



Strategic Plan

Fiscal Years 2027-2031

Mississippi State Fire Academy
A Division of Mississippi Insurance Department

Mike Chaney, Commissioner of Insurance
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1. Mission Statement for State Fire Academy

To serve the Mississippi Fire Service Community and the world by providing quality education and training in fundamental and advanced skills to save lives and property.

"Making a difference when it matters the most!"

Enabling Legislation:

- ***MS Code Annotated 1972, Section 45-11-7 (1) creates the State Fire Academy for the purpose of training and education of persons engaged in municipal, county, and industrial fire protection and designates it as a division of the Insurance Department.***
- ***Section 45-11-7 (4) officially designates the Academy as the agency of the state to conduct training for fire personnel on a statewide basis in which members of all duly constituted fire departments may participate.***
- ***Section 45-11-203 references that the uniform training standards for all paid fire fighters shall consist of the satisfactory completion of a training program administered by the State Fire Academy.***
- ***Section 83-1-39 requires one member of the sheriff's department to be the county fire investigator and to attend training at the State Fire Academy in arson investigation.***

2. Philosophy

The State Fire Academy is committed and responsible for the training and education of statewide personnel engaged in municipal, county, and industrial fire protection and emergency medical services (EMS). The typical student body consists of career, volunteer, and industrial fire personnel. The Academy has four training areas: 1) Firemanship Group 2) Professional Development 3) Special Operations Group and 4) Strategic Operations Advancement Group. These groups target and specialize in the specific needs of the State's fire service training needs. **Appendix A** introduces you to the Fire Academy facility, and **Appendix B** will further explain the functions of the different divisions of the Agency.

The Academy's philosophy is to deliver quality training and instruction to the fire service/emergency response personnel of the State, while adhering to high ethical standards, promoting cooperation among staff with efficiency and integrity in their work while representing the Academy in a professional, courteous, and helpful manner at all times, as well as safeguarding the assets of the State. The Academy is committed to providing excellent service to its customers by providing training based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards as well as specialized courses not addressed by NFPA.

Accreditation

The Academy currently has 49 levels of certification accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC), and 57 levels of certification accredited by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (ProBoard). All of these certifications are based on the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. The majority of our courses are dually accredited which speaks highly for the State of Mississippi and for the students receiving the training. The Agency's Emergency Medical Services courses are tested through the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians.

3. Relevant Statewide Goal and Benchmark

Public Safety and Order

Statewide Goal: To protect the public's safety by providing training to first responders/emergency responders.

The training students receive from the Academy provides them the skills necessary to save lives and property, which will in turn, lower the insurance fire rating which determines the premium rates on business and homeowner's insurance.

Primary Agency Benchmarks:

- Number of students trained
- Number of courses offered
- Number of student hours delivered

4. Overview of State Fire Academy 5 Year Strategic Plan

Over the course of the next five years (2027-2031), the Academy will offer quality and advanced training, develop new courses offerings, and seek additional funding sources like federal, state, and private grants. The following are some larger goals set forth by the Academy's administration:

- ❖ Develop new courses in conjunction with universities that will allow college credit toward a degree program. Currently, we have courses that have been approved by some community colleges for college credit toward a fire science degree and with two on-line universities. These courses also include a bridge for EMS students to transition to community colleges to complete their training and become full-time paramedics. The Academy is also working with MS State University to have course hours transferred into a Bachelor of Applied Sciences.
- ❖ Continue to expand and modify training programs in conjunction with the ever-changing needs of the State's fire services. Continue to look at ways to accommodate the needs of the students and

the fire departments they serve. Whether this is through modifications on course delivery, course offerings, or ongoing changes to the training schedule.

