Gov. Perry Honors Fallen and Injured Texas Peace Officers, First Responders

*Note - Gov. Perry frequently departs from prepared remarks.
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Once again, I'm honored to be here with you all for the Star of Texas Awards, among so many who have given so much in service to their fellow Texans.

A few days ago, we marked the 11th anniversary of the attacks of Nine-Eleven.

As we think back over the events of that day, as shock gave way to grief, and eventually to acceptance, the one enduring trait we've carried forward is courage.

The courage of the firefighters who marched ever upward into the towers, and died as they lived, saving lives.

The courage of first responders, military and civilian, who pulled victims to safety from the smoking hole in the side of the Pentagon, without regard to their own personal danger.

The courage of the civilians on United 93, who risked, and lost, everything, knowing they were the only ones standing between life and death for somebody on the ground.

While the scope of the attacks seized the world's attention, with an almost universal outpouring of grief, it's important to remember that the tragedy of Nine-Eleven was felt most directly by individuals.

It was felt in the form of fathers who would never return home, daughters who would never return another phone call, countless wives and husbands, siblings and friends, all lost in the space of a single fall morning.

For eleven years we've lived under that reminder of just how fragile our peaceful world is, and how thin the line is between us and disaster.

That's a reality our first responders here in Texas face every single day.

On any given day, they may be called upon to rush a car accident victim to the hospital, earning precious seconds that make the difference between life and death.

They may be called upon to capture a dangerous fugitive, ensuring he's no longer on the streets and posing danger to others.

They may be called upon to take to the skies and spread flame retardant on wildfires, calming an inferno that threatens to consume homes, businesses and entire communities.

In short, our first responders prevent personal disasters, our own individual Nine-Elevens, every single day.

They are the ones ensuring that we'll be there, safe, for birthdays, weddings and graduations.
They are the ones ensuring a safe return home, and that a near-tragedy leaves nothing more behind than an interesting story.

Over the past year, Texas has seen its share of disasters, and, once again, we were able to depend upon our best and brightest to come to our defense.

Our first responders fought massive wildfires outside Wichita Falls, near San Angelo, and battled total devastation in Bastrop.

Our first responders moved quickly and decisively when dealing with a violent tornado outbreak in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, and their fast action helped save untold lives in those storms.

With less fanfare, they also moved quickly to save Texans suffering heart attacks, injured in car accidents and other critical, life-or-death events.

They pursued suspects, served warrants and took drunk drivers off the streets.

Anyone in this room knows, however, that this calling, this noble service, carries with it a great element of danger.

They understand that placing yourself in harm's way will sometimes carry a cost.

All too often, they pay the ultimate price.

Like Austin Police Officer Jaime Padron, who was shot and killed while responding to a routine report of an intoxicated male at a shopping center.

Or State Trooper Javier Arana Jr, who died in an auto accident in pursuit of a suspect in El Paso.

And Lieutenant Todd Wesley Krodle, who died when the roof he was standing on collapsed while fighting a Dallas-area fire.

These individuals, along with all the others we've lost over the past year, lived lives of meaning.

They were part of a higher calling, and like the other honorees here with us today, helped make Texas a safer, stronger and better place to live.

To those of you with us today who were injured in pursuit of your duties, you have the gratitude, and respect, of an entire state.

To those who have lost loved ones, I can only imagine the pain you continue to feel, but I hope you understand that the contributions of your fallen loved one, your fallen hero, helped spare countless others from the type of pain you've experienced.

Know that they lived in the most noble fashion possible, placing the lives of others above their own safety.

The Texans we honor here today are the best our state has to offer, people for whom honor, courage and dedication are a way of life.

They're the people we can always count on in a crisis, and we take great pride in honoring them today.

May God bless you. May He speed your healing, and, through you, may God continue to bless the Great State of Texas.