

Emergency Response: Fall 2023 Update

South Carolina State Fire's Emergency Response programs consist of **Firefighter Mobilization** and the **Emergency Response Task Force System**. State Fire has direct responsibility for two of the System's teams, SC-Task Force 1 and SC-HART. SC Law (§23-49-50) provides the authority and responsibility of the SC Firefighter Mobilization Oversight Committee to establish the SC Firefighter Mobilization and Emergency Response Task Force Plan. The State Fire Marshal serves as Chair of the SC Firefighter Mobilization Oversight Committee and has the statutory responsibility for the execution of the Firefighter Mobilization and Emergency Response Task Force plans.

The SC Emergency Response Task Force is organized as a collection of state and regional resources, consisting of six Urban Search and Rescue teams, strategically located throughout the state. In 2022, each team received non-recurring funding for equipment and training from the General Assembly. An ERTF Working Group was created, made up of the five regional teams and SC- Task Force 1. This forms the SC Emergency Response Task Force (ERTF) System, within the Firefighter Mobilization Plan. During its September 2023 meeting, the SC Firefighter Mobilization Oversight Committee tasked the SC Statewide Firefighter Mobilization Coordinator with spearheading the development of the ERTF Plan, with assistance from the ERTF Working Group.



Firefighter Mobilization

Firefighter Mobilization is able to assist any fire department in the state with resources if an event such as a fire, rescue, terrorism attack, hazardous materials event, or natural disaster occurs that overwhelms the resources of the local department. Firefighter Mobilization does not take the place of any local mutual aid agreements, but only enhances them by providing a force multiplier through statewide aid. Firefighter Mobilization can be implemented at any time at the request of an incident commander or can be implemented

by the State Fire Marshal as part of the SC Emergency Operations Plan through ESF 4 and 9 to possible conditions that could impact the state. Activation does not take a declaration of a State of Emergency by the Governor.

The new Firefighter Mobilization Palmetto Notification System will be released Sept. 29, 2023. This system is part of Palmetto EOC and will not require any additional passwords or inventory management.

There have been three recent mobilizations. Firefighter Mobilization provided support for a line of duty death, warehouse fire, and church fire.

SC-Task Force 1 (SC-TF1)

SC-TF1 is a multi-disciplinary, all-hazards, Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) team based on the NIMS/FEMA Type I model. SC-TF1 is capable of responding to assist local agencies, upon request, both in state and nationally. Some examples of incidents are man-made or natural disasters including earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, structural collapses, flooding, terrorist events or wide area search. SC-TF1 is comprised of highly motivated members of Fire, EMS, and other emergency response agencies across our State. These personnel are trained to be specialists in their respective disciplines. The team currently has 129 members, with projected growth to 210 members in order to fulfill the goals outlined in the strategic plan. Recruiting for specialized members in HazMat, Logistics, Medical, Planning, and Communications began in late summer to fill vacancies in these areas. Team members are currently visiting each of the regions throughout the state to help with this campaign.



Program Manager Shon Hamilton retired Aug. 31 after spending 15 years as a member of SC-TF1 and the last six years as the Program Manager for SC-TF1 and SC-HART. Brian “Archie” Archibald was hired Sept. 18 as the new Program Manager. He has been a member of SC-TF1 for 19 years, most recently serving as a Task Force Leader (TFL), and Rescue Team Leader (RTL) on SC-HART.

The team has had three recent deployments: Hurricanes Ian and Idalia, and the partial collapse of a Columbia apartment building because of a fire.

SC-TF1 will conduct team training Oct. 10-12, 2023, on the SC State Fire campus. Exercise scenarios will be centered on a three-story parking garage collapse containing 15 vehicles.



South Carolina-Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (SC-HART)

Created in 2009, SC-HART is one of only a few states with a Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (HART) or Helicopter Search and Rescue Team (HSART) program of its kind. It is a collaborative effort between SC-TF1 and the Army National Guard Aviation Unit. SC-HART has all hazards capabilities, and its members are trained professional rescuers from SC-TF1, joined by highly-trained pilots and crew members from the Army National Guard. SC-HART is capable of performing helicopter rescue using the UH-60 Blackhawk and LUH 72 Lakota, and responds 24/7.

SC-HART recently completed two successful training exercises. Quarterly training was held in Charleston. The annual Tri-County Exercise was conducted in Oconee, Pickens, and Greenville counties.

One recent notable SC-HART event was the first rescue in the world on a Lakota Bravo model. This was accomplished at Yellow Branch Falls in Oconee County.

**For additional information on the Emergency Response Task Force,
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