Wake Starts Tonight for Deceased Fire Chief

A makeshift memorial of flowers has been created in front of Seneca Hose Fire Company in West Seneca, while the gear of their chief is displayed in a window.

On Sunday, Chief Daniel Shanahan died in a head-on collision on Route 5 in the Town of Portland, Chautauqua County.

State Police said it appeared that Shanahan crossed the center line while driving around a curve, striking an oncoming truck. Authorities said there was evidence that Shanahan attempted to swerve back into his lane.

Calling hours for Daniel Shanahan are Tuesday from 7-9pm and on Wednesday from 2-4pm and 7-9pm at Hoy Funeral Home, 3855 Seneca Street in West Seneca. The funeral service will be held Thursday at 9:30am in Our Lady of Sacred Heart Church, 3122 Abbott Road, Orchard Park. Shanahan will be laid to rest in Holy Cross Cemetery, 2900 S. Park Avenue.

In addition to being chief for Seneca Hose, Shanahan was also a corrections officer, and was on his way to work at the Lakeview Shock Facility.

The truck that Shanahan reportedly hit was driven by another corrections officer, 55-year-old John Mackowiak. He was airlifted to Hamot Medical Center in Erie, Pennsylvania. Mackowiak was first listed in serious condition, but was upgraded to fair condition on Monday. Mackowiak was driving home from his job at the Chautauqua County Jail at the time of the accident.

Seneca Hose Fire Company was closed Sunday after learning of the crash, but reopened Monday morning. District 5 Fire Commissioner Tracy Escott said the volunteer fire company is grieving like a family, and that members of the clergy are serving as counselors.

Both men were wearing their seatbelts and airbags deployed in both vehicles.

"Seneca Hose is going to be without a great leader of a fire chief," said Erie County Deputy Fire Commissioner James McCullough. "He had great potential in the fire company. He was a great leader above and beyond."

Shanahan was a 1982 graduate of West Seneca West High School and had been a volunteer with the department for 13 years, chief for the past two and a half
years. He was married with two children, Dan and Erin, ages 18 and 12. The fire department says Shanahan's son was with an explorer post with the hopes of also becoming a volunteer.

The fire department said the loss of Shanahan is "a tremendous tragedy."

Through the department, the Shanahan family issued a statement saying they are in a state of shock, but that they will all get through this because that's what Dan would have wanted.

Fellow firefighters say Daniel Shanahan was a strong family man who was morally driven. They say they are in shock and disbelief. "We lost our leader and very good friend. He was a dedicated family man, dedicated firefighter and fire chief," said one of his fellow firefighters who added that he was a man "of little words, but big actions."

The department says the Fire Board of Commissioners allowed Shanahan to take his chief vehicle to his regular job as a corrections officer because, as a first responder, he would be able to respond to any emergency along the way. In addition they said he would be permitted to leave his job as a corrections officer if he was needed in his role as fire chief.