



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation  
**South Carolina Fire Academy**  
141 Monticello Trail • Columbia, SC 29203  
Phone: 803-896-9800 • Fax: 803-896-9856 • [www.llronline.com](http://www.llronline.com)



**For Immediate Release:**

Contact: Susan Duncan, Office Manager  
S.C. Division of Fire and Life Safety  
(803) 896-5790  
Date: May 12, 2017

**State Fire Academy Graduates 12 in May**

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 12 recruits, Friday, May 12, 2017, from its eight-week firefighter candidate school in Columbia. Keynote speaker was Chief Trey Cooper, City of Marion Fire Department.

The 12 firefighters from eight fire departments across the state, one from the U.S. Virgin Islands Port Authority, and one open enrollment recruit, underwent a 320-hour training program of classroom and hands-on firefighting skills development.

The in-depth 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.

"This is a very challenging program that requires team work, in-depth study, extensive hands-on training with live fires, eight practical skills evaluations and seven written tests to meet the National Fire Protection Association standards," Fire Academy Branch Chief Lenny Busby said. "I am pleased with the recruits and our staff; they have shown extreme commitment to service by completing this challenging and comprehensive program. Our state and their communities will be better served as a result of their efforts."

The following recruits graduated Friday, May 12, 2017:

- Ashley Bouchillon, Aiken Department of Public Safety
- Benjamin Gamble, Pelham – Batesville Fire Department
- Joshua Gokool, U.S. Virgin Islands Port Authority
- Derek Habgood, Jasper County Fire Rescue
- Andrew Johnson, Beaufort Fire Department
- John Mackie III, St. Johns Fire District
- Jonathan Merrywell, Open Enrollment
- Nicholas Olson, St. Johns Fire District
- Taylor Priester, Mount Pleasant Fire Department
- Kelley Sellers, City of Marion Fire Department
- Zachary Williams, St. Johns Fire District
- William Willis, Boiling Springs Fire Department

The following awards were also presented:

**Order of the Maltese – William Willis, Boiling Springs Fire Department**

The Maltese Cross is a firefighter's badge of honor, signifying 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 – John Mackie III, St. Johns Fire District**

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

**Pride of the Battalion – Kelly Sellers, City of Marion 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.