



Columbia-Richland Fire Department

2024 Annual Report







WELCOME FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

Hello!

As fire chief of the Columbia-Richland Fire Department it is my pleasure to welcome you to our annual report for the year 2024!

Even after 122 years as an incorporated agency the Columbia-Richland Fire Department is continuing to grow and evolve as we work to meet the needs of our communities and citizens. That constant mission has become even more challenging day by day as our city and county continues to grow.

Despite these changes CRFD and its leadership are continuing to take every step possible to ensure the safety and success of our members. Last year thanks to contributions from our elected leaders we were finally successful in obtaining a second set of turnout gear for all of our firefighters. This investment along with

new equipment at our fire stations will give our members new layers of protection from the dangers of cancer.
Our department also continued to invest in new firetrucks and firefighting equipment and we will continue to do so in the year ahead.

The hard work of our members was also recognized in new ways in 2024. After several years our CRFD Awards Ceremony returned and the event saw more than 80 of our members honored for their outstanding work.

This happened in large part because our members put in the time and the commitment to make the ceremony happen. As fire chief I was incredibly proud to see the success of that project.

During the year CRFD also obtained a 'Fire Safe SC Community' designation for the fifth consecutive year. We were also recognized by Governor McMaster and the South Carolina Center of Excellence in Addiction for our work combating drug overdose cases in our communities. The year concluded with our department feeding more than 500 area households in need during the 'Firefighters Feeding Families Holiday Food Drive.'

I hope you enjoy reading more about our work this past year in the pages of this report.

From answering calls during major fires and hurricanes to putting in support for community projects and fundraisers, our members continued to be here for our citizens in 2024. More importantly even after more than 120 years, our firefighters and civilian employees continued to be motivated by a daily desire to serve others.

Even as the City of Columbia and Richland County continues to change, the vision of our department never will.

Aubrey D. Jenkins
Columbia-Richland Fire Chief

IN REMEMBRANCE



Robert L. Busbee (Photo 1)

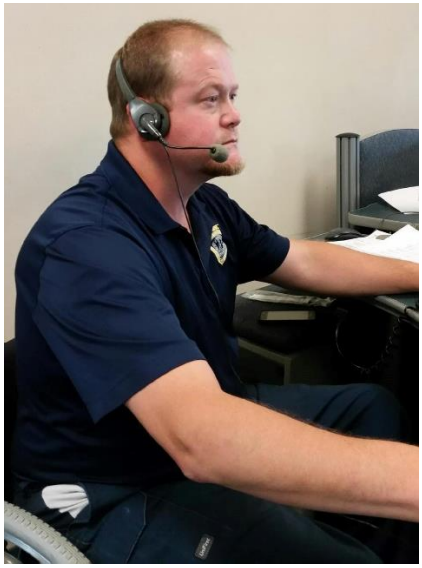
On the early morning of April 4, 2024 the Columbia-Richland Fire Department lost our longtime photographer and loyal friend Robert Leroy Busbee.

Over the course of decades Mr. Busbee, who was known fondly as Buzz and by his department call sign ‘Photo 1,’ recorded the story of CRFD through the lens of his camera. He demonstrated an unwavering commitment and passion for Columbia’s history, its fire service and the dedicated men and women that through the years took the oath to serve here.

From major fires to amazing rescues, the images Mr. Busbee captured truly illustrate the spirit of what it means to be a Columbia firefighter.

Buzz’s photos that line the walls of our fire stations will forever enshrine his legacy here.

More importantly however the lasting impact he has made on generations of our firefighters will stay strong in our hearts.



Chad Lamar

Our department was saddened by the sudden passing of 9-1-1 Telecommunicator Chad Lamar in December of 2024.

Chad was a dedicated member of 9-1-1 and had been serving with the department since 2001. As a dispatcher he worked with our firefighters as they responded to calls, and he was a close friend to many members of our fire family.

He will be sorely missed by all members of the Columbia-Richland Fire Department.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome from Fire Chief…… 2

Department Overview……7

Command Staff & Support Staff…….10-13

Operations Division……14

Major Incidents in 2024……19

Administration & Community……31

Public Information Office ……34

Awards & Recognitions……37

CRFD Community Highlights……44

Professional Services……57

Occupational Health & Safety……61

Fire Prevention……65

Columbia-Richland Fire Department

Our Mission

We save lives and protect property through community risk reduction and professional emergency response to the public we serve.

Our Core Values

- **Community** representing both citizens and employees.
- **Integrity** with professionalism.
- **Service** above self.

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Vision. *Extraordinary people providing extraordinary service. We are committed to excellence in every task we perform. Our department will provide our citizens with world class emergency services that are community driven and financially responsible with unheralded dedication to the safety of our citizens and employees.*

The Columbia-Richland Fire Department (CRFD) is a combination career and volunteer all-hazards department providing a full complement of services covering 772 square miles. These services include emergency response to medical calls, fires, civilian rescues and hazardous material incidents.

Our Fire Prevention Division also performs fire and life safety inspections at various properties in the City of Columbia as well as fire investigations. The division also undertakes community risk reduction and public fire safety education initiatives across Richland County.

CRFD is comprised of five divisions of labor. This includes:

- the Office of the Fire Chief,
- Administration & Community Division,
- Fire Prevention Division,
- Operations, Division and
- Professional Services Division.

The department has more than 482 sworn firefighter positions, 27 full-time civilian employees, and approximately 100 volunteer firefighters. CRFD crews operate from 32 fire stations (20 county and 12 city stations) and four administrative support facilities across Richland County. Fire stations are strategically located to meet the emergency service needs of the residents, businesses, and visitors of the city and county.

As a result of the review of the department's operations, training, and community risk reduction initiatives, CRFD currently has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of a Class 1 in the City of Columbia. In Richland County the department has an Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating of a Class 2.

Area of Coverage: City of Columbia	
City Population:	136,632 *(as of April 2020 Census)*
Population Rank	2nd in South Carolina
ISO Rating	Class I

Area of Coverage: Richland County	
County Population:	416,147 *(as of April 2020 Census)*
Population Rank	2nd in South Carolina
ISO Rating	Class II



COMMAND STAFF



Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins



Assistant Chief Mickey Folsom
(Administration & Community)



Fire Marshal George Adams
(Fire Prevention)



Assistant Chief Christopher Kip
(Professional Services)



Assistant Chief Anthony Holloway
(Operations)



Assistant Chief Albert Owusu
(Health & Safety)



Division Chief Chad Harmon
(Special Operations)

SUPPORT STAFF



Captain James Bostic
(Recruiting Officer)



Mike DeSumma
(Public Information Officer)



Marcas Houtchings
(Fire Communications Officer)



Chief Bengie Leverett
(Assistant Fire Marshal)



Deputy Ariel Thomas
(Fire Education Officer)



Deputy Kenneth Willis
(Fire Investigator)



Captain Richard Wymer
(Volunteer Coordinator)



Shenique Smith
(Executive Assistant)



Rushnee Luckett
(Lead Admin Assistant)



Brittany Tarr
(Training Coordinator)



Virgil Robitzsch
(Fire Analyst Specialist)



Charity Weston
(Lead Admin Assistant)



Chief Michael Driggers
(Chief of Logistics)

OPERATIONS DIVISION

CRFD's Fire Suppression Division operates from 32 strategically located fire stations and is responsible for effective response to all types of emergencies. This includes fires, technical rescues, hazardous material incidents, natural disasters and medical calls across the City of Columbia and Richland County.

