



NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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New class of reserve firefighters starts classes with Beaufort-Port Royal

With dreams of riding the shiny red fire trucks and battling back flames, a new class of 16 future firefighters started 15 weeks of training Monday with the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department.

The reserve firefighter training typically lasts 10 hours per week with classes on Tuesday nights and Saturday mornings. The training includes two live fire burns and multiple training days in the fire training building.

Over the past several years, the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department has rekindled its reserve firefighter program – what used to be called “volunteer firefighters.”

“We now have ‘reserve firefighters’ because they have the same level of training and basic skills that we require of our entry-level career firefighters,” Beaufort Fire Chief Sammy Negron said. “Our reserves have nearly 100 hours of hands-on training plus hundreds of hours in the books to complete the knowledge requirement for an internationally-recognized firefighter certificate.”

The Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department’s reserve firefighter coordinator, Matthew Bowsher, handles the training, equipment, and scheduling for reserve firefighters.

“Reserve firefighters play a vital role in our department,” Bowsher said. “First, they are able to assist our paid staff during emergencies. The most important asset of any business is its people, and ours are the best.

“Second, our qualified reserve firefighters become our hiring pool. These are trained, qualified folks, who have already proven their dedication to the Beaufort residents we protect. We know that our reserve firefighters are a good fit with our department – it’s a great way to get a foot in the door,” he said.

Over the past three years, the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department has conducted five recruitment drives for reserve firefighters. During an average recruitment drive the department receives about 45 applications; of those, two-thirds typically make it through the screening process to the interview, and 20 are accepted into the training program on average. Men and women are encouraged to participate.

“It’s a tough process, with a high attrition rate, but we have to keep high standards because each firefighter has the potential to be the first person arriving on the scene. They have to be ready to get to work saving lives and property,” said Capt. John Robinson, training and education officer for the department.

Some of the department’s active reserve firefighters have freely given their time for more than 15 years. In the past three years, 11 people who earned the title of Reserve Firefighter with the Beaufort/Port Royal Fire Department have been hired as full-time firefighters by the Beaufort-Port Royal department or another Beaufort County fire agency.

The Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department operates out of three fully-staffed fire stations which are strategically located to minimize response times. A new fire station is under construction on Ribaut Road and will replace an outdated facility in the middle of the Mossy Oaks neighborhood.

The department is a combination fire department in that it utilizes both career/paid firefighters as well as volunteers from the community. The department typically has a roster of 37 uniformed career personnel and about 25 reserve firefighters.

At a minimum, firefighters receive the basic training and qualifications in the following areas:

- NFPA Firefighter II
- Hazardous Materials Operations
- Emergency Medical Technician
- Arson detection for the first responder
- Emergency Vehicle Driver Operations
- Pump Operations
- Automobile Extrication
- L/P Flammable Gas Firefighting
- Basic Rope Rescue.

For more information about the reserve firefighter program or other fire department issues, email the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Department at city-fire@cityofbeaufort.org or call 843-470-3515.

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