



South Carolina  
Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation



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South Carolina Fire Academy

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**State Fire Academy Graduates 17 in September**

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 17 recruits, Friday, Sept. 23, 2022, from its eight-week firefighter candidate school in Columbia. These firefighters underwent a 320-hour training program of classroom and hands-on firefighting skills development. Keynote speaker was Assistant Chief Will Vaigneur, Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District.

"This challenging program requires commitment, passion, and dedication," Fire Academy Superintendent Dennis Ray said. "These recruits have successfully worked together as a team, performed extensive hands-on training with live fires, and passed intensive practical skills evaluations and written tests to meet the National Fire Protection Association standards."

The comprehensive training, offered quarterly at the Fire Academy, includes emergency responder first aid training, hazardous materials operations training, auto extrication, flammable liquids and gas firefighting, rescue training, and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Firefighter I and Firefighter II levels. Additionally, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes were made to class structure and facilities to promote social distancing and recommended precautions.

"With the successful completion and graduation of these new firefighters who will now be dedicating their lives to serving their communities and the state, our South Carolina fire service is enhanced," Ray said. "I am proud of their accomplishments, and I also commend the dedicated Fire Academy instructors who brought the recruits through these weeks of instruction leading to graduation."

The following recruits graduated Friday, Sept. 23, 2022:

- Windsor Anderton - Sullivan's Island Fire Department
- Carlos Aponte - Lake City Fire Department
- Cameron Burnett - Bluffton Township Fire District
- Jeremy Clemmer - Ridgeland Fire Department
- Thomas Cotton - Hardeeville Fire Department
- Nicolas Fernandez - Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Isaac Hernandez - Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Jason Kleiner - City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department
- Skyler Korinek - Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Shane McGovern - Bay Springs Voluntary Fire Department
- Cody Parker - Ridgeland Fire Department
- Casey Peters - City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department

- Wyatt Pope - Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District
- Matthew Richardson - Jasper County Fire & Rescue
- Jake Toller - Bluffton Township Fire District
- Nicholas Warchal - Bluffton Township Fire District
- Christian Williams - Darlington County Fire District

The following awards were also presented:

**Order of the Maltese – Jason Kleiner - City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department**

This award recipient is chosen by the class recruits. The Maltese Cross is a firefighter's badge of honor, signifying that he or she works in courage – a ladder rung away from death. The Eight Obligations of The Maltese Cross are: Live in Truth, Repent of Sins, Love Justice, Be Sincere and Whole-Hearted, Have Faith, Give Proof of Humility, Be Merciful, and Endure Persecution.

**Chief Robert Frick – Jason Kleiner - City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department**

The Chief Robert Frick Award is awarded to the recruit with the highest grade point average.

**Pride of the Battalion – Thomas Cotton - Hardeeville Fire Department**

This award recipient is chosen by the instructor staff who worked with the recruits during the eight-week program. The Pride of the Battalion award is given to the recruit who has demonstrated "Leadership, Integrity, Determination, and Good Value."

The Fire Academy provides emergency services training to the municipal fire service - both paid and volunteer - airport crash rescue departments, industrial fire brigades and emergency teams and service organizations including EMS, law enforcement and military from around the state and the world. The Fire Academy is accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress and National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board) for multiple NFPA firefighter levels.

The Fire Academy and the State Fire Marshal's Office make up the Division of Fire and Life Safety, which is a division of the S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.