- ❖ The MSFA lacks adequate facilities to provide ADA compliant, male/female restrooms for the thousands of students and visitors that attend the Academy each year. This facility should be in proximity to the live-fire training facilities (heat buildings and live fire training props). For the health and welfare of all firefighters training at the MSFA, the facility will provide a heated and cooled area for showering, laundering clothing and PPE, and lockers for storing personal belongings while training. NFPA standards require protective clothing to be subject to advanced cleaning (decontamination from smoke particulates), whenever exposed to combustible products, such as smoke particulates and fire gases to protect students, instructors, and the public from exposure to contaminated PPE.
- ❖ Due to the age of the facility (50 years old), Agency administration has started the process of determining the long-term viability of the campus's administration building. The cafeteria and kitchen areas need a complete over-haul. Due to foundation issues the back and the front half of the building are separating. The foundation problems have also caused a considerable amount of plumbing issues. All administration duties, the cafeteria, several classrooms, and the Executive Director are all housed in this building, which makes it among the most important buildings on campus.
- ❖ New Training Prop-Flammable Liquids/Propane Pad #6. This training prop will resemble an industrial refining terminal with approximately 20,000 square feet of burning area. Platforms will be elevated to simulate petroleum refining towers and stacks. Currently, we are working with one of our industrial customers that may be able to provide all the supplies needed for this to be constructed.
- ❖ Expand Academy course offerings by developing new courses that will be presented and accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) and ProBoard. As outlined in Appendix A, the Agency has several courses currently accredited by one or both of these organizations which are internationally recognized. Staff will continue to have other courses reviewed for accreditation.
- ❖ Design and construct a search and rescue training facility that simulates the challenges firefighters face while answering calls to residential and multifamily structures. This residential structure training facility will be geared specifically to provide realistic search and rescue scenarios, complimented with features such as bedrooms, hallways, closets, basement, attic space, carport, and many other possibilities/challenges that residential structures present. This facility will include ventilation and forcible entry props. Recent research is showing the increasing need for rapid search and rescue operations due to the significant rate of fire growth. This facility will focus on the search concepts needed to make rescues under defined conditions. This type of facility is different in that it includes realistic obstacles (furnishings) that are not part of our current training arsenal, due to the NFPA standards that restrict the use of combustible furnishings, which can be used during live-fire training. This facility will not provide live fire props, rather it will complement our current training facilities by presenting the students with the challenges of searching for victims within a structure under zero-visibility conditions.

5. Agency External/Internal Assessment

External Factors Include:

- Appropriation funding authority/level of funding
- Local fire departments' level of budget/funding for training
- Legislative statute changes regarding fire personnel training or agency responsibility
- Regulations imposed by the Mississippi Fire Personnel Minimum Standards and Certification Board
- Changes in OSHA/EPA regulations
- Facility and/or staffing limitations
- Federal grant funding availability
- National incidents of natural disasters
- Changes in NFPA Standards
- Training offered by other training facilities, including out of state facilities
- Equipment changes (fire apparatus)
- Spikes in the costs of commodities, which can affect the quantity or quality of live fire training that can be provided
- Technology changes
- Changes to the overall economy

Internal Factors Include:

- Redirection of Agency mission and objectives
- Operational Procedures
- Organizational Structure

Agency's Internal Management System

The State Fire Academy will monitor and evaluate all aspects of its mission and performance to ensure they continue to reflect the ever-changing needs of the fire service and that the targeted outcomes can be tracked and produced. Each manager or supervisor will have input on potential changes to the agency and administration will consider all options that could provide a benefit to the Academy's mission. Academy Instructors will have input regarding the direction of training based on public requests and provide insight on best practices. The Academy currently utilizes all management tools available to state agencies, including the Performance Review Assessment (PRA) and management training through the State Personnel Board, such as the Certified Public Managers certification and the Basic Supervisory Course. The Academy utilizes weekly management briefings to keep all levels of Academy staff updated on goals and opportunities that must be met as well as a monthly meeting to discuss longer term goals. The Academy has several policies in place to control and protect sensitive information, such as the implementation of stringent testing procedures and tight controls of those testing materials. The Academy has a dedicated Public Relations division, which disseminates information to the state fire departments and public. This information is provide through website updates, our management systems, and social media.

The Academy utilizes internal tracking to keep abreast of course participation numbers, which courses have been successful and popular, and which courses are not seeing demand via enrollment. Schedule flexibility will be used to ensure all statewide training needs are being met. Internal control checklists are

included in each course folder which allows each bureau and the admissions office to track the outcome of each course delivery. This information is also recorded in the Academy's registration and management system, ACADIS. The Academy solicits course evaluations by providing each student a course evaluation form which, if returned by the student, stays in the permanent course folder. This assists the Academy's evaluation of the programs presented.

6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies, and Measures by Program for FY 2027 - 2031

PROGRAM 1: Training

GOAL A: To provide quality training and education to first responders/emergency responders in fundamental and advanced skills that save lives and property.

Statutory Duties:

MS Code Annotated Section 45-11-7:

The State Fire Academy was created for the purpose of training and education of persons engaged in municipal, county and industrial fire protection.

The Academy is officially designated as the agency of this state to conduct training for fire personnel on a statewide basis to all duly constituted fire departments.

This code was also amended in the 2020 Legislative Session to make the Academy the authorized training facility for Emergency Medical Services for the Mississippi Fire Services.

