



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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**State Fire Academy Graduates 17 in September**

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's South Carolina Fire Academy graduated 17 recruits, Friday, Sept. 25, 2015, from its eight-week firefighter candidate school in Columbia. Keynote speaker was Chief Tres Atkinson, Dorchester County Fire Rescue.

The firefighters from nine fire departments across the state 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 Sept. 25, 2015:

- Edward Alejandro, Columbia Fire Department
- Russell Anderson, Corinth-Shiloh Volunteer Fire Department
- Avery Atkinson, Dorchester County Fire Rescue
- Mark Baird, Burton Fire District
- Whitney Brady, Bluffton Township Fire Department
- Brian Brock, Bluffton Township Fire Department
- Jason Carle, Bluffton Township Fire Department
- Michael Causey, Hampton Fire Department
- Joshua Daugherty, Hilton Head Island Fire Rescue
- Andrew De La Cruz, Bluffton Township Fire Department
- Phillip Ellenburg, Hampton Fire Department
- Alexander Farley, Sumter Fire Department
- Connor Hutto, Hampton Fire Department
- Lauro Samaniego, Burton Fire District
- Richard Shell III, Columbia Fire Department
- Travis Wiggins, Columbia Fire Department
- David Wynne, Pine Ridge Fire Department

The following awards were also presented:

**Order of the Maltese – Jason Carle, Bluffton Township 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 – Lauro Samaniego, Burton Fire District**

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

**Pride of the Battalion – Andrew De La Cruz, Bluffton Township 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.