Each day the department covers 750 square miles and roughly 390,000 South Carolinians living in Richland County.



STATISTICS

Over the course of 2024 the department responded to 38,546 emergencies. This is a 2 percent increase when compared to the 37,747 that CRFD answered the previous year.

Tragically four fire deaths occurred in four fatal (structure) fires in Richland County. These fatal fires occurred in March, April, May, and December of 2024.

Of our overall calls for the year:

- 60 percent were rescue and emergency medical service-related. This amount is down one percent compared to rescue and EMS calls in 2023.
- 20 percent were false alarm calls.

INCIDENT TYPE		
Incident Series	**Total Number for 2024**	**Percentage for 2024**
Rescue & EMS Incident	23,228	60%
False Alarm & False Call	7,882	20%
Good Intent Call	2,713	7%
Fire (see next chart)	1,688	4.4%
Hazardous Condition (no fire)	1,608	4.2%
Service Call	955	2.5%
Special Incident Type	457	1.2%
Severe Weather & National Disaster	13	0.03%
Overpressure, Rupture, Explosion, Overheat (No Fire)	2	0.01%
TOTAL	**38,546**	

Of the 1,688 fire incidents, the types of fires included:

- **576 structure fires**
- 309 mobile property (vehicle) fires

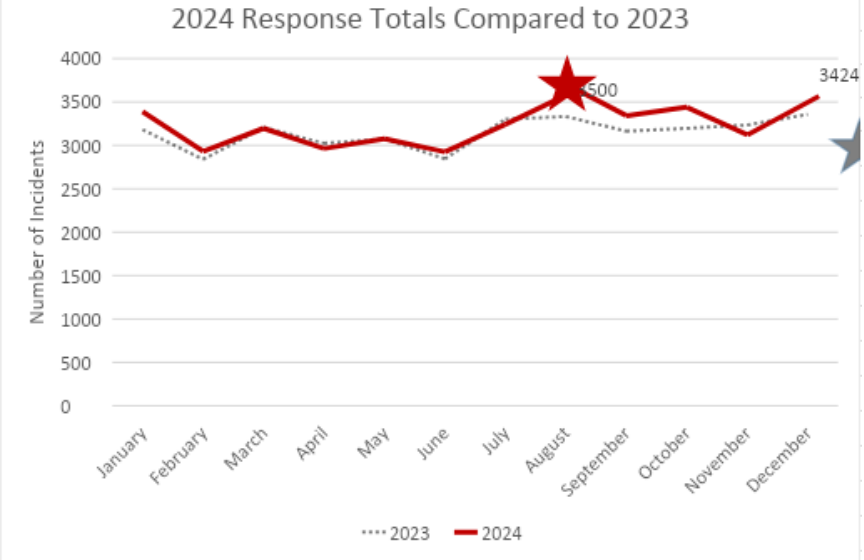
- 660 natural vegetation fires
- 119 outside rubbish fires



It is estimated that in 2024 the total fire loss for areas serviced by our department was more than $22 million. The work of our crews helped save more than $734 million in property values.

When looking at our response totals month by month, the months of August, October, December, January, and September had the highest number of calls. The response totals for those months were also well above the monthly average for the year.

During the year 2023, the number of calls CRFD ran month to month also peaked in late summer and throughout the fall months.



2024 INCIDENT RESPONSES BY STATION

- **CRFD Station 1 had the highest call volume in 2024 with 3,278 calls for service**
- **Station 6 St. Andrews placed second for call volume with 2,408 calls for service**
- **Station 14 in Dentsville placed third for call volume with 2,353 calls for service**

2024 TOP STATIONS FOR INCIDENT RESPONSE	
Station	**Calls for 2024**
Station 1 (Headquarters)	3,278
Station 6 (St. Andrews)	2,408
Station 14 (Dentsville)	2,353
Station 13 (Eau Claire)	2,074
Station 9 (Shandon)	1,906
Station 27 (Killian)	1,843
Station 34 (Elders Pond)	1,761
Station 8 (Atlas Road)	1,702
Station 11 (Belvedere)	1,679
TOTAL	19,004

2024 TOP APPARATUS FOR INCIDENT RESPONSE	
Apparatus	**Calls for 2024**
Engine 1 (Headquarters)	2,900
Ladder 7 (North Columbia)	2,830
Engine 6 (St. Andrews)	2,740
Engine 13 (Eau Claire)	2,515
Engine 4 (Northeast Columbia)	2,460

2024 TOP COUNTY APPARATUS FOR INCIDENT RESPONSE	
Apparatus	**Calls for 2024**
Rescue 3	2,385
Ladder 14	2,293
Engine 14	2,186
Engine 34	2,039
Engine 24	1,742
Engine 32	1,660
Engine 33	1,342
Rescue 2	1,322

MAJOR INCIDENTS IN 2024

2-ALARM FIRE AT COLUMBIA RISING APARTMENTS

In the first week of the new year CRFD 2nd Shift crews responded to a 2-Alarm fire at a commercial facility in northeast Richland County.

Crews responded to Laserform & Machine on Farrow Road shortly after 10:30 Friday morning January 5. Heavy smoke was showing from the back of the property and there was heavy fire on the inside. A second alarm was toned out sending additional units to the scene.
All workers at the facility made it out safely and there were no injuries.

The fire got started in an oven at the plant that is used for treating metal. Part of the building did suffer fire damages.



2-ALARM FIRE AT COLUMBIA RISING APARTMENTS

Roughly 30 people were left displaced after a 2-Alarm fire ripped through a building at the Columbia Rising Apartments off of Johnson Avenue in late January.



CRFD crews responded to the property and arrived to find heavy fire and smoke coming out of a window. The fast progression of the fire prompted officers on scene to call for a second alarm.

The fire was ultimately brought under control and extinguished. All occupants of the building made it out safely but two of them were later transported by EMS due to smoke inhalation. Sixteen units of the building were left damaged by the fire and upwards of 50 firefighters were involved in the operation.

CRFD's fire marshal's office investigated and determined that the fire was caused by electrical wiring in between two units of the building.

2-ALARM FIRE AT BRIARGATE CONDOMINIUMS

Columbia-Richland firefighters working with the Irmo Fire District were successfully able to contain a fast-moving 2-Alarm fire at Briargate Condominiums in February.

Firefighters responded to Old Manor Road inside the property off of Broad River Road just before 4 p.m. on Tuesday February 6.



Upon arrival they found fire moving quickly through one of the condo buildings and its roof. This prompted officers on scene to call for a second alarm — dispatching more companies to the scene. In all over 19 fire units became involved in the operation.

Two occupants of the building were transported by Richland County EMS for injuries and about 20 people were left displaced.

MULTI-HOME FIRE IN BOWDEN VILLAGE

Four homes in the Bowden Village subdivision were left damaged by fire in late February.

CRFD 2nd Shift crews responded to the neighborhood after 4 p.m. on February 26. One home was heavily involved with fire and it was quickly spreading to other properties and the grass surrounding them.
Firefighters were able to rescue two dogs from one home and the fire was ultimately contained. One home was left unlivable and three other properties suffered exposure damages. There were no injuries.





3-ALARM FIRE AT THE HOLLOWS APARTMENTS

On Sunday March 10, 2024 Columbia-Richland fire crews working with the Irmo Fire District were able to contain and stop a fast-moving 3-Alarm fire that ripped through an apartment building.