MS Code Annotated Section 45-11-203:

Within one year of employment, all paid full time fire fighters shall be certified as completing the mandatory training requirements administered by the State Fire Academy.

MS Code Annotated Section 83-1-39:

Requires one member of the sheriff's department to be the county fire investigator and to attend training at the State Fire Academy in arson investigation.

MS Code Annotated Section 45-11-7(Section 14):

The State Fire Academy is designated as an authorized training program for Emergency Medical Response and Emergency Medical Technician, and is authorized to provide initial and national continued competency program training, including Emergency Medical Responder, Emergency Medical Technician-Basic and Emergency Medical Technician-Advanced. The State Fire Academy shall be limited to a total of one hundred twenty (120) students per year for Emergency Medical Technician-Basic and Emergency Medical Technician-Advanced training; however, no limitation shall apply to the number of Emergency Medical Responder students.

OBJECTIVE A.1: To offer training on a state-wide basis at the lowest possible cost with maximum attendance in each delivery as well as a reasonable pass ratio. The following outcomes are sought:

Outcome: Meet the expected output ratio of courses offered annually at 96%
 Outcome: Meet the expected output ratio of students trained annually at 96%
 Outcome: Meet the expected output ratio of student contract hours at 96%
 Outcome: Maintain a student pass ratio of all course requirements at 90%

A.1.1 STRATEGY:

The Academy sets the course delivery dates for on-campus courses with dormitory capacity, scheduling conflicts, and course demand in mind. Exceptions to this are industrial training and AHA training. There are five weeks per year that training is typically not offered on-campus (holidays). Training is also offered off campus by request of counties/departments of the state. The Academy offers two off campus 12-hour regional trainings to each of the State's 82 counties yearly. Counties/departments may request additional course instruction materials and to have their training officers teach their own counties/departments, with us providing the materials at no cost, and testing being proctored by Academy staff. Grant-funded, specialized courses are offered on a request basis. Industrial courses are specialized and may be taught at the industrial customers' location. We offer student study group sessions on campus and provide adequate student materials and hands-on demonstrations. Reference material and computer equipment (on campus) are also provided for students use.

- Output:
 - Number of Courses Offered Annually (on or off campus)
 - Number of students/emergency responders trained annually
 - Number of student attempted hours annually
- Efficiency:
 - Average cost per student trained (operational cost / target number of students trained):
While some off campus courses are no cost to the sponsoring county/department, the total students trained both on and off campus are used in this calculation.
 - Average cost per student hour (operational cost / target number of attempted hours):
While some off campus courses are no cost to the sponsoring county/department, the total cost per instructional hour is used in this calculation.

➤ Explanatory Measures:

Regarding the courses offered annually, the following are factors to consider:

- We can offer the courses, but cannot mandate that the department's request deliveries or send students to training on campus
- Reduction of federal grant funding
- Local fire departments' level of budget/funding for training
- Changes to the overall economy
- Changing our funding mechanism from special funds to general funds

Regarding number of students trained, the following are factors to consider:

- Reduction of federal grant funding
- Local fire departments' level of budget/funding for training
- Appropriation funding authority/level of funding

- Legislative changes regarding fire personnel training or agency responsibility
- Regulations imposed by the Mississippi Fire Personnel Minimum Standards and Certification Board
- Changes to OSHA/EPA regulations
- Facility limitations
- Staffing limitations
- Federal grant funding availability
- National incidents of terrorism or natural disasters
- Technology changes
- Changes to the overall economy

Regarding the pass ratio of students attending courses and meeting all course requirements, the following are factors to consider.

- Offering accredited courses, we must meet the accreditation criteria for courses offered which include students passing written exams at 70% plus a 70% pass rate for skills examinations. The issue we are seeing is that students with minimal education and/or comprehensive skills are unable to pass the written exams, thereby failing the course.
- Another issue is that the courses offered off-campus are mostly to volunteer emergency responders (which represent 72% of the Mississippi Fire Service) and must be conducted primarily at night due to the volunteers' job responsibilities. The courses are taught from 6-10 PM and if the students do not attend all nights of the course, they do not complete the course successfully. They are only given credit for hours completed, not course completion.

APPENDIX A: Overview of the State Fire Academy

Facility Description:

The State Fire Academy is located just outside the capital city of Jackson in Rankin County, Mississippi. Construction began in 1974 and is located on approximately one hundred and twelve (112) acres. Currently, the agency has the following structures:



Administration Building: The Administration Building houses Executive offices, Administration offices, two classrooms, and a full-service cafeteria. The cafeteria is utilized to serve students two meals a day.



