



MARCH 16, 2023 | ISSUE 42

Rattle Watch

Proudly informing South Carolina firefighters.



Let's learn together

Does your fire department reflect the community you serve? Do you know how to talk to people who have different beliefs, who grew up different than you?

If your answer to any of the questions above is 'no,' *we want to help you.*

Let's learn how to talk about our differences. Join us in the Denny on March 31 at 10 a.m. for The Human Piece of the Puzzle–Humanistic Approaches to Fire Service Diversity Summit. Lunch is on us, just [let us know](#) you're coming.

Association event



Congratulations, Officer Academy class 23-01

Twenty fire officers from across the state participated in and graduated from **Fire Officer Academy: The Company Officer** last week, March 5-10. The program tests students in ways they haven't been tested since they joined the fire service, leaving a lasting impression on the trajectory of their career and the camaraderie between students creates a lifelong family. We're proud of the work this group put in and we're excited to see how they help mold the future of the Officer Academy.

[Take a look](#) at what they were up to last week.

P.S. Applications for OA class 23-02 open in early June.



Register your team for the Foundation Golf Tournament

The **South Carolina Firefighters Foundation's** annual golf tournament is on Wednesday, June 14 at Legends Golf Resort, Parkland Course in Myrtle Beach.

The event is a great day of fun, camaraderie, friendly competition, and you'll even have the chance to win some awesome prizes. All proceeds from the tournament are funneled back into the South Carolina fire service community.

Get your team together and [register](#).



The future of Palmetto 800

One of the biggest talking points at the upcoming Legislative Day event is **Palmetto 800**, the interoperability radio system that allows for public safety agencies to communicate across county lines. The system—used during mutual aid, natural disasters, mass shootings, train derailments, just to name a few—is in significant need from the legislature.

Palmetto 800 was born out of the aftermath of September 11, 2001, when public safety officials recognized the need to prepare for a terrorism incident and the critical need to communicate between agencies. The inability to talk to each other was a red flag that signaled need for immediate change for an effective response.

In the years following 2001, 800-megahertz technology, which existed previously but never in the world of public safety, was introduced to first responders. Some states, like neighboring North Carolina, built their own radio system; South Carolina elected to contract the work to Motorola, and the Palmetto 800 system was formed.

Towers were built under parameters that 95% of the state would be covered through a mobile radio, or car radio, transmission. But things have changed since the mid-2000s, and the modern first responder must have the ability to communicate with a portable, or handheld, radio that is compatible with the Palmetto 800 system. The strength of transmission has weakened and includes a lot of dead space in counties throughout the state.

Over time, counties have built towers, meaning the local taxpayer has taken the brunt of the cost. It was never intended for local taxpayers to shoulder the cost.

Towers, signal strength, and the type of radio aren't the only barriers

agencies face with Palmetto 800; there's also a user fee per radio, and the fee structure is based on the number of towers you want access to. Prior to the 2008 recession, the legislature agreed to pay 33% of the user fees; but when budgets were tightened, that percentage was slashed to roughly 5%.

Palmetto 800 hasn't had significant appropriation since.

Now we are at a crossroads. Agencies are being priced out of Palmetto 800, realizing they cannot afford to build more towers to increase signal strength *and* pay the user fees. But without Palmetto 800, we risk reverting our public safety communications to pre-9/11 ineffectiveness.

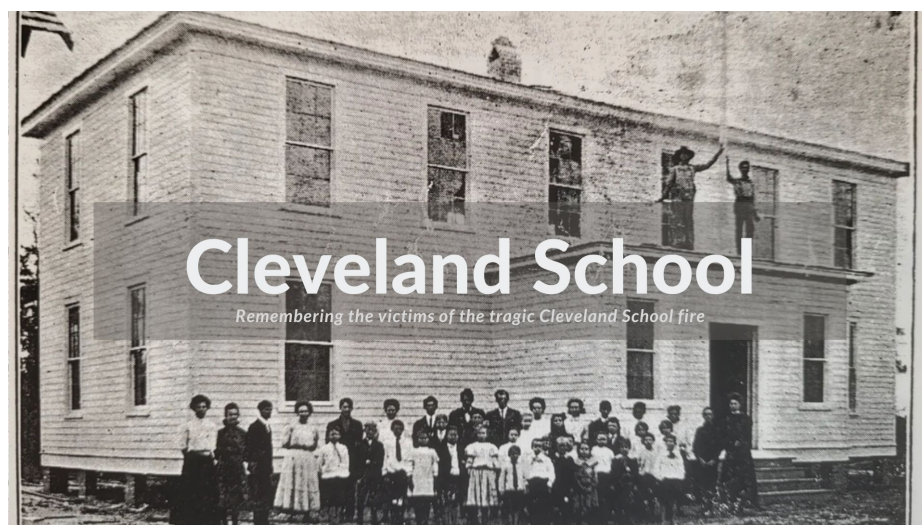
To achieve the desired 95% portable coverage, 50 additional towers need to be built at a cost of \$2,000,000 per tower, a total cost of \$100,000,000. Total user fee coverage equates to \$24,000,000 per year. It will cost \$124,000,000 to repair, modernize, and maintain Palmetto 800.

As more and more agencies seek alternative and cheaper communications systems, the further away a fully functional interoperability radio system becomes.

Please talk to your legislator about the importance of funding Palmetto 800 when we convene for [Legislative Day](#) on April 5.