More than 20 people were left displaced but thankfully no one was injured during the fire at The Hollows apartments on Longcreek Drive. CRFD 3rd Shift crews responded to the scene shortly before 7 p.m. Upon arrival firefighters found heavy fire working through the building

and spreading through the roof. Additional alarms were sounded – dispatching more resources. In all more than 50 firefighters became involved in the operation.

The building suffered extensive damages and the fire left most of the roof burned away. The Red Cross was called in to assist the many occupants that were left displaced.

2-ALARM FIRE IN THE SUMMIT NEIGHBORHOOD

In the early morning hours of June 25, 2024 Columbia-Richland firefighters responded to a massive fire in the Summit neighborhood off of Clemson Road.



Crews were first dispatched to the scene on Gardenhill Drive shortly before 1 a.m. The first units arrived to find one property fully involved with the fire quickly spreading through the house next door. This prompted officers on scene to call for a second alarm — dispatching more resources.

Occupants of all properties involved escaped to safety and there were no injuries. The fire was ultimately brought under control and extinguished. In addition to the two homes that were heavily damaged, one other home also suffered exposure damages due to the high heat.

JULY 4TH INCIDENTS

Over the course of the night on July 4 CRFD firefighters handled 68 calls for service.

That total included six structure fire dispatches, 18 grass fires, six brush fires, five woods fires and four dumpster fires.

Several of the calls were related to fireworks 💥— including one fire that damaged two homes on Fernview Drive. Crews responded to that scene around 12:15 a.m. to find heavy fire in one home and the flames quickly spreading to the home next door.



The fire was brought under control and all occupants made it out safely. Six people total were left displaced and the first home was left a total loss.

FIRE AT RICHLAND FASHION MALL DEMOLITION SITE

CRFD 2nd Shift crews have jumped on a fire that broke out on the site of demolition work at the old Richland Fashion Mall July 10, 2024.

Firefighters responded to the scene off of Forest Drive shortly after 3:30 p.m. to find heavy fire coming from a debris pile on one corner of the building. The fire was extinguished and no one was injured.

Workers on the demolition site were reportedly cutting metal in the old mall when the fire got started.



FIREFIGHTERS INJURED DURING 2-ALARM FIRE ON WEST BELTLINE

Two Columbia-Richland firefighters were injured Saturday night August 17, 2024 while fighting a massive 2-Alarm fire that broke out in a commercial property on W. Beltline Boulevard.

CRFD 1st Shift crews were dispatched to the scene near W. Beltline & Brookland Circle at around 11:40 p.m. Upon arrival they found heavy fire spreading through the interior and roof of the structure. This prompted officers on scene to call for a 2nd Alarm – sending more units.



Minutes after the 2nd Alarm was called a collapse occurred on one side of the building causing the injuries to two CRFD personnel. Both firefighters were quickly rescued and taken from the scene by Richland County EMS.

Firefighter Mario Trejo was rushed to a nearby hospital where he spent weeks receiving treatment for his injuries. He was eventually discharged and over the course of the last eight months has been progressing through his rehabilitative care.

The other injured firefighter, Brice Minick, was released from the hospital and able to return home on Sunday August 18. He currently has returned to active duty with the department.




(CRFD firefighters Mario Trejo & Brice Minick)

HURRICANE HELENE

In late September 2024 Richland County felt numerous impacts from the powerful storm that was Hurricane Helene.

During the roughly 36 hours that the storm moved through our area on September 26 and 27, CRFD crews were dispatched to more than 350 calls for service.




That total included:

- o 30 calls for collapsed structures
- o 49 calls for motor vehicle accidents
- o 10 calls for structure fires
- o 69 calls for power lines arcing or fallen power lines

Heavy rains from Helene brought prolonged periods of flash flooding to Columbia and Richland County on September 26. This caused several incidents where citizens needed to be rescued after their vehicles became stuck in flood waters.

Damage from falling trees were the biggest impact from the storm on September 27 after high winds from the hurricane moved through central South Carolina.

Meanwhile our members were not only at work aiding citizens here in Richland County but also ones in other parts of the Palmetto State.



In advance of the hurricane's landfall members of SC Task Force 5 deployed to Oconee County to help in communities that were already experiencing significant challenges due to the weather.

Our firefighters on the task force spent four days in the upstate performing search and rescue missions in flooded areas. They also assisted with clearing downed trees that had fallen on area homes and roads.

In the aftermath of the storm CRFD worked to notify area communities of the continued potential for flash flooding due to rising levels on the Broad and Congaree rivers. When the rivers crested on September 29 and 30 our crews were mobilized to nearby neighborhoods to monitor flooding continues and assist with evacuations if they became needed.

2-ALARM FIRE ON BLUFF ROAD

In late October a major 2-Alarm fire ripped through a commercial property on Bluff Road.

Firefighters on CRFD 3rd Shift were toned out to the property on the 4500 block of Bluff shortly before 7:30 p.m. Thursday October 24. Fire had moved through the interior of the property and

began showing through the roof. This prompted officers on scene to call for a second alarm - dispatching more units.

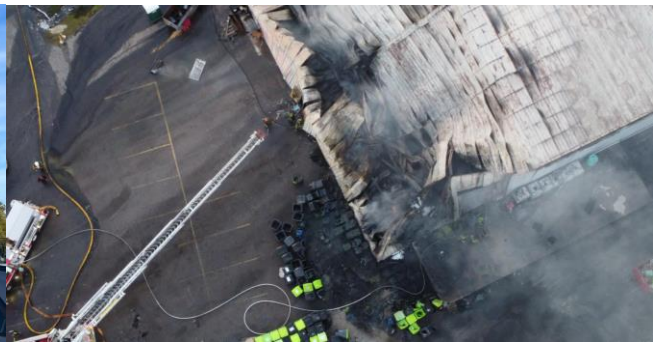
The building was an old convenience store that was vacant. There were no injuries.



2-ALARM FIRE ON AT GFL ENVIRONMENTAL

Our 1st Shift crews responded to a 2-Alarm fire that broke out at a waste disposal facility in Richland County on the afternoon of November 24.





Crews responded to GFL Environmental on the 7800 block of Farrow Road shortly before 3:15 p.m.
The rapid spread of the fire prompted officers on scene to call for a second alarm — dispatching more resources.



There were four workers present at the facility when the fire broke out but no one was injured.

2-ALARM FIRE IN COTTONTOWN

On the morning of December 2 a 2-Alarm fire broke out at a vacant commercial property on the 2200 block of Main Street.

CRFD crews arrived on scene shortly after 5:30 a.m. to find a large amount of fire going on two floors of the building. This prompted officers to call for a second alarm dispatching more resources.

The fire was brought under control and extinguished. There were no injuries.



2-ALARM FIRE AT TROPICAL RIDGE APARTMENTS

Friday night December 6 CRFD 1st Shift crews and the Irmo Fire District responded to a 2-Alarm fire that broke out at Tropical Ridge Apartments off of Stoneridge Drive.







Crews were toned out shortly after 10 p.m. for reports of an apartment fire and immediately called for a second alarm on scene as fire was working through much of the roof of one building.

Sixteen people were left displaced by the incident but there were no injuries.