Dorm A: The dormitory currently will sleep seventy-five. An exercise area is located in the dorm for use by students, as well as a recreational area. In 2024, the Dorm received extensive renovations to the ceiling, HVAC, and roof.



Fire Research Building: The Fire Research Building simulates a three-story residential structure with an attic, and a commercial structure with a basement. The building contains over 4,000 square feet of training space and is equipped with five computer-controlled fire/smoke rooms with propane gas fueled fire simulators and a Class A burn room. A four (4) story drill tower is attached to the burn area. The project was completed in November 2006 with authorization by the State Legislature during the 2003 Regular Session of the Mississippi Legislature. During fiscal year 2012, installation of a new fire prop in the Fire Research Building was completed. The prop simulates a couch fire with flashover capabilities, and is computer controlled along with the other four props in the building. Planning has begun to refit the building with new props and a computer operational system. In fiscal year 2025, the Academy began the process of replacing all burn props to keep the building in line with new NFPA standards. This project is funded and looks to be complete during budget year 2026.



Drill Tower: The five-story drill tower provides opportunities for high-rise ladder, rope, and firefighting operations. In addition to this tower, there is a communications tower erected for training high angle rescue purposes.



Original Burn Building: The original Burn Building was constructed in 1974. Since the completion of the new Fire Research Building in 2006, this building was converted into a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) training area and collapse rescue training building. However, thanks to a grant from FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant, the Agency was able to have this building converted back into a working heat/burn building. Completion of this project took place in 2021 calendar year.



Live Fire Pads: The live burn area consists of five large concrete pads as well as one 5,000 square foot airliner fuselage flammable liquid/LP gas burn prop designed specifically to prevent environmental contamination. These training areas include: a fifty-foot flowing fuel fire (LP gas Christmas tree fire); LP gas tank fire; pump seal fire; twenty foot vertical tank fire with exposures; horizontal tank fire with an exposed small tank truck; and a three story evolution simulating a chemical processing plant fire.



Train Derailment Site: The hazardous materials training site consists of a large train derailment simulation with a multitude of different rail cars and liquid petroleum burning

capabilities. A considerable portion of these props were donation by several private entities.



Drafting Lakes: Two lakes are on campus. One is forty feet deep and is utilized for dive rescue training. The other lake is used as a water source for pump testing fire apparatus.



Pad 5: Five aircraft simulators (including Pad 5, above) are used in the instruction of aircraft rescue training. A landing gear simulator is on site along with a side-wall aircraft section used in training. We are recognized by the Federal Aviation Administration as an

approved training site for this region. Students from all over the United States attend these courses for the required annual training to be in compliance with the FAA regulations.



Auditorium: The Fire Education and Safety Auditorium will seat up to 300 people and is used for graduations and large meetings of the fire service. The building underwent renovation by the Bureau of Buildings and was completed in November of 2012.



New Classroom Building: The construction and furnishing of four state of the art classrooms was completed in May of 2012. This project has greatly enhanced our facility. Two of the classrooms are theater style that will seat 50 each, while the other

two classrooms are traditional with seating capacity of 30 each. Each of the classrooms has the latest technology for course instruction and wireless capabilities.



Mobile Driving Simulator: In 2017, the MSFA purchased a mobile driving simulator. This driving simulator travels across the state aiding in the delivery of NFPA 1002 Driver/Operator, and other driving related courses. The simulator was purchased using federal grant funding from FEMA's Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program.



Apparatus Bay: The Apparatus Bay is a multi-use building. It houses the Academy ARRF Crash Truck, the Pierce Pumper as well as offices for a considerable portion of the Academy's Instructor staff. It is also used to teach several 1006 Technical Rescue courses, and 1002 Driver/Operator.



Fire Station/Dormitory B: In late 2020, construction began on the new fire station and dormitory project. This project was completed in late 2023 calendar year and put into operation. This building provides additional dorm, office, and classroom space. It also serves as a large storm shelter thanks to a grant by the MS Emergency Management Agency. The structure and layout of this building was designed to simulate a similar layout of a typical fire department fire station. This was intentionally done for the benefit of the Basic Firefighter 1001 course. By simulating a fire station, the intent was to familiarize new students to life in a fire station. The building also has a fully functional vehicle bay, and houses one of the Academy pumper trucks and the Academy aerial apparatus.



Crash Truck: In fiscal year 2022, Agency purchased a new Airport Rescue Fire Truck, known as a CRASH Truck. Funding for this purchase was provided by the Federal Aviation Administration and the MS Legislature.



