

## Hall of Legends, Legacies, and Leaders

**Inductee #6**

**Fire Chief Sveinn Eiriksson**

**Keflavik, Iceland**

**Died: June, 1986**



An Icelander, Sveinn Eiriksson, was appointed Fire Chief for the US Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland. The first non-US citizen appointed to command a US military fire department. On January 23, 1973, a fissure opened on the eastern side of Heimaey, Iceland, at approximately 1:00 a.m. It was 1,100 yards from the center of the town of Vestmannaeyjar. The fissure was one and one-quarter miles long and spread from one side of the island to another. In the beginning, fountains of lava spouted all along the fissure but soon the activity reduced to a small area one-half mile from Helgafell Mountain. Although one-third of the town of Vestmannaeyjer was destroyed by the eruption of Eldfell, crews of volunteers and emergency services personnel under the command of Chief Eiriksson reduced potential damage by pumping seawater onto the lava flows diverting the lava from the city and saved a major fishing village from extinction.