ADMINISTRATION & COMMUNITY DIVISION

The Administration Division of the Columbia-Richland Fire Department handles many layers of responsibility. This includes the research, developmental oversight and purchase of new equipment for our members. The division works daily to provide supplies and resources in support of all of our departmental operations.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

Space Needs Study

- CRFD is currently undertaking a Space Needs Study that will focus on enhancing our fire stations. The study will seek to:
    - Establish hot, warm and cold zones in stations for contamination control
    - Increase privacy in firefighter dormitories
    - Improve restroom privacy for CRFD personnel
- At this point the Space Needs Study is in the design phase and an architect has been brought in to assist. Timelines for the project are also being developed.

Cancer Prevention Initiatives

- In 2024 CRFD successfully issued a second set of bunker gear to all firefighters – providing them with essential protective equipment. Now each firefighter will have a second set of gear they can use while on shift in case their first set becomes contaminated from fighting a fire.




- Gear extractors have been installed in all fire stations. This will help promote cleaner and safer handling practices for firefighting gear.
- Two gear extractors and gear dryers were installed at our department training grounds on Bluff Road. This will also help promote the proper cleaning of gear with our crews.

Operational Efficiency Improvements

- **MDT Push Enroute Button:** Fire units have adopted the use of the MDT Push Enroute button. This technology enhances precision and helps reduce our radio traffic and streamline our communication when we respond to an incident.
- **The department transitioned to CityWorks in July 2024.** This has helped improve our communications between our hydrant support staff and workers with the Columbia Water Department.
- **Since July of 2024 staff in our Logistics Bureau have tested a total of 7,421 fire hydrants.** This has helped maintain our operational readiness for fires and other emergencies.

Lexipol Acquisition Progress

- Staff in the Administration Division worked diligently to acquire Lexipol – a vital tool for policy management and operational guidance.

CRFD Fleet Modernization

- During 2024 the department replaced six administrative vehicles.

- Two new fire engines were also acquired (Engine 6 & Engine 16) as well as one ladder truck (Ladder 7)



PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
2024 YEAR IN REVIEW





The CRFD Public Information Office acts as a liaison between our agency and the communities that we serve. The department's Public Information Officer communicates information from CRFD in a number of ways. This includes through our many social media platforms and by providing information to numerous media outlets in the Columbia area.

Over the course of the year our PIO provides and coordinates interviews between members of our department and various media outlets. This includes CRFD appearances on local TV and radio stations as well as interviews for area magazines, newspapers and student-run publications at Columbia area colleges and universities. The PIO also manages the department's website, plans CRFD events and handles any direct inquiries from our citizens that many come in.

The purpose of the CRFD Public Information Office is to provide transparency in all affairs of the department with our citizens and aid them in providing community feedback to the department and its leadership.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter (X)	442 posts
Facebook	505 posts
Instagram	467 posts
Nextdoor Neighbor	30 posts

TOTAL
1,444 posts

OTHER NUMBERS

360 requests taken through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

- *Fire Prevention staff alone put 83 hours into researching and fulfilling FOIA requests*

32 press releases issued to the media

238 interviews provided to the media

588 citizen inquiries answered through the department's website and social media platforms

PUBLIC INFORMATION HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

- Facebook followers of CRFD are now at 25,000
- Instagram followers have reached 6,816 and X followers are at 10,700
- The department continued to make revisions and updates to its new website during 2024. Over the course of the year it assisted CRFD with getting the latest information out to our citizens. This included crucial updates on severe weather events that hit our area as well as important fire-safety messaging.
- The Public Information Office assisted with planning the return of the CRFD Awards Ceremony in January. The event saw roughly 80 of our members recognized for their exceptional work serving the community. This included CRFD firefighters who showed incredible valor, bravery and honor to save and protect lives.





AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS DURING 2024

Fire Captain Adam Lostetter – Recognized with the 'First Responder Award' by the Knights of Columbus **(January)**



Fire Captain Chad Alexander, Fire Captain Adam Lostetter, Senior Firefighter John Paparella & Firefighter Marcus Pee – Recognized with the CRFD 'Superior Fitness Award' **(February)**

Training Coordinator Brittany Tarr, SCBA Technician Paul Baust & PPE Repair Tech Kristen Womack – Recognized with the CRFD 'Outstanding Support Staff Award' **(February)**




Fire Education Officer Ariel Thomas & Fire Training Officer Erik McElhenny **–** Recognized with the CRFD 'Educator of the Year Award' **(February)**

Deputy Fire Marshal Kenneth Smith **–** Recognized with the CRFD 'Fire Marshal of the Year Award' **(February)**

Firefighter Eli Presnell **–** Recognized with the CRFD 'Rookie of the Year Award' **(February)**

Senior Firefighter Bryce Machain **–** Recognized with the CRFD 'Ozakie Knotts Senior Firefighter of the Year Award' **(February)**

Engineer Acie Kibler & Engineer Andrew McKinney **–** Recognized with the CRFD 'Timmy Young Engineer of the Year Award' **(February)**

Fire Captain Chad Alexander & Fie Captain Chris Ford **–** Recognized with the CRFD 'Battalion Chief Joe M. Kee Officer of the Year Award' **(February)**

Battalion Chief Jacob Eller & Battalion Chief James Warf **–** Recognized with the CRFD 'William May Leadership Award' **(February)**




Executive Assistant Colleen Foster – Recognized with the CRFD 'Chief's Cross Award' **(February)**

Engineer Matthew Hook – Recognized with the CRFD 'Meritorious Cross Award' **(February)**

Fire Captain Kenneth Warr – Recognized with the CRFD 'Green Cross Award' **(February)**

Rescue Company 1-2nd Shift (Fire Captain Bobby Philips, Senior Firefighter Connor Brown, Senior Firefighter Caleb Jacobs & Firefighter Ryan Sesty) – Recognized with the CRFD 'Formal Company/Division Citation' **(February)**



***Engine Company 14-2nd Shift (Fire Captain Michael Barkley, Engineer Quinn Sanders & Firefighter Samuel Twigger)* –** Recognized with the CRFD 'Formal Company/Division Citation' **(February)**



***Rescue Company 3-2nd Shift (Fire Captain John Moak, Fire Captain Trent Henderson & Senior Firefighter Duncan Oliver)* –** Recognized with the CRFD 'Formal Company/Division Citation' **(February)**

***Engineer Adam Baker, Fire Captain Charles Baxter, Firefighter Adam Beale, Engineer Jesse Bussey, Fire Captain Chris Byrd, Fire Captain Ray Champagne, Firefighter Courtney Clowney, Engineer Justin Epps, Firefighter Akil Finley, Fire Captain Austin Graham, Firefighter Melanie Henderson, Fire Captain Dale Hornsby, Firefighter Michael Jeffers, Senior Firefighter Kevin McDonald, Engineer Josh Moskaitis, Senior Firefighter Kevin O'Brien, Fire Captain Kurt Paschoal, Firefighter Nathan Phillips, Firefighter Khalid Ramsundar, Engineer Jaered Shelton, Senior Firefighter Chatman Smith, Engineer Chad Solomon, Firefighter Stephen Solomon, Firefighter Trever Sulser Jr., Firefighter Anthony Bookman, Senior Firefighter Justin Gallman, Senior Firefighter Cruz Mata, Engineer Willie Pelzer, Firefighter Travis Spigner, Senior Firefighter Len Stokes Jr., Battalion Chief Gregory Walker & Firefighter William Young* –** Recognized with the CRFD 'Phoenix Award' **(February)**

