



## COLLETON COUNTY FIRE – RESCUE

To: All Volunteer Personnel  
From: Barry McRoy, Fire-Rescue Director  
Date: 02-August-2010  
Subject: Firefighter Training / Forestry Commission Changes / Budget Issues

There have been changes to the Firefighter Training Standards in our State, which everyone needs to be aware of. During the Firefighter's Conference at Myrtle Beach in June, we were informed of the new interpretation of the Firefighter Training Standards by the State Marshal's Office. This new interpretation has been rumored for several months, so we had personnel attend the meeting(s) to gather information on how it would affect our department. Basically, the description of the SC Fire Academy Course # 1152 has been changed. This course is now titled "Fundamentals of Firefighting" in the current 2011 course catalog. All references to Interior Firefighting and OSHA Basic Firefighter have been removed and a statement advising the course does not provide adequate training sufficient for entry into an Immediate Danger to Life and Health (IDLH) environment has been included. This fact is something Fire Service Administrators Statewide have noted for nearly a decade. The Fire Marshal's Office is basically clarifying that the 1152 course is only the first in a series of classes to prepare a firefighter to enter an IDLH environment and does not provide them with adequate training to do so. It is only one course of many to provide personnel with Firefighter Training, similar to the older 1131 course criteria. That criteria was in a three course format. South Carolina changed to the National Curriculum about 12 years ago and now issues IFSAC (International Fire Service Accreditation Congress) Certificates, which are recognized in many states and other countries. It is a much better system and level of training.

Many members of our department have only taken the 1152 training course and have not completed the Firefighter I or Firefighter II curriculums or the prerequisite courses. These changes will affect those personnel and some firefighters who only have the older 1131 training. This information was presented to the County Administration and the Fire-Rescue Commission in June. We have been directed to conduct the necessary training classes to bring our personnel in line with the National Standards as published by the NFPA (National Fire Protection Association). During the last six weeks, our training division and administration has put together the necessary courses to meet this goal. The SC Fire Academy has also been a great asset in assisting our department in this endeavor. We will begin bringing all of the career personnel to meet the Firefighter II Standard during August and early September in a recruit type school offered during the day on weekdays. This will take approximately five weeks to finish. Once completed, we will be running a similar type program in the evenings starting in late September to accommodate our volunteer personnel.

Any personnel interested in completing this training should contact Captain Feather or Lieutenant Campbell at Station # 19, 538-6849 as soon as possible. Class space is limited. Fire Academy registration forms are required, since the classes are Fire Academy Courses. The Training Division can assist you with the registrations. This training will begin in approximately six weeks, so you should get your registration forms in quickly.

What does this mean to you?

Personnel with the older 1131 certification will be able to meet the current OSHA training requirements if they have also had training in Hazardous Materials Operations, Flammable Liquids (FLAG) and CPR. Many personnel already have this training.

Current course numbers:

- 2722 Hazardous Materials Operations – 24 hours
- 1136 Flammable Liquids and Gas Firefighting – 8 hours
- CPR – 4 hours

Personnel with only 1152 certification will need to take the following courses:

Firefighter I –

- 2722 Hazardous Materials Operations – 24 hours
- 1136 Flammable Liquids and Gas Firefighting – 8 hours
- CPR – 4 hours
- 1153 – Firefighter I - 65 hours

Firefighter II –

- 3330 Auto Extrication – 16 hours
- 1154 – Firefighter II - 44 hours

These classes will be offered at least two nights a week with some weekend training through mid December. Depending on participation, we will try to run additional courses after January.

The Fire Marshal's Office has placed all of the responsibility on the local governing bodies. Since we are not able to cease operations, the Fire-Rescue Commission is allowing members of our department to obtain this training by 30-June-2011. After, this date, persons not meeting the Standard will not be able to enter an IDLH environment. Keep in mind, we have a large number of personnel to get trained and the courses have a limited number of available seats, usually 20 to 25. It is easy to see that this undertaking may take several years.

Rumor Control:

1. The 1152 course is not going away. It is the first step in obtaining Firefighter I. Those individuals who have this course are 95 hours closer to reaching Firefighter I and II.
2. Firefighters who have the older 1131 course, DO NOT have to retake the 1152 course.
3. Fire-Rescue is not "kicking" any volunteer personnel off of the department due to only having 1152 training. As mentioned above, this is the first course of several necessary to reach Firefighter II. It provides the fundamentals and a good background in firefighting, but lacks the in-depth knowledge to perform past the basic level.
4. Officers with only 1152 will not be able to serve as officers. We will not be making any changes in officer requirements until after 30-June-2011. After this date, station officers will need to meet the updated

requirements. Our primary goal at this point is to meet the minimum standards for Firefighters over the next year. After that time, we will be making efforts to meet the Fire Officer standards.