Community events

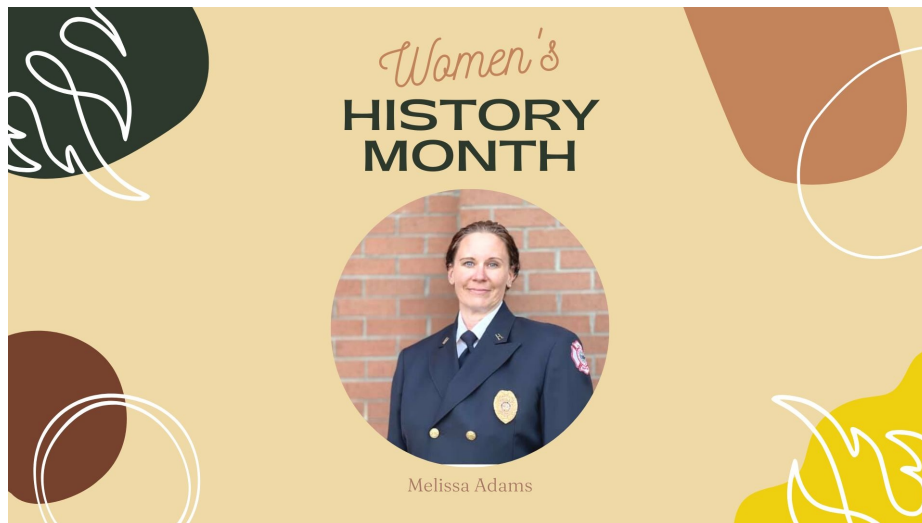


Cleveland School Fire: 100 years later

The Cleveland School, located just outside of Camden, tragically burned in May of 1923 during the end of the year play. *Entire families were lost.* The tragedy changed fire and life safety in South Carolina and across the nation.

The 100th anniversary of the event is on May 17, 2023. A recognition service will be held at the site of the school at 10 a.m. on May 17. A brief seminar will be presented the evening before, on May 16 at 6 p.m. at 212 Broad St. in Camden.

Please kindly [RSVP](#) if you plan to attend either or both events.



Women's History Month spotlight: Melissa Adams

Melissa Adams is a lot of things to a lot of people. She's a wife, mother, friend, education specialist at the Fire Academy, and approaching her twelfth year as a captain at the Ridgeway Station in the Fairfield County Fire Service. She's naturally curious and inquisitive, and when her husband, Glenn Adams, was approached after church to be a driver, her interest in the fire service was sparked.

Glenn, now Ridgeway Assistant Chief, enrolled in 1152 and Melissa would ask what he'd learned. When the tones went off in the middle of the night, she would travel with him on the dark country roads so he wouldn't be by himself. They were—and still are—a team.

Melissa has a passion for making sure students understand concepts and skills because she knows the difficulty some have with school.

"I didn't have the patience from teachers to help me learn completely, I learned enough to test," Melissa said. She has a deep understanding of the importance of patience when teaching, and her heart is with the volunteers who may need a few more reps or a different approach when it comes to a skill.

She draws inspiration from the late Skip Hannon, the beloved instructor who taught her 1152 and whom she credits getting her love for apparatus pumping from, and emulates his patience and supportive persona when she's teaching.

"I know exactly how I want to instruct and teach," Melissa continued, "I want to take the time with the volunteers who have been left behind and tossed aside because they don't fit what the station wants to be seen as. If it takes more than one time to do this teaching, I want to spend multiple times with that person. I don't want them to be swept under the rug."

Melissa is one of few women in the Fairfield County Fire Service and is in it

for the long run. Her advice for women considering joining the fire service is simple: "Do not allow anyone to stop you."



The Jive special episode is on May 18

The Jive, the monthly Officers Section video podcast, is open to the public for the first time ever on May 18. [Fire-Rescue](#) speakers **Sabrina Yaw** and **Amanda Moore** are joining hosts **Will Vaigneur** and **Chris Kip** to talk all things fire family to give a preview of their classes at conference. We'll be going Live on the Association's [Facebook page](#) on **May 18 at 7:30 p.m.** and hope you join us.

News from the State House



Legislative Update

Each week when the legislature is in session, Association lobbyists Stewart, Konduros, and Associates provide an update on legislation that impacts the fire service. All Legislative Updates for current session are posted on our [website](#).

Today we're looking at Senate Bill 375 Emergency Scene Management.

S 375 (Emergency Scene Management) By Grooms, Verdin and Senn. Provides that a driver shall ensure that his vehicle is kept under control when approaching or passing a motor vehicle stopped on or near the right

of way of a street or highway; to provide that a person driving a vehicle approaching a stationary vehicle displaying flashing hazard lights shall slow down, yield the right of way, and maintain a safe speed if changing lanes is unsafe; and to provide penalties. This bill was passed by the Senate and sent to the House where it was referred to House Judiciary.

Was this email forwarded to you? Subscribe to receive Rattle Watch every Thursday.



- [March 31 - Humanistic Approaches to Fire Service Diversity Summit](#)
- [April 5 - Legislative Day](#)
- [April 20 - 1% Regional Training Class: Berkeley County](#)
- [May 16 + 17 - Cleveland School Fire Remembrance](#)
- [June 14 - Foundation Golf Tournament](#)
- [June 14-17 - Fire-Rescue](#)
- October 1-6 - Fire Officer Academy: The Company Officer class 23-02
- [October 17 - 1% Regional Training Class: York County](#)



South Carolina State Firefighters' Association

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