Engineer John Youngblood, Senior Firefighter Braeden Slater & Firefighter Jessie Hardin – Recognized with the CRFD 'Maltese Cross Award' **(February)**

Fire Captain Austin Graham, Fire Captain Randall Headden, Fire Captain David Meier, Engineer David Morgan, Senior Firefighter James Dunbar, Senior Firefighter Chun Pan, Senior Firefighter Jarrel Richburg, Firefighter Desiree Colon, Firefighter Jay Ross, Firefighter Trever Sulser Jr. – Recognized with the CRFD 'Medal of Bravery' **(February)**

Battalion Chief Danny Lowery, Fire Captain Chad Alexander & Engineer Bradley Brown – Recognized with the CRFD 'Medal of Valor' **(February)**





Fire Captain Bobby Philips, Engineer David Fender, Engineer Matthew Hook, Senior Firefighter Connor Brown, Senior Firefighter Ryan Espling, Senior Firefighter Andrew Morris, Senior Firefighter Dante Thompson – Recognized with the CRFD 'Medal of Honor' **(February)**

Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins – Recognized by South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster for 45 years of public service. **(February)**



Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins **–** Recognized by the Columbia City Council for his 45 years of service to the City of Columbia. **(February)**

Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins **–** Recognized by the Richland County Council for 45 years of public service. **(March)**

Fire Captain Chris Ford **–** Recognized as 'Firefighter of the Year' by Richland Post 6 of the American Legion . **(March)**

Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins **–** Recognized by the Richland County Neighborhood Council for 45 years of public service. **(April)**

Battalion Chief Thomas Niles **–** Honored by 'Unity on the Hardwood' for his sponsorship of its youth basketball league. **(April)**



Columbia-Richland Fire Department **–** Honored by South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster and the SC Center of Excellence in Addition for our work responding to drug overdose incidents. Over three years CRFD firefighters helped reverse the effects of drug overdose in 334 incidents by administering the drug naloxone to patients on the scenes of medical emergencies. **(April)**





Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins **–** Recognized by members of the South Carolina General Assembly for 45 years of public service. **(May)**



Columbia-Richland Fire Department **–** Recognized as a 'Fire Safe SC Community' for the fifth straight year by Fire Safe South Carolina. **(June)**

Fire Education Officer Ariel Thomas **–** Honored by the congregation of Eastminster Presbyterian Church with its Servant Leadership Award. **(September)**

The Columbia-Richland Fire Department **–** Recognized by the University of South Carolina during First Responders Night at Williams-Brice Stadium. **(October)**

The Columbia-Richland Fire Department **–** Honored by the Columbia City Council and Richland County Council for Fire Prevention Month. **(October)**

Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins **–** Named Grand Marshal of the Carolina Carillon Holiday Parade **(December)**

CRFD 2024 COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Department Awards Ceremony

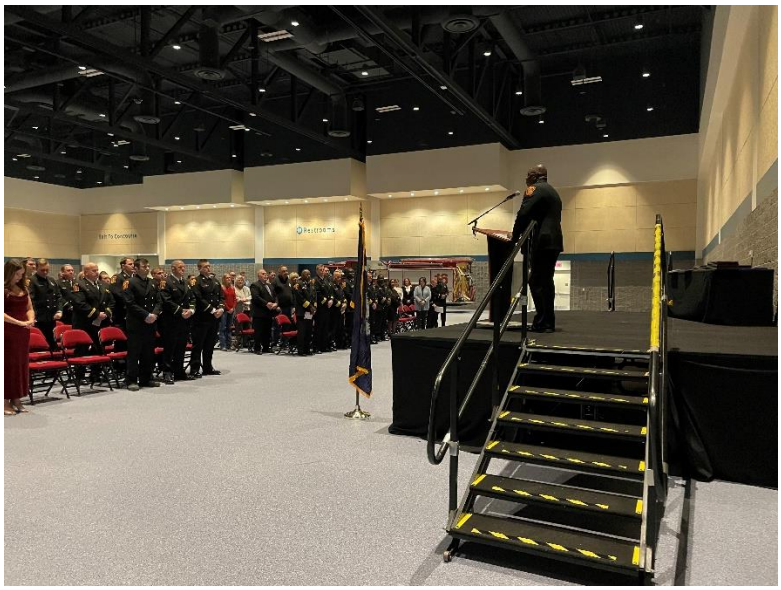
For the first time in several years the Columbia-Richland Fire Department hosted an awards ceremony to recognize exceptional work performed by our members over the course of 2023. Among them were many of our firefighters who demonstrated incredible valor and leadership in the line of duty to save and protect civilian lives.





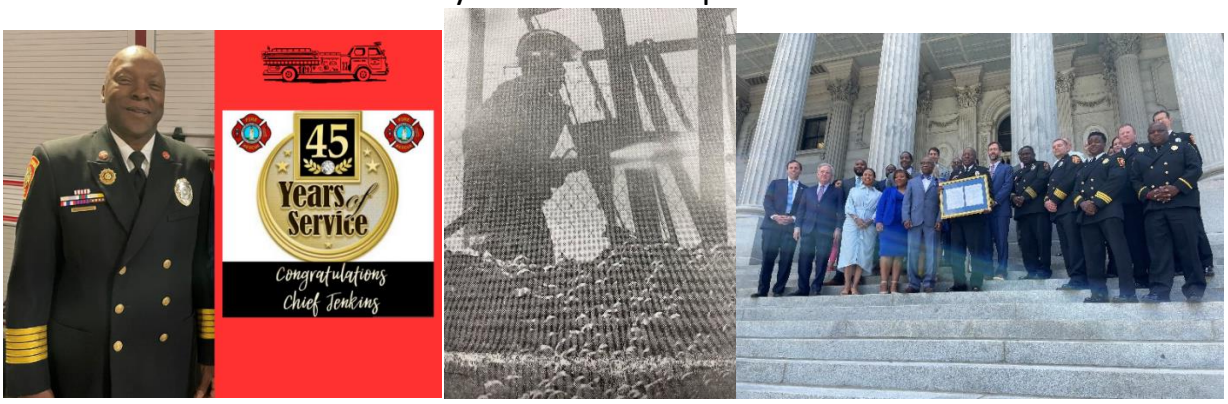
The ceremony was held on the evening of Friday January 19, 2024 and roughly 80 of our personnel were honored. This included 10 firefighters that received the Medal of Bravery, three firefighters that received the Medal of Valor and eight firefighters that received the Medal of Honor.

All award honorees for the event were nominated by members of the Columbia-Richland Fire Department. The department's Awards Committee, which is made up of CRFD personnel, carried out the task of reviewing nominations at the end of 2023 and ultimately selecting which members would receive awards.



45 Years of Service for Fire Chief Jenkins

This year was a big one for Columbia-Richland Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins as he was honored for 45 years of public service to the City of Columbia and Richland County. Chief Jenkins began his career with CRFD in 1979 as a firefighter. Over the course of several decades he rose through our ranks to ultimately become the first African American in history to head our department.



For his years of service Chief Jenkins was recognized by the Columbia City Council, the Richland County Council, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster and members of the state's General Assembly. On April 30 members of the legislature presented him with a concurrent resolution. The resolution was introduced by State Senator Darrell Jackson of Richland County and agreed upon by both the SC House and Senate.

