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TORONTO: PROPANE EXPLOSION: BOB LEEK

Firefighter remembered as intelligent, helpful colleague

MATTHEW TREVISAN

With a report from Josh Wingrove

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Bob Leek, Toronto Fire Services district chief of emergency planning, was an accommodating, easygoing and highly intelligent firefighter, and a husband and father, his colleagues said last night.

"He had a very fulfilling career within the Toronto Fire Services ... and will certainly be missed by the department and certainly as a valued member of our association," said Scott Marks, president of the Toronto Professional Firefighters' Association.

Mr. Leek, 55, died yesterday while surveying damage from the active fire at the Sunrise Propane facility. He collapsed without signs of traumatic injuries and was sent to Humber River Regional Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

"We still don't know the cause," an emotional division chief David Sheen, who knew the 25-year veteran, said yesterday afternoon. "That'll take a few days to get out. We'll have to have an autopsy, I'm sure, to determine the cause."

Mr. Leek began his career in 1983 and did not spend a long time in direct firefighting operations, Mr. Marks said. Instead, he moved to the support division and, in the mid-1990s, received an internal award for developing a new system of training.

"Crews, as they did their training, would fill out these computer forms, which would then track what training they'd done over the course of the year," Mr. Marks said last night.

Toronto Fire Services spokesman Adrian Ratushniak worked with Mr. Leek and said he had a wife and son. "He was one of those kinds of guys who accommodates you - so if you have a request, he'll try to fulfill that request."

In a statement, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty called Mr. Leek a "true Ontario hero."

"When others were being evacuated from a dangerous situation, he rushed toward it so that lives could be saved," the Premier said.