

McCormick County Hosts Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for New Emergency Services Headquarters

Mccormick County hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 28 for its new 10,000-square-foot emergency services headquarters facility in McCormick.

Located near the county's administrative building, the facility houses:

- Emergency Management Services, including an Emergency Operations Center, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and Fire Support Services
- E911
- Coroner's Office and Morgue

The new emergency services headquarters features four large drive-through bays for emergency vehicles, a large training room and a kitchen.



“The new facility centralizes all public safety functions, and provides ample space to train multi-discipline emergency response staffs, and to coordinate and respond to large scale events,” said McCormick County Administrator Columbus Stephens. “It also features state-of-the-art video displays, conference calling, video calling, and other audio/video capabilities.”

McCormick County Council Chairman Charles T. Jennings said he is very happy with the county's new EMS headquarters, because the state-of-the-art facility provides quality services all under one roof for the entire county.

“I most appreciate the fact that this new building—centrally located in the Town of McCormick—will serve our county for the next 50 to 75 years,” Jennings added. “This new emergency services headquarters building reflects McCormick County Council's strong support for public



safety.”

The project to construct the \$2.8 million facility began on July 24, 2020. About \$1.38 million of the facility's cost will be funded by the county's first Capital Project Sales and Use Tax, approved by voters in 2016. The remaining balance, approximately \$1.4 million, will be funded by a \$2.6 million general obligation bond for capital improvements.

Christopher Doolittle, McCormick County emergency services director, said construction of the new emergency services facility reduced the cost of constructing separate facilities for each emer-



UPPER PHOTO—The new McCormick County Emergency Services Headquarters. **LOWER PHOTO**—(Left to right) Henry Deason, past McCormick County Emergency Services (ES) director; Chris Doolittle, McCormick County ES director; Bernard Hamby, McCormick County council vice chairman; James Smith, chair of McCormick County SC Chamber of Commerce Board; Charles Jennings, McCormick County council chairman; Columbus Stephens, McCormick County administrator; Rep. Julia Anne Parks (District 12); Dr. Hope Rivers, Piedmont Technical College president; Charles Cook and Henry Banks, McCormick County council members; Byron Thompson, former McCormick County council member; Roy Smith, mayor of McCormick; and Jackie Brown, McCormick County council member.

gency service agency. He also said the facility has already improved collaboration between the county's E911 Department and the other emergency services departments, and that it is expected to enhance communication among all departments during natural and man-made disasters.

The completion of the new emergency services facility is a big achievement for McCormick County.

"Prior to 1993, EMS was provided by an all-volunteer group," Doolittle recalled. "When I came to work in McCormick in 1996, there were three shifts, and each shift had three paid personnel assigned. We were supported by volunteer EMTs and drivers. Between 1996 and 2002, McCormick EMS and McCormick Emergency Management were separate departments. EMS was full-time, and the emergency manager was part-time. County fire support for the fire service volunteers didn't exist.

"But in 2002," Doolittle added, "we consolidated EMS, Emergency Management and fire support into the McCormick County Emergency Services. Now, eight emergency services staff members operate the Emergency Services Headquarters 24 hours per day."

McCormick County, which encompasses 360 square miles, has a population of about 10,000. Like other rural counties in South Carolina, the county participates in and utilizes mutual aid agreements with neighboring counties when the volume of emergency calls exceeds the county's ability to respond.

"Our county's population grows to as high as about 30,000 during the summer months, and periodically increases during the hunting season as well," Doolittle explained. "Our new Emergency Services Headquarters will be one of three stations, placed throughout the county, that will be used to spread EMS resources across the county.

"This new facility will serve as Medic 1. Medic 2 is located in Modoc, and Medic 3 is located at Old School Road on Highway 81," he added. "Multiple stations allow emergency resources to be stationed across the county for better coverage, and provides faster response times."

McCormick County Council Chairman Jennings said his county kept its promise to use the Capital Project Sales and Use Tax to provide the county's new Emergency Services Headquarters.

"This is a dream come true and a testament of what a one-penny sales tax can do!," he added. "And it's just one of eight projects that is set to be realized in our great county due to that tax."

"Any facility of this magnitude certainly helps improve moral and creates an attitude of inclusiveness," said Stephens (McCormick County administrator). "It also indicates that we, as elected and appointed officials, recognize the importance of providing quality services.

"This project was a real challenge for McCormick County's Capital Project Sales Tax Committee," he added. "But our county's residents understood the value of a penny, that visitors from outside our county would help pay the tax to fund the new facility, and that it was important to support the effort to pass the one-penny sales tax. They understood that we would all benefit."

Stephens credited Johnson, Laschober & Associates, P.C. Lee Dorn, architect for partnering with Contractor John W. Spratlin & Son, LLC, and successfully designing, and building the facility. 



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