



South Carolina
Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
South Carolina Fire Academy



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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State Fire Academy Graduates 14 in December

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 14 recruits, Friday, Dec. 6, 2024, 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. The keynote speaker was Captain Micah Rains, Greenville City Fire Department.

"Today, we celebrate graduation and welcome these new members to the South Carolina fire service," State Fire Academy Superintendent Jason Pope said. "The past eight weeks have been a challenging program requiring commitment, passion, and dedication. These recruits have 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.

"From this day on, these new firefighters will be dedicating their lives to serving their communities and the state," Pope said. "All of us at State Fire are proud of their accomplishments. I also want to commend the dedicated Fire Academy instructors who brought the recruits through these weeks of instruction leading to graduation."

The following recruits graduated:

- Alex Betz, Dorchester County Fire Rescue
- Lilly Duke, Dorchester County Fire Rescue
- Dakota Forsythe, Cayce Fire Department
- Ryan Gregory, Aiken Department of Public Safety
- Shawn Janowski, Orangeburg City Fire Department
- Landon Lane, Colston Volunteer Fire Department
- Ayrton Leichner, James Island Public Service District
- Reed McComb, Jasper County Fire-Rescue
- Cody McHenry, James Island Public Service District
- David Meyer, Sumter City Fire Department
- Cole Rayborn, Newberry Fire Department

- Ryan Rosenmeier, Sumter City Fire Department
- Adam Sitarz, Greenwood City Fire Department
- James Vagedes, James Island Public Service District

The following awards were also presented:

Order of the Maltese: Dakota Forsythe, Cayce Fire Department

The class recruits choose this award recipient who most exemplifies the eight perfect points of the Maltese Cross in the Firefighter II candidate program. The Maltese Cross is a firefighter’s badge of honor, signifying that he or she works in courage. The Eight “perfect points” of the Maltese Cross include: 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: Ryan Gregory, Aiken Department of Public Safety

The Chief Robert Frick Award is presented to the recruit who achieves and maintains the highest academic grade point average in the Firefighter II candidate program.

Pride of the Battalion: Dakota Forsythe, Cayce Fire Department

The instructor staff who work with the recruits during the eight-week program choose this award recipient. The Pride of the Battalion award is presented to the recruit who exemplifies teamwork and camaraderie in the Firefighter II candidate program.

The Fire Academy provides emergency services training to the municipal fire service – both paid and volunteer. These include airport fire and rescue departments, industrial fire brigades, 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 the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (Pro Board) for multiple NFPA firefighter levels.

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

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