



South Carolina
Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation



141 Monticello Trail
Columbia, SC 29203
Phone: (803) 896-9800
FAX: (803) 896-9856
www.scfa.state.sc.us

South Carolina Fire Academy

Henry D. McMaster
Governor

Emily H. Farr
Director

For Immediate Release: Sept. 24, 2021
Contact: Susan Duncan, Office Manager
S.C. Division of Fire and Life Safety
(803) 896-5790

State Fire Academy Graduates 21 in September

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 21 recruits, Friday, Sept. 24, 2021, 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 Karl Ford, City of Sumter Fire Department.

"This challenging 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."

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. Additionally, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, changes were made to class structure and facilities to promote social distancing and recommended precautions.

"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. 24, 2021:

- Sergio Briceno, Pelham Batesville Fire Department
- Brandon Cowart, Pelham Batesville Fire Department
- Connor Finn, St. John's Fire District
- Joshua Gerde, Lady's Island/ St. Helena Fire District
- Emmanuel Guthary, Dorchester County Fire Rescue
- Logan Hiott, Walterboro Fire Department
- Timothy Holt, St. John's Fire District
- Yoan Jacobo, Cayce Department of Public Safety
- Andrew LaPlace, Virgin Islands Port Authority
- Joseph Lawson, Murrells Inlet-Garden City Fire Department
- Bailey Little, Van Wyck Fire Rescue
- Troops to Firefighters, McCrady Fire and Emergency Services

- Sergio Pena, Virgin Islands Port Authority
- Lucas Richardson, Dorchester County Fire Rescue
- Caleb Riddle, St. John's Fire District
- Rush Riley, Lady's Island/ St. Helena Fire District
- Troops to Firefighters, McCrady Fire and Emergency Services
- Peyton Stelle, City of Sumter Fire Department
- Darian Stokes, City of Sumter Fire Department
- Mya Swan, Dorchester County Fire Rescue
- MaKenna Young, St. Paul's Fire Department

The following awards were also presented:

Order of the Maltese – Joshua Gerde, Lady's Island/ St. Helena Fire District

This award recipient is chosen by the class recruits. 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.

Chief Robert Frick – Joshua Gerde, Lady's Island/ St. Helena Fire District

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

Pride of the Battalion – Timothy Holt, St. John's Fire District

This award recipient is chosen by the instructor staff who worked with the recruits during the eight-week program. The Pride of the Battalion award is given to the recruit who has demonstrated "Leadership, Integrity, Determination, and Good Value."

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.