Combating Drug Overdose in Our Communities

In May CRFD's efforts to help in the nation's ongoing opioid crisis was highlighted at the annual SC Governor's Opioid and Addiction Summit.





CRFD was one of several fire departments from across the state to receive honors from Governor Henry McMaster and the South Carolina Center of Excellence in Addiction. In the last three years CRFD firefighters have helped reverse the effects of drug overdose in 334 incidents by administering the drug naloxone to patients on the scenes of medical emergencies.

Helping Teens Living with Sickle Cell Anemia

In June our department hosted a community open house at Station 1 to benefit the James R. Clark Sickle Cell Foundation. Citizens were able to stop by during much of the day to check out the department's firetrucks, meet Columbia-Richland firefighters, explore the fire museum and enjoy food trucks, lawn games and other hands on activities.

The event was held to benefit the James R. Clark Sickle Cell Foundation and area teens who face the daily struggle of living with sickle cell anemia. Guests at the open house were encouraged to donate gift cards and other items that will be distributed in our communities during the holiday season.







The department also supported a second event for the foundation that was held in September.

Motivating Area Youth

For the third summer in a row the department welcomed area teens for our Youth Empowerment Academy. Participants were selected by the Columbia Urban League and spent two weeks at CRFD getting a behind-the-scenes look at their community fire service. The kids also learned valuable life-saving skills they can put to use in their communities as well as strategies for career success.





Twelve teens completed this year's empowerment academy and they were recognized with a graduation ceremony on Friday August 2.

Fifth Year As A 'FireSafe SC Community'

The summer also marked the fifth straight year that the Columbia-Richland Fire Department was recognized as a 'FireSafe South Carolina Community.' The honor given to us by FireSafe South Carolina came in response to our continuing efforts to promote fire safety and education with our citizens during the year 2023.

Over the course of that year CRFD members provided 211 fire safety presentations and installed more than 300 free smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in area homes.



The department was officially recognized for this designation during the annual state Fire-Rescue in Myrtle Beach in June. Fire Captain James Bostic attended to accept the honor on behalf of the department.

CRFD Fire Prevention Parade Marks 25th Year

In October CRFD ushered in activities for National Fire Protection Week 2024 with the annual Fire Prevention Parade and Community Block Party.

To mark its 25th year in the Capital City this year's parade was held in downtown Columbia on Thursday October 3, 2024. Several CRFD firetrucks and ones from outside agencies made their way from Main Street and Calhoun Street to our department headquarters on Laurel Street.





CRFD hosted a block party after the parade that featured free food, games and fire-safety themed fun. Many area citizens and community leaders came out to watch the parade and enjoy the festivities.



Feeding Our Community

More than 500 area households in the Columbia area were aided by this year's 'Firefighters Feeding Families Holiday Food Drive.' The annual campaign was once again a major success thanks to the support of area businesses as well as our elected leaders.



For the second straight year the Columbia-Richland Fire Department was able to provide more than 500 bags of food to area households in need. Thanks to grant support from members of the Richland County Council each household also received meat for their tables this Christmas. That included frozen turkeys, hams and chickens.



All aid was distributed to area citizens on Friday December 20.

OTHER ITEMS OF NOTE

- Students at Carver-Lyon Elementary School who showed the most improvement in their Star testing for math and reading were gifted new bicycles by Fire Chief Jenkins.
- Members of our department participated in several guest reading days at area schools. This included 'Real Men Read' events at Caughman Road Elementary, Carver-Lyon Elementary, H.B. Rhame Elementary and PACE Academy.





- In April the Columbia-Richland Fire Department was once again proud to support the annual Firetruck Pull to benefit Curing Kids Cancer. In all 22 teams took part in this year's competition, which was held on Lady Street in downtown Columbia. The Richland County Sheriff's Department, the Columbia Police Department, Aflac and athletic teams at the University of South Carolina were just a few of the groups to try their luck pulling a 14,000 pound CRFD fire engine down a 500 foot stretch of Lady Street. This year CRFD's team of firefighters recorded the best pull time for a 10-person group and the competition raised more than $21,000 to support pediatric cancer research at Prisma Health Children's Hospital-Midlands.




- CRFD supported public-safety operations for the USC Women's Basketball Championship Parade.

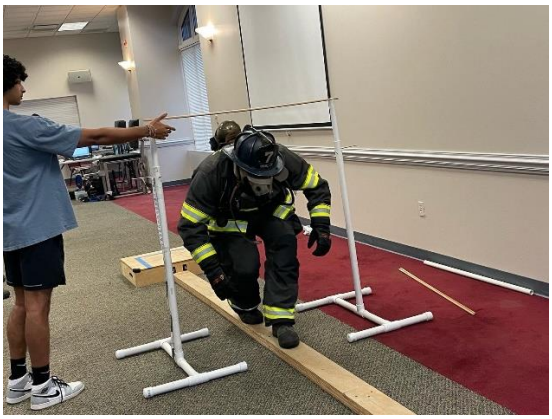


- Officers with the department took part in the annual Firefighter Legislative Day at the South Carolina State House. The event, which is organized by the SC State Firefighters Association, helps us network with state lawmakers and promote legislation to support the South Carolina fire service.
- The department took part in the City of Columbia's career fair in April.
- The department committed resource to the city's annual 'Touch A Truck' event in May.
- CRFD took part in our seasonal competition with the Columbia Police Department and the Richland County Sheriff's Department in the 2024 Battle of the Badges Blood Drive. All three agencies went head to head to

see which one could raise the most pints of blood in support of the American Red Cross of South Carolina.



- In July several of our firefighters took part in a research study focused on Firefighter Injury Prevention out of the University of North Carolina. Over the course of a few days our members helped researchers collect data through a series of tests focused on balance, strength and more.
  The overall goal of the project was to come away with ways to reduce firefighter injuries and advance slip, trip and fall protection.





- Members of our CRFD command staff and fire prevention team were on hand at Carver-Lyon Elementary School to welcome students backs for the first day of class.
- Heads of the department and our administrative support staff assisted Senior Resources with their Community Champions Week for ‘Meals on Wheels.’ Several CRFD members volunteered to drive routes to deliver meals to our area senior citizens and the homebound.



- On 9/11 CRFD members took part in the annual 'Morning of Remembrance' at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. The department also provided resources and manpower in support of the 'Tunnel to Towers 5K Run & Walk' that was held on Friday September 13.
- Fire Chief Aubrey D. Jenkins committed financial support to the Senior Citizens Healthcare & Fun Day Luncheon that was held on September 19 at Seawell's Catering. Chief Jenkins and other members of the department were also on hand at the event to assist with food service.



- Fire Chief Jenkins assisted with serving food at the city's annual Isabel Law Breakfast. All proceeds raised from the event will go to fund breast cancer preventative care treatment at Prisma Health Parkridge hospital.
- The annual Fall Festival at CRFD Station 20 returned after being cancelled in recent years due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. On October 26 volunteer and career members at the station welcomed the community in for an evening of free food, candy, games and other activities.




- Members of the department assisted the City of Columbia in unveiling its new Fitness Court at Greenview Park on October 30. Following an introductory press conference our firefighters and officers with the Columbia Police Department demonstrated sections of the court for the media and guests in attendance.





