

## Illinois National Guard Soldier Honored by Association for Saving Trucker

Written by Story by Maj. Brad Leighton, Illinois Guard Public Affairs  
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### Staff Sgt. Matthew Arnett of Rochester Saved Driver from Burning Vehicle

ITASCA, IL (04/26/2013)(readMedia)-- The National Guard Association of Illinois presented Illinois Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Matthew Arnett of Rochester with the 2013 Outstanding Guardsman Award on April 23 for pulling an injured truck driver from his burning vehicle last month.

"Staff Sgt. Arnett is the living definition that shows that the National Guard is always trained and ready to help our neighbors," said Brig. Gen. Daniel M. Krumrei of Springfield, the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. "He served honorably overseas when his nation needed him and he continues to serve honorably at home."

Arnett, who was a member of the 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry Regiment, was traveling home on Interstate 57 from the 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team's communications exercise in Urbana on March 3 when he saw a collision between a box truck and fuel truck near the Berkeley exit.

With the box truck on its side and ablaze, Arnett and a fellow passerby smashed the windshield of the box truck with a pry bar and extricated the driver. They pulled him away from the

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wreckage. Moments later, flames engulfed the passenger compartment of the box truck.

The box truck driver was conscious, but lethargic and bled profusely from a head wound and another laceration near his collarbone. Arnett, a trained combat lifesaver, used his Army combat uniform coat as a pressure dressing to the driver's wounds and continually assessed the driver's injuries until Illinois State Police and paramedics arrived.

"Honestly, there wasn't a whole lot of thinking going on," Arnett said. "I saw the accident happen in front of me and thought 'He's going to be in trouble.' After that, it was just reacting."

Arnett was treated for minor abrasions to his hands at Carl Hospital in Champaign and while there checked on the box truck driver, who is expected to make a full recovery. The tanker truck driver suffered minor injuries.

"Thank God I was going about three miles-per-hour slower than I could've been," he said. "Otherwise that truck would've been right on top of me."

Arnett now serves with the 766th Engineer Battalion of Decatur and is a full-time military technician working in the United States Property and Fiscal Office on Camp Lincoln in Springfield. He said he appreciates the National Guard Association of Illinois award and the accolades he has received from his fellow Soldiers, but the incident really helped him appreciate his family and his life.