



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
South Carolina Fire Academy
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Dennis Ray, Academy Superintendent

For Immediate Release:

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State Fire Academy Graduates 22 in May

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 22 recruits, Thursday, May 9, 2019, 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 Chief Dennis Ray, Fire Academy Superintendent.

"This challenging eight-week program requires commitment, passion, and dedication," 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," he said.

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.

"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 May 9, 2019:

- Andrew Anderson, Aiken Department of Public Safety
- Drew Cunningham, Open Enrollment
- Matthew Dandridge, City of North Charleston Fire Department
- Tony Everhart, Gaffney Fire Department
- Anthony Fuster, Wolf Creek / Patrick Air Force Base
- Payton Gibson, City of North Charleston Fire Department
- Timothy Gilbert, Aiken Department of Public Safety
- Mitchell Hinton, Mt. Pleasant Fire Department
- Ryan Krauss, St. John's Fire District
- Brandon Kubik, City of North Charleston Fire Department
- James Llewellyn Jr., Troops to Firefighters
- Preston Lood, St. John's Fire District
- Connor Mayes, Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Paul McEachern, Mt. Pleasant Fire Department
- Patrick Mejia, St. John's Fire District
- Medgar Patten, North Augusta Department of Public Safety
- Derek Penrose, Aiken Department of Public Safety
- Aaron Pettry, SC Army National Guard
- Christopher Pugh, Sumter Fire Department

- Adam Rocafort, Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Nicolae Toma, Mt. Pleasant Fire Department
- Tristan Watson, Silver Bluff Fire Department

The following awards were also presented:

Order of the Maltese – Tony Everhart, Gaffney Fire Department

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.

This award is chosen by the class recruits.

Chief Robert Frick – Adam Rocafort, Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue

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

Pride of the Battalion – Payton Gibson, City of North Charleston Fire Department

The Pride of the Battalion award is given to the recruit who has demonstrated “Leadership, Integrity, Determination and Good Value.”

This award recipient is chosen by the instructor staff who worked with the recruits during the eight-week program.

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.