## **FIRE-RESCUE BUDGET**

As with most government agencies, we were not spared the budgetary axe this year. Due to the slow economy Fire-Rescue took major reductions in many essential line items, which will place restrictions on operations for the next fiscal cycle. Additionally, with the on-going training mentioned above, most of our training budget will be exhausted attempting to bring personnel up to Firefighter I and II. I must ask that each of you play a part in reducing our operating costs where possible. This could include keeping station thermostats at higher levels during the summer and lower levels during the winter; turning off non-essential lighting, conserving fuel and taking care of equipment, especially pagers. We go through a great number of pagers due to damage and loss. These items are very expensive and the newer Minitor 5 requires the unit to be shipped back to Motorola for repair. The minimum cost is \$140 just for them to look at it. The cost to replace a lost pager is close to \$500, so please take care of this equipment. Over the past two years, we have removed four older Engines and one older Tender from the fleet due to mechanical issues. To date, these units have not been replaced. This has also placed a burden on our operations, so again please take care of the vehicles, as we are limited in reserve units. Equipment repair was another area that was severely cut. This line item is used to pay for repairs to equipment, from hand tools to mechanical items. Keep in mind that if some piece of equipment is broken, we are going to be limited in our ability to repair it, so be careful with items in the stations and on the vehicles. County Council was gracious to keep the volunteer incentive line item at its previous level, so that was not affected. Council was very supportive of Fire-Rescue, but many cuts were necessary to balance the County budget during the down-turn in the economy. They did succeed in not having a tax increase for the second year in a row, which does help the citizens in many ways. We must do our part to operate within the reduced budget.

## **FIRE ALARM RESPONSES**

Our agency responds to a large number of fire alarms, many of which are false. However, we are seeing an increase in the number of actual fires detected by these automated systems. In many cases, the responses are cancelled shortly after they are dispatched. In recent months, we have experienced a couple of fires that were actively burning after the call was cancelled, one of which resulted in a camper being destroyed and a man receiving injuries. To help reduce the possibility of an undetected fire by untrained civilians, our personnel should respond to the scene and evaluate the situation for the citizen or business. In this way, we can verify that no fire exists. If the call is cancelled, the Engine can respond under non-emergent conditions (No lights or siren).

## **FORESTRY COMMISSION**

If you think our budget is bad, then look at the Forestry Commission's Budget and you will feel better. They took an almost 50% reduction over a few years and lost many employees as did many other state agencies, including the Highway Patrol. The Forestry Commission is now down to 16 tractors in the 8 surrounding counties, which will limit their ability to respond when we need them. Their response times have been increased to 35 minutes, so you should plan accordingly. Additionally, the closest tractor may not be responding to your incident due to their new on-call hours and shift schedules.

Our local Ranger, Mike Crosby, retired in June. His position is not being replaced, meaning we will be sharing a single Ranger with another county. This will greatly limit the Ranger's ability to respond to calls. His work week is still only 40 hours and he now has twice the territory to cover. Kip Terry will be serving Colleton County in this capacity. With the limited personnel, the Forestry Commission has had to implement new procedures. We will have to become accustomed to these and the following procedures should be used.

- Do not request the Forestry Commission until you have arrived on the scene and made an assessment of the fire. If a tractor is needed, you should request one after you have arrived and determined one is needed.
- The Forestry Commission no longer issues permits for people to burn outdoor debris. Citizens are required to contact the recorded message and notify the Forestry of the burn. The recording advises them of current conditions and precautions. Their dispatcher is not aware, nor do they have the ability to monitor this recording. So you don't need to ask for our Dispatchers to check on a burn permit, because they aren't issued any longer. If the fire is a danger, then extinguish it. If the land owner has it under control, you can leave it with them. If you determine a fire line is needed to protect the area or contain the fire, then call for a tractor to plow a line around the fire. When in doubt, put it out.
- The Ranger should only be notified if a fire gets off of the property of origin and damages another person's property. The Ranger may not respond to the scene or he may respond at a later date, so it is not necessary for you to remain on the scene until he arrives, because he may not be responding when you call. In some cases it may be several days before he is able to get there.
- The Forestry Commission does not have jurisdiction within any municipal limits. If the fire is inside a Town or City, then do not call for the Ranger.
- The use of airplanes for fire detection has been stopped. The Forestry Commission now has only two pilots statewide and only part-time pilots in our area. They are used on an on-call basis when there is an active fire and will be called by the Forestry Commission, not the fire department.
- They have asked that we not request more than one tractor to respond. Their procedures will be to send one tractor. If that operator needs assistance, he will request a second tractor and/or additional resources.