



South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation  
**South Carolina Fire Academy**  
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**Ken Kerber, Superintendent**

**For Immediate Release:**

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Date: May 15, 2015

**State Fire Academy Graduates 16 in May**

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 16 recruits, Friday, May 15, 2015, from its eight-week firefighter candidate school in Columbia. Keynote speaker was Battalion Chief Joseph Mitchell, Rock Hill Fire Department.

The firefighters from 11 fire departments across the state, and one out-of-country department, 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 May 15, 2015:

- Jeffrey Brazier, Aiken Department of Public Safety
- Ernest Cook, Mt. Pleasant Fire Department
- Jason Cunningham, North Augusta Department of Public Safety
- Kevin Duncan, Mt. Pleasant Fire Department
- Toby Eldred, Beaufort Fire Department
- Osmine Givens, Simpsonville Fire Department
- William Gonzalez, Laurens City Fire Department
- Kyle LaMotta, Virgin Islands Port Authority Airport
- Jordan Leet, Pickens Fire Department
- William Mays, North Augusta Department of Public Safety
- Mark Norris, Glassy Mountain Fire Department
- Eric Roberts, No affiliation
- Gyles Tuckett, Virgin Islands Port Authority Airport
- Brandon Turner, Cayce Department of Public Safety
- Josh Tuten, Walterboro Fire Department
- Benjamin Willard, Columbia Airport Department of Public Safety

The following awards were also presented:

**Order of the Maltese – Toby Eldred, Beaufort 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 – Gyles Tuckett, Virgin Islands Port Authority Airport**

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

**Pride of the Battalion – Osmine Givens, Simpsonville 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.