

Charleston County News Release

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See photos: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/newsimages/afd.htm>

Awendaw Fire Department Earns Training Grant

Charleston County Government's only fire department takes proactive measures to maintain compliance, promote safety and reduce losses

Charleston County's Awendaw Fire Department has been selected to receive a \$16,275 online training grant.

The TargetSafety - Volunteer Chief Officers Section (VCOS) International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Online Training Grant will enable the entire department to receive one year of online safety and risk management training at no cost.

As a result of the grant, firefighters with the Awendaw Fire Department will be able to utilize 24 different online courses, including courses on:

- Fire
- Confined-space entry
- Burn management
- Radiation safety
- Terrorism
- EMS continuing education
- Driving safety
- Homeland security
- Hazardous materials
- Safety and health
- Human resource topics
- Officer training

"Our firefighters are extremely excited to hear that we've been awarded this prestigious grant," said Mike Rakoske, Chief of the Awendaw Fire Department. "We will gain valuable information that will help the department meet annual Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and refresher training requirements."

Rakoske has been the department's chief for four years, has served as interim chief for two years prior, and has been employed with Charleston County for 10 years overall. Rakoske has just completed the third year of the Executive Fire Officer Program, which is an initiative of the U.S. Fire Administration/National Fire Academy designed to provide extensive training and knowledge to senior officers and others in key leadership roles. The Executive Fire Officer Program spans a four-year period with four core courses; each course is two weeks long.

"We are thankful to firefighters, training officers, and fire chiefs across the U.S. who have made TargetSafety the leader in online firefighter and EMS training," said Bruce Kaechele, President and CEO of TargetSafety, Inc. "This grant initiative is just a small way of thanking the entire fire and EMS family for all that they have done for us. TargetSafety has a long-term commitment to the fire and EMS industry, and we hope to give back even more to them in the future."

TargetSafety's fire industry business unit has been providing training, services and applications designed specifically for the fire and EMS industry since 1999. As a training partner of the National Fire Protection Association, TargetSafety is dedicated to providing fire departments and EMS agencies with a complete solution to maintain compliance, promote safety, reduce losses,

provide certified EMS continuing education hours, and assist with the management and documentation of all firefighter training.

For more information about TargetSafety, visit: www.targetsafety.com/fire.

Visit the Charleston County Web site at www.charlestoncounty.org for news, services and up-to-date information relating to Charleston County Government.

SIDEBAR on the Awendaw Fire Department

- Charleston County created the Awendaw Fire Department on December 31, 1983. Initially, the department had one fire chief, three firefighters, one station and several volunteers, and handled between 200 and 300 calls per year.
- Current staffing is as follows:
 - 1 Fire Chief, Mike Rakoske
 - 3 Battalion Chiefs
 - 3 Lieutenants
 - 18 Firefighters/Engineers
 - 10 Volunteer Firefighters
- The current fleet of fire engines is less than 10 years old, ensuring good durability. Last year the County purchased two new fire engines and one Quint, or ladder truck, which has a pump, hose bed, ground ladders, water tank, and ladder capability.
- The department is a first responding unit for the U.S. Forestry Service for wild fire suppression, when such occurrences are reported by the public.
- The Awendaw Consolidated Fire District was established in July of 2005. This improved fire protection and operations, and expanded fire service to South Santee and Germantown communities, which were previously served by a volunteer fire department.
- The Awendaw Fire District coverage starts near Venning road in Mount Pleasant and continues north to the communities of Germantown and South Santee and stops at the South Santee River at the Charleston County line.
- The department contracts with the Town of Awendaw and the Town of McClellanville to provide service.
- A recent random inspection visit by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) found that the department was in compliance with training requirements. The grant addresses many of the core training subjects required by OSHA annually.
- For the County's Fiscal Year 2007 (July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007), the Awendaw Fire Department responded to 1,085 incidents:
 - 20 fires in structures/dwellings
 - 3 non-dwelling fires
 - 23 total building fires
 - 96 other fires including vehicles, brush and trash
 - 658 rescue/EMS calls
 - 54 false alarms
 - 7 assists to other agencies/departments
 - Five hazardous materials responses
 - 25 responses to other hazardous conditions
 - 217 service calls (install smoke detectors, burn permits, assist elderly in or out of home, etc.)

- Written by Jennie Davis -