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# Department of Emergency Services & Public Protection

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## 52 Recruits Graduate From Fire Academy

BLOOMFIELD -- Amid bagpipes, applause, and inspired speeches, the Connecticut Fire Academy proudly honored 52 graduates Wednesday afternoon.

Members of Class 73 from the Recruit Firefighter Program will now head to departments in nearly two dozen municipalities across the state, from Willimantic to Greenwich.

"Why put ourselves through this?" Daniel O'Brien asked during remarks to his classmates, family members, and friends gathered at the First Cathedral. "We were called to it."

For the last 14 weeks, Class 73 members have learned about all aspects of firefighting, hazardous materials, and rescue techniques. They will join more than 4,000 career firefighters already on the job working fulltime in Connecticut.

"We should all be grateful there are those who are willing to listen for and respond when the bell rings," said Ronnell A. Higgins, commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection. "They will stop what they're doing, they will grab their gear, and although their hearts may be racing, they will answer the call,"

The new graduates, who attended the academy after being hired by local departments, will start work as soon as this week. For weeks, they have learned the essentials of firefighting, from teamwork and discipline to running into burning buildings. All of the firefighters must be in top physical condition.

"We are turning out a topnotch entry level firefighter," said Jeffrey J. Morrissette, State Fire Administrator. "We are very proud of the accomplishments of these individual firefighters."

Stratford Fire Chief Jermaine Atkinson urged the class to carefully listen to the lessons of veteran firefighters. "Let your love of this job show," he said.

The "Michael C. Reilly Hard Charger" award went to Brock Gee, who will serve in Milford. The William J. Deford II Health and Fitness Award was given to Michael Rose, who will also start work in Milford. Torrington firefighter Richard Maloney received the instructor award.

The Rev. Diann Bailey closed the graduation with a plea to Class 73. "The best thing and old firefighter can teach a new firefighter is how to be an old firefighter," she said. "Each one of you is beloved creation."

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