- The department took part in the annual Veterans Day Parade as well as the Carolina Carillon Holiday Parade in downtown Columbia. Chief Jenkins received the honor of being selected as the grand marshal for the holiday parade.
- Santa Claus hopped aboard our CRFD firetrucks for several rides through area neighborhoods during the holiday season. Parts of Blythewood,

Ballentine, Shandon and downtown Columbia were just a few of the locations visited by Jolly Old St. Nick.



PROFESSIONAL SERVICES DIVISION

CRFD's Professional Services Division oversees staffing levels for the department as well as human resource matters. This includes the recruiting, hiring and promotion of our members.

The division also helps develop departmental policy and oversees the many volunteer firefighters working in our Volunteer Services Bureau.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

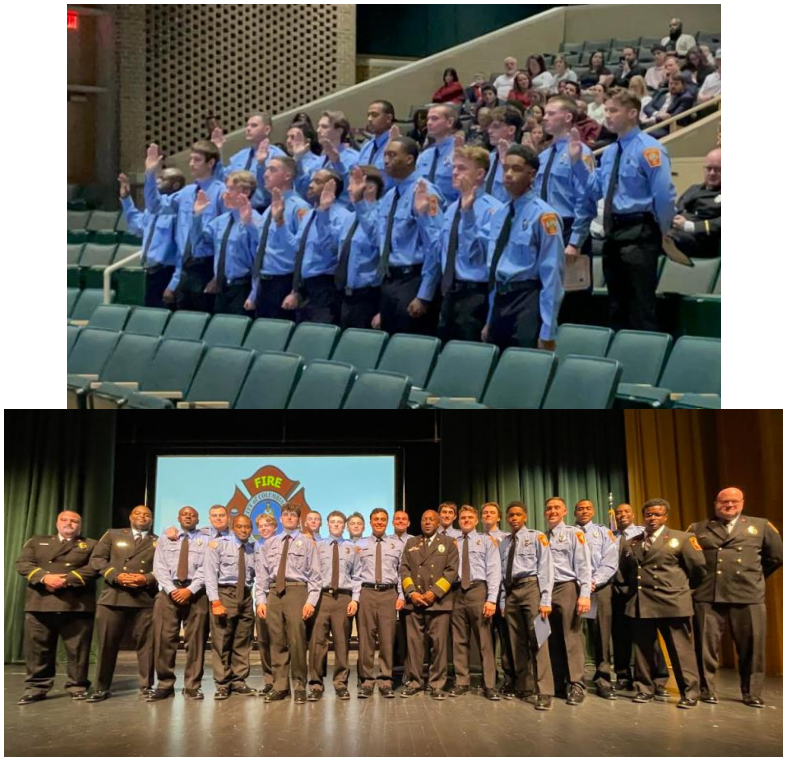
- **CRFD hired a total of 74 employees to fill positions in all four of our internal divisions.**
- The department ended 2024 at 88% staffed. As of the beginning of 2025 we are now 93% staffed.
- The Professional Services Division used new tactics for recruitment and applicant engagement under the Professional Service motto: "Want to come, want to stay."
    - The division also began building a platform for identifying potential candidates from local high schools and college athletic programs.

- During 2024 CRFD hosted two full 18-week firefighter recruit programs. These academies took individuals with little to no experience in the fire service and gave them the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be safe and effective firefighters.





- These programs were augmented with two on-boarding programs for applicants who had previous experience in the fire service. A total of 39 recruits graduated from our programs.
- **By the end of the year a total of 39 recruits graduated from our firefighter training academies.**



- The department also conducted a promotional process in 2024 for the ranks of fire engineer and fire captain.
  - Innovations were included in the process to better ensure the accurate evaluation and selection of candidates.
  - **During the year a total of 60 CRFD members were promoted:**

- 1 Deputy Fire Marshal
- 1 Senior Deputy Fire Marshal
- 11 Fire Captains
- 15 Fie Engineers
- 25 Senior Firefighters
- 1 Fire Training Chief
- 2 Fire Training Officers
- 4 Volunteer Senior Firefighters







- The department has also begun a partnership with Lexipol to review, revise, and rewrite our current standard operations guidelines (SOGs).

Staffing

- Our CRFD staffing officer has been working in close coordination with UKG - the parent company of both our staffing and time-keeping platforms - to assist the city with implementing scheduled changes in UKG products.
- Our staffing officer has also been working to develop a process for automating annual leave requests for suppression personnel.

Volunteer Program

- **CRFD ended the year with 90 volunteer firefighters in our ranks.**
- During 2024:
    - The department received 25 applications for volunteer firefighters.
    - Our volunteer members responded to 2,568 emergencies.
    - Volunteer members staffed fire stations for 11.168 hours.
    - Volunteers participated in 5,882 hours of training.
    - Volunteers instructed in 1,327 hours of training.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY DIVISION

The Division of Occupational Safety & Health works to promote and protect the health and safety of all employees, volunteers, and visitors who participate in activities related to the department's missions.

Introduction

The following is the annual CRFD Health & Safety Division's report on the safety and well-being of our employees. It includes all incidents from January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

Over the course of the year the Health & Safety Division continued to work on the following key actions:

- Review of existing policies that impact the safety and health of employees.
- Addressing the high occurrence of motor vehicle accidents (MVAs) in part by use of the Accident Review Board.
- Educating CRFD personnel on safety management processes.

- Raising awareness of health and safety matters within the department.

Injuries

It is policy of the department to record all incidents and near misses that involve CRFD employees and volunteer firefighters regardless of where they occur. In addition we also provide a consistent pathway for employee injury management and return to full duty status. All CRFD employees are therefore encouraged to report all of the above.

- In 2024, there were 72 work related injuries reported to the Health & Safety Division.
- There has been a significant improvement in reporting near misses and injuries that do not require medical attention.

Employee Health and Wellness

In the area of mental health, Jamine Leslie and CRFD Flow Counselor Amie Lutz from Post Trauma Resources facilitated training for CRFD leadership teams, division chiefs, battalion chiefs and captains. They also conducted a series of mental health training sessions for the entire department in a multi-unit drill (MUD) format.

This past year there was a noted increase in the use of the FLOW program by department personnel and their families.

Injury Statistics for 2024

Category of Injuries	Number of Injuries
Fire ground injuries	18
Injuries sustained in fire apparatus accidents	2
Injuries incurred during medical calls	3
Injuries sustained during RCEMS lifting assistance calls	1
Injuries incurred while working on MVA scenes	3
Injuries sustained during firefighter training	2
Injuries incurred during exercising	2
Injuries sustained by logistics personnel	1
Injuries sustained by fire prevention personnel	1

Miscellaneous injuries	8
Recruit school injuries	31
Injuries reported for documentation only (no medical visit required)	4
TOTAL NUMBER OF INJURIES	**72**
Exposures (Blood-Borne)	1
Exposures (Chemical)	15
Illness reported while on duty	6
Workers compensation claims filed (includes illness, injuries, exposures)	90

Injury Statistics Comparison 2017-2023

Category of Injuries	**Number of Injuries**					
	2018	*2019*	*2021*	*2022*	*2023*	*2024*
Fire ground injuries	23	19	23	16	19	18
Non-fire ground injuries	48	58	53	58	43	72
Workers Compensation claims filed	66	57	73		55	90
Total Number of Injuries	**71**	**77**	**76**	**74**	**62**	**72**

Motor Vehicle Accidents

CRFD MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS IN 2024	
Total number of vehicle accidents	**33**
Number of county vehicle accidents	16
Number of city vehicle accidents	17
Number of accidents while responding to emergencies	4
Accidents while backing up vehicles	5
Number of accidents where CRFD driver was at fault	23

Number of personnel injuries in vehicle accidents	2

- Damage to apparatus – non MVA causes – 5
- Damage caused by apparatus hitting station bay doors/walls/stationary objects – 8
- Damage to apparatus with unknown causes – 0
- Equipment falling from apparatus and damaging other vehicles on roads – 0

FIRE PREVENTION

CRFD's Fire Prevention Division provides oversight of fire inspections, fire investigations, internal affairs investigations and permit administration and plan review for both new construction and existing construction in the City of Columbia.

