

TOWN OF HILLIARD, FLORIDA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hilliard Volunteer Fire Department Announces Line-of-Duty Death of Firefighter

Hilliard, FL — April 24, 2026 — It is with profound sadness that the Hilliard Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) announces the line-of-duty death of Firefighter James “Kevin” Crews, who passed away on April 23, 2026 following a medical emergency experienced while fighting the Old Dixie Highway Fire just south of Henry Smith Road in Hilliard, Florida.

Crews began his career as a firefighter in Ware County, Georgia, and was a two-year veteran of Hilliard VFD assigned to Station 4. He is remembered by colleagues as a dedicated public servant, well respected by all firefighters, and loved by his community.

"Our department and our community have lost a hero," said Hilliard Volunteer Fire Chief Jerry Johnson. "Kevin was the epitome of courage and dedication. His sacrifice will never be forgotten. We are focused on supporting his family and our personnel during this unimaginably difficult time."

The incident occurred at approximately 5:20 p.m. during brushfire suppression operations on the fifth wildfire to break out in the Hilliard area of Nassau County during the past week. Life-saving measures were immediately provided by on-scene fire rescue personnel. Firefighter Crews was transported to UF Health on New Kings Road for further treatment, but passed away at the hospital at 6:50 p.m.

The Town of Hilliard and Hilliard Volunteer Fire Department are working closely with Nassau County Sheriff's Office and State investigative agencies to determine the circumstances surrounding this incident.

Funeral and Memorial Information:

Details regarding funeral services and memorial arrangements will be shared as they become available. The family has requested privacy at this time.

About the Hilliard Volunteer Fire Department, Station 4:

The Hilliard VFD, started in 1954, is proudly staffed by 13 trained community volunteers and serves as a local fire department. Station 4 is located at 3794 Pecan Street and works closely with NCFR Station 40 on a daily basis, supporting their wildland fire capabilities with experience and equipment necessary to protect the rural community.

Media Contact:

To allow Hilliard VFD Chief Jerry Johnson time to focus on the Crews' family and support Station 4 personnel, NCFR Chief Brady Rigdon will serve as their point of contact until further notice. Chief Rigdon can be reached by e-mail at BRigdon@nassaucountyfl.com or at 904-753-1627.



###