Aerial Apparatus: In budget year 2023, the Agency purchased an Aerial Fire Apparatus (Ladder Truck). This purchase was to replace a nearly 30 year old apparatus.



Trench Rescue and Confined Space Rescue: A Trench Rescue and Emergency Shoring Prop was completed during fiscal year 2009. The prop consists of approximately seventy feet of space for practice in emergency shoring techniques and to allow several scenarios for rescue operations. The prop was a generous donation of equipment, labor, and material from the Associated General Contractors of Mississippi-Municipal Contractors Division. The value of the prop is estimated at a quarter of a million dollars. The confined space training site has over 9,000 cubic feet of enclosed area and a forty-five foot tower. The underground area includes vents and drains with several emergency entries/exits. A forty-one by fourteen foot water vessel is dry docked for the instruction of offshore personnel.

Appendix B: Academy Staffing

The Academy operates the facility with sixty-two (62) staff members in the following major areas:

- **Administration and Human Resources**
- **Minimum Standards and Certification Board Administrator**
- **Information Technology and Videography**
- **Building, Maintenance, and Vehicle**
- **Housekeeping**
- **Cafeteria**
- **Public Relations**
- **Firemanship Group**
- **Professional Development Group**
- **Special Operations Group**
- **Strategic Operations & Advancement Group**

The Office of Administrative Services is responsible for the day to day finances of the Academy, procurement, student training records, and course registration. Human Resources is responsible for staff recruitment, staff training and all employee benefits. The Secretary for the Minimum Standards Board is responsible for all functions related to Board activities. Informational Technology is responsible for all computer systems for staff and student use, custom programming for staff, networking, servers, and internet connections. Maintenance is responsible for maintaining and repairing all agency buildings, equipment, and training props as well as all vehicles owned by the Academy, including Fire Apparatus. Housekeeping is responsible for maintaining the cleanliness of all the buildings, checking students into the dormitory, cleaning rooms, and assisting in grounds keeping when necessary. The Cafeteria Staff is responsible for serving two meals a day to students, breakfast and lunch. All these areas are housed in the **Academy's Support Services**.

The Public Relations area prepares/designs all public documents including the course catalog and news releases. In addition, informative tours are given to all ages, from junior high school to senior citizen groups. The tours consist of information the Academy provides relating to fire safety, discussing fire fighters' duties, and touring the campus, including all fire apparatus and training props. PR is also responsible for issuing all info to external entities as well as the Academy's social media.

The Academy has its own Honor Guard, consisting of ten staff members. The Honor Guard attends and/or performs services when requested for funerals of members of the fire service or opening ceremonies for meetings.

The agency Executive Director and thirty one (31) Instructional staff members comprise the members of the State Emergency Response Team for immediate response to any disasters within the State of Mississippi. They were one of the first response teams at ground zero after Hurricane Katrina hit.

The Firemanship Group is responsible for the fundamental core curriculum of a firefighter's career. This group manages the Basic Firefighter Recruit program as well as other core programs firefighters attain as they continue through their careers such as Driver Operator. The Firemanship Group also provides

advanced and technical firefighter training such as the Airport Firefighter Program, Engine Company Operations Program, and Truck Company Operations Program. The Firemanship Group strives to provide firefighters with fundamental and advanced firefighter training.

The Professional Development Group is responsible for officer development and career development. This group provides leadership training to firefighters as they prepare to become company officers, managing officers, and even executive officers. The Professional Development Group also provides technical training in specialized areas such as inspections and investigations. The Professional Development Group strives to develop future fire service leaders.

The Special Operations Group is responsible for technical rescue, hazardous materials. This group provides advanced training in many disciplines to prepare firefighters for a vast array of situations they might encounter. The Special Operations Group also provides training for industrial firefighters including both rescue and firefighter training. The Special Operations Group strives to develop all-hazards responders to effectively mitigate many complex situations rescuers encounter.

Lastly, The Strategic Operations and Advancement group is primarily responsible for agency strategic planning, compliance, and accreditation, as well as Emergency Medical Services. This group provides oversight on all IFSAC and Proboard accredited programs. The Strategic Operations and Advancement Group also provides guidance on strategic planning and future program development. This group manages Public Relations for the agency which includes campus tours, campus visits, and marketing programs. There is currently an Academy Store located in the Administrative Building that falls under Strategic Operations and Advancement. The Emergency Medical Programs including certification courses as well as continuing education courses in preparation for the National Registry.