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## Indian River State College fire training center named best in state

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FORT PIERCE — With a year of firefighter training under its belt, the new Indian River State College fire training center at the college's new Public Safety Training Complex was named the best in the state in a competition hosted annually by the state fire marshal's office, college President Edwin Massey said Tuesday.

Certificates of excellence were awarded to 35 fire science faculty members from firefighting agencies throughout the Treasure Coast during an outdoor presentation ceremony at the complex's fire station used for training.

"All of our faculty members are people who work at fire fighting agencies," said Dean Steve Huntsberger. "This gives them the hands-on professional knowledge and experience to share with their students and this wealth of information they share is invaluable. It's more than just the center, it's the program and how they teach it that won this award."

The training facility took years of planning and "everyone wore out the knees of their pants begging" for funding to build the \$40 million complex which includes sections for a variety of simulated disaster training exercises, Massey said. "It is the most up-to-date training facility in the United States."

Huntsberger said the Bureau of Fire Standards, on behalf of the state fire marshal's office, selected the Indian River State College facility this year.

Last year the award went to the Tampa Fire Training Center, and the year before to the Coral Springs Fire Academy.

"Our academy is great because our students train under realistic conditions," Huntsberger said. "We even get students occasionally from outside the Treasure Coast. We have a six-story training high rise tower with a condo apartment, stairwells, and an elevator shaft inside.

"We have a live burn building where firefighters enter an actual burning building. We have 13 different real props such as a tanker truck and a car on fire, a gas meter wall

in case a gas line breaks, a barbecue grill, and an electric voltage box. We even have a collapsed building so people can learn to rescue people from it.”

St. Lucie County Fire Chief Ron Parrish said he went inside the live burn building when it was on fire to check it out.

“It was a very real experience,” he said. “This facility and our instructors are a tremendous asset. It was time for them to be recognized.”



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