



South Carolina  
Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation



South Carolina Fire Academy

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**State Fire Academy Graduates 15 in May**

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation’s South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 15 recruits, Thursday, May 9, 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 Chief Justin McLellan, Lancaster 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:

- Owen Becker - Jasper County Fire-Rescue
- Alexavier Berry - West Columbia Fire Department
- Peyton Bullock - Bluffton Township Fire District
- Devin Hancock - Sumter City Fire Department
- Adrian Juarez - Jasper County Fire-Rescue
- Jewell Kincaid - Aiken Department of Public Safety
- Gregory Koehler - Sumter City Fire Department
- Aaron Lemus - Hardeeville Fire Department
- Isaiah Ramsey - Greenville City Fire Department
- Nolan Rodriguez - Sumter City Fire Department
- Brett Taylor - West Columbia Fire Department
- Carson Thayer - Bluffton Township Fire District
- Jaden Tomlinson - Jasper County Fire-Rescue
- Rusty Weaver - Orangeburg City Fire Department
- Jamarcus Wiley - Aiken Department of Public Safety

The following awards were also presented:

**Order of the Maltese: Jaden Tomlinson - Jasper County Fire-Rescue**

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: Gregory Koehler - Sumter City Fire Department**

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: Rusty Weaver - Orangeburg City 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.