant threat of aftershocks.