



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 September

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 22 recruits, Friday, Sept. 27, 2019, from its eight-week firefighter candidate school in Columbia. Keynote speaker was Chief Bruce Kline, Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District. These firefighters underwent a 320-hour training program of classroom and hands-on firefighting skills development.

"This challenging eight-week 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," 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 Sept. 27, 2019:

- Ronald L. Ball, Jr., City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department
- Carson Banner, Lexington County Fire Service
- Tommy Buskirk, Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District
- Scott Collins, City of Greer Fire Department
- Chase Dotson, Landrum Area Fire and Rescue District
- Caleb Dumais, Lexington County Fire Service
- Mark Eppolito, Georgetown City Fire Department
- Christopher Fitzpatrick, Town of Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Samuel Frye, Piedmont Park Fire District
- Parker Harrison, Brunson Fire Department
- Trenton Horry, Town of Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Jacob Johnson, Hardeeville Fire Department
- Ian Lovice, St. John's Fire District
- Daniel Lowder, St. John's Fire District
- Tanner Matheson, Dunklin Fire District
- Tyler Mathews, Hardeeville Fire Department
- Michael McCullion, Town of Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Joshua Porter, Lexington County Fire Service

- Garrett Rivers, Ruby-Mt. Croghan Volunteer Fire Department
- Rutledge Schock, St. John's Fire District
- Kodie Strube, Hardeeville Fire Department
- Jessica Tomasoski, City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal Fire Department

The following awards were also presented:

Order of the Maltese – Mark Eppolito, Georgetown City 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 – Tyler Mathews, Hardeeville Fire Department

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

Pride of the Battalion – Ronald L. Ball, Jr., City of Beaufort/Town of Port Royal 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.