

Chief Barry Mcroy – Colleton County Fire and Rescue  
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A resident of Colleton County since 1972, Fire Chief Barry McRoy has served the people of Colleton County for nearly thirty years as a member of the Colleton County Fire and Rescue Department.

Chief McRoy aspired to have a career as a firefighter from an early age. After graduating from school, he decided to get a jumpstart on achieving his goal. He first moved to Savannah, then to Atlanta, where he picked up valuable experience in fire service that would serve as the basis of his career as a firefighter.

After returning to Colleton County in 1990 and seeing the archaic state of fire service across the county, McRoy knew that fundamental changes would need to be made in the administration and operations of the fire department's functions to bring it into the modern world of fire protection. At the time of his return to Colleton, the county-wide fire service was nonexistent. Rather, each township had to rely on their own small volunteer services made up of a few dedicated residents. While this proved sufficient at one point in time, this system quickly became inadequate as the area grew in population.

He says, "Many times what would happen is someone would try to report a fire, and they would open the phonebook to a page with all the volunteers' phone numbers on it and just start calling the numbers until they would get an answer. This was before cell phones and modern communication systems, so once they got on the phone with one volunteer, they would then muster up the other firefighters, get in the truck, and go. Now by that point, many structures would have already burned down."

The lack of a unified fire service led to inadequate protection for the people of Colleton County, but there was also a lack of training and equipment standardization among the various fire departments. However, these problems quickly began to be resolved with the formation of the Colleton County Fire Department in the mid-1990's. Once the Colleton County Council voted to create the county-wide fire department, a new system had to be built from the ground up.

In an orchestrated effort by the community and members of the various fire departments around the county, infrastructure was laid to help merge all the various fire departments into one service. Despite the immense size of this undertaking, the benefits would pale in comparison to the costs, and on January 1, 1994 Colleton County Fire Department (CCFD) was officially launched and immediately made huge strides towards the level of care it can provide today.

Following its inception, the newly minted CCFD set to work assigning street names to every road in the county so each building could have a unique address for the dispatchers to reference. The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) was soon adopted as

the national standard for firefighter certification, and in 2004 the county voted to merge the ambulance service with the existing fire department to create Colleton County Fire & Rescue Service.

Today, Colleton County Fire & Rescue has continued to grow to its fullest potential. They have Colleton County instructors who have been certified by the South Carolina Fire Academy to teach classes on-site.

Chief McRoy also takes great pride in the fact that all Colleton County firefighters are dual-certified to work on ambulances.

He says, "All of our firefighters are cross-trained to be at least the level of EMT, and we try to get all of our career staff to at least the level of paramedic. We do this because the county operates the ambulances-not the hospital, and not a private company. So we need to make sure everyone is trained to the standard of care that we want to provide, especially since over 80% of our calls are medical calls."

Under McRoy's leadership, Colleton County Fire & Rescue has also been able to form their own special units for responding to special calls around the county. They currently operate an aquatic rescue and dive team, a high and low angle rescue squad for rescues high above or below the ground, and a type 1 HAZMAT team. All of these services help set Colleton County apart through their ISO class 3 rating, which is used to determine the responsiveness and effectiveness of an area's fire service. This rating is then used by insurance companies to gauge whether or not an area is at risk. Since Colleton has a rating of 3, its fire protection and mitigation services are considered to be well above standard for a rural community.

Colleton County is also one of the few rural counties in South Carolina to operate a rescue MedEvac helicopter, called C.A.R.E. flight, in their fleet of vehicles. Although the company that owns the helicopter itself staffs its own pilots, the flight paramedics aboard each C.A.R.E. flight are Colleton County Fire & Rescue paramedics. The MedEvac helicopter program has also driven the standard of care higher for each of the nine regular ambulances operated in Colleton County.

Chief McRoy says, "The standard of care when the helicopter is deployed is second to none. They can do just about anything and administer just about anything they need to in a lifesaving situation. I figured if that's going to be the standard of care for our most intense calls, then we need to make sure that is the standard of care we are providing every time, even with the regular ambulances."

Although Colleton County Fire & Rescue is unrecognizable compared to the individual fire departments that serviced Colleton County decades ago, Chief McRoy emphasizes that there are still improvements to be made to the current fire service, such as the planned construction of nine more fire stations in the county.

For more information please visit: <https://colletonfire.com/>.