



# NEWS RELEASE

**For immediate release**

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## **Beaufort celebrates new fire station, new 75-foot ladder truck to serve city & Port Royal**

With the ceremonial uncoupling of a fire hose, Beaufort and Port Royal leaders today celebrated the opening of a new fire station at 1120 Ribaut Road.

The new fire station replaces the outdated one beside Beaufort Middle School and across from Mossy Oaks Elementary on residential Mossy Oaks Road. Firefighting equipment was moved from the Mossy Oaks facility to the new station.

In November, the city took delivery of a new fire 75-foot ladder truck that is housed at the 1120 Ribaut Road station, incoming Fire Chief Reece Bertholf said. The new vehicle matches the department's fleet with the similar Pierce chassis, he said, and expands on the service provided to the area with Beaufort's first 24/7 manned aerial company.

"This is an important day for the residents and businesses of Beaufort and Port Royal – our firefighting capability is much improved by this new station," Beaufort Mayor Billy Keyserling said.

Helping celebrate the new fire station's opening was retired Beaufort firefighter Stephen Brown – who also helped open the city's Mossy Oaks Fire Station in 1970 and was the department's first African-American professional firefighter.

"It's a pleasure and a privilege to help open this new fire station," Brown said. "We've come a long way from when I opened the Moss Oaks station in 1970."

Until 1970, Beaufort had segregated fire departments, the all-white Washington Fire Company and the Pioneer Fire Company of African-Americans. They merged into the Beaufort Fire Department.

Born and raised in Beaufort, Brown was brought up to serve his community – his dad was a firefighter. Brown’s Pioneer Fire Company badge is displayed with other memorabilia at the Beaufort-Port Royal Fire Headquarters.

Brown joined the Pioneer Fire Company in 1966 and three years later integrated the city’s fire department. On Nov. 27, 1970, he was put in charge of the new Mossy Oaks Fire Station. Within days, he helped save an Allison Road house from burning by using a fire extinguisher to put out an overheated furnace that caught fire, he recalls.

Even though he’s been retired from firefighting since 2001, Brown stays busy – he’s the supervisor of the Lady’s Island and Harbor River swing bridges.

Brown said the new fire station is a huge step forward from what he worked with when he opened the Mossy Oaks facility in 1970.

Retiring Beaufort Fire Chief Sammy Negron said the new Ribaut Road fire station offers:

- Direct access to the main road between Beaufort and Port Royal
- Easy and efficient travel times to the entire coverage area for this fire station
- Excellent geographical positioning to reinforce and enhance the fire insurance ISO 2 rating that helps reduce commercial fire insurance premiums
- Limited impact on neighborhoods, and a greater distance from large schools than the current Mossy Oaks station
- Smooth traffic flow for fire vehicles, including direct access to the rear of the facility (eliminating fire trucks having to back into the bays).

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