The prevention division also takes care of staffing for special events, lockbox key assignments, public fire education programs, strategic planning for the department, false alarm abatement and compiling monthly and annual statistical reports.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024





- The Fire Prevention Division executed work during the year that helped CRFD become a 'Fire Safe SC Community' for the fifth straight year.
- CRFD fire prevention staff members inspected all hotels and motels in the City of Columbia.
- Over the course of the year the division hired four new employees.
- Fire Marshal George Adams, Assistant Fire Marshal Bengie Leverett and Fire Investigator Kenneth Willis attended a damaged assessment class hosted by Richland County.
- Fire Marshal Adams took part in an insightful panel discussion hosted by the Apartment Association. This event brought together experts from several fields to discuss important

topics related to fire safety, prevention and emergency preparedness within apartment communities.

- Staff members took part in a number of programs at area schools including 'Real Men Read' days. They also supported the department's annual 'Firefighters Feeding Families Holiday Food Drive.'
- Many members of the division were recognized as Richland One Champs Mentors

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Throughout the course of 2024 staff in the Fire Prevention Division hosted number of programs and campaigns focused on raising awareness and educating the public about fire safety. This included:

- **National Fire Prevention Week (October 6-12, 2024).** The theme of this year's awareness week was promoting the importance of having working smoke alarms.
- **Personalized Engagement.** Fire safety professionals conducted door to door canvassing inspections and one-on-one sessions with area business members. This was undertaken to address specific concerns they had and ensure safety messages were resonating with them.

ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES	
Processed False Alarms	217
False Alarm Letters	64
Pyro Permits	12
Phone Calls Received	1,160

- **False Alarms** – Undesirable false alarms are a recurring problem for CRFD as well as the general public. During 2024 the Fire Prevention Division sent out $16,100 in bills for false fire alarms activations.

  A false fire alarm is the activation of any fire alarm system not caused by heat, smoke or fire that results in a fire department response. A Columbia city ordinance reads that when four false fire alarms occur at one location within a year, a user fee of $100 for service shall be billed to the property owner. Each additional false alarm within the year shall require the billing of an additional $100 fee.

SPECIAL EVENTS



In addition to conducting fire inspections the Fire Prevention Division also provides services for a number of events in the City of Columbia. These events include but are not limited to:

- Football and basketball games for the University of South Carolina
- Events at the Township Auditorium
- Columbia Fireflies baseball games
- Food truck shows
- Various events at the South Carolina State Fairgrounds (Boat Show, Home & Garden Show, etc.)
- City of Columbia's Famously Hot New Year
- Soda City Marketplace
- King Day at the Dome
- And many more!

FIREWORKS



The Fire Prevention Division also inspects fireworks stands and retailers under guidelines set by the South Carolina Board of Pyrotechnic Safety and the SC State Office of the Fire Marshal (OSMF).

A site plan showing separation distances from buildings, combustibles, parking, fuel dispensers and storage of fireworks is required and must comply with NFPA 1124 code sections.

Over the course of the year CRFD deputy fire marshals inspected 29 fireworks stands throughout the City of Columbia. Members of the Fire Prevention Division worked diligently to ensure the safety of fireworks vendors and customers by making sure that stands complied with all regulations.

FOOD TRUCKS



Inspections of food trucks are crucial to ensure the safety of their operators as well as citizens who visit them. These inspections help to mitigate the unique fire risks associated with food trucks and also make sure their operators are complying with all local fire safety regulations.

In 2024 deputy fire marshals conducted thorough inspections of 65 food trucks operating within the city limits.

IROL

IROL stands for Inspection Reports Online. It is a web-based inspection report management system designed for Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), Service Providers (SP), and Property Owners/Occupants (PO).

This system helps streamline the inspection process for fire safety systems (i.e. fire alarms, sprinkler systems, fire pumps, etc.) at area businesses in the City of Columbia.

The system allows us to electronically submit and manage our inspection reports.

The department's goal is to reach a 95% achievement rate with area business on IROL --- reflecting our commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.
As the Fire Prevention Division worked towards this objective, it focused on strategic planning, effective execution, and constant monitoring of progress.

At this point the division has reached an IROL compliance rate of 87.3% with fire inspections.

FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

Fire investigators with the Fire Prevention Division were actively involved in 2024 determining the origin and cause of all structure fires in the city that were deemed suspicious in nature.

During the year the division conducted a total of 47 investigations. These investigations involved working structure fires, vehicle fires and suspicious fires that caused damage to area properties.
The findings were:

- **Incendiary Fires (Arson):** 15 cases (31% of all investigations)
- **Accidental Fires:** 27 cases (57% of all investigations)
- **Undetermined Causes**: 5 cases (10% of all investigations)

These thorough investigations have been crucial in determining the causes of these fires and addressing fire-related incident sin our communities.

FIRE PLAN REVIEW

Plan review is required for all new construction in the City of Columbia. It is also required when additions and most alterations and repairs are made to properties.

Plan review is also required for fire alarm installations, fire hood suppression systems, underground tank installations, and automatic fire sprinkler systems.

During 2024 Fire Prevention staff reviewed:

- **88 site plans**
- **74 sprinkler plans**
- **58 fire alarm plans**
- **10 hood suppression systems**
- **4 encroachments**

- **2 cleaning agents**

FIRE INSPECTIONS



During 2024 the Fire Prevention Division conducted 4,347 total fire and life safety inspections as well as 183 site visits. These inspections were critical in making sure that buildings and properties complied with fire safety codes and regulations – ultimately protecting lives and properties.

Fire prevention inspections are the single, most important non-fire fighting activity performed by CRFD.

2024 FIRE INSPECTIONS	
Type of Inspection	**Annual Number**
Business	1,525
Assembly	789
Mercantile	449
Educational	92
Storage	90
Mobile Food Vendor	65
Institutional	21
Factory Industrial	18

FIRE EDUCATION

Over the past year CRFD'S Fire Public Education Officer (FEO) was dedicated to engaging the community through various fire safety and prevention programs.



These initiatives have been instrumental in educating the public on essential safety practices, such as the importance of having working smoke alarms and practicing fire alarms safe cooking

habits. Our FEO has conducted numerous events and workshops which have reached thousands of our citizens.

During the year 2024 the FEO

- **Conducted 306 home fire safety surveys**
- **Installed 213 smoke alarms for citizens who needed them**
- **Installed 143 CO alarms for citizens who needed them**
- **Installed 101 batteries in CO and smoke alarms**
- **Provided address labels for 79 area homes**
- **Reviewed 35 fire evacuation plans**
- **Provided 160 fire education presentations**
- **Provided 28 virtual fire education presentations**
- **Conducted 28 fire drills**



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Columbia-Richland Fire Department