

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

AGENCY’S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Making South Carolina a Safe Place to Work and Live

The mission of the South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) is to promote the health, safety and well-being of the citizens of this state by devoting its resources to ensure effective and efficient programs. The agency is responsible for Professional and Occupational Licensing, the Division of State Fire, and the Division of Labor. Each program contributes to making South Carolina a safe place to work and live.

GOAL 1

Promote a Positive Business Climate, Efficient Use of Public Resources and Protect the Public through Professional & Occupational Licensing

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (LLR) protects the public and supports the state’s economy by ensuring qualified, competent professionals are licensed to work in regulated occupations. This role is carried out by LLR’s professional and occupational licensing boards, which review applications, renewals, reinstatements, and disciplinary matters to maintain a skilled and trustworthy workforce.

The boards are supported by LLR’s **Professional & Occupational Licensing Division** and **Legal Services and Enforcement Division**, which provide the administrative, legal, investigative, and customer service resources needed to manage high volumes of licensing and enforcement activity. Public board and committee meetings are held throughout the year to ensure decisions are made transparently, fairly, and consistently.

BOARD ACTIVITIES		
300+	Governor Appointed & Senate Confirmed Board Members	42 Boards & Commissions
215	14	77
Board Meetings	Two Day Meetings	Committee Meetings

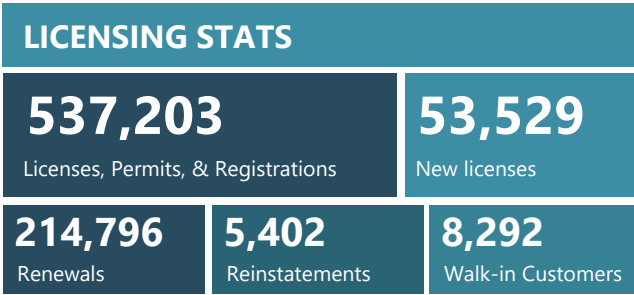
Unlike many state agencies, LLR is primarily self-sustaining and operates without many General Fund appropriations. Eighty-eight percent of the agency is funded through other funds which are primarily made up of licensing and renewal fees collected from regulated professionals. This funding structure requires LLR to carefully manage resources to provide high-quality services, maintain modern systems, and meet statutory responsibilities without relying on taxpayer dollars.

Meeting Rising Demand

Demand for LLR’s services continues to grow year after year, driven by increases in license volume, public inquiries, and enforcement actions. To meet this need, LLR is streamlining application reviews, expanding online services, and improving coordination among staff, boards, and investigative teams—ensuring the agency remains equipped to make South Carolina a safe place to work and live.

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

Licensing can be complex for both applicants and the agency, as it requires verifying qualifications such as education, training, exams, experience, and ethics—often confirmed by third-party sources like schools, other state boards, or immigration authorities. While this review is essential, LLR is investing in technology to make the process faster and more user-friendly.



In FY2025, LLR began piloting an **artificial intelligence tool** with the Nursing Board, set to go live in 2026, that instantly detects missing documentation, alerts applicants, and pauses submission until issues are resolved. This early intervention will reduce delays, improve accuracy, and speed qualified professionals into the workforce. Last year, 40.8% of new licenses were issued within 15 business days of application, a number expected to rise with these enhancements.

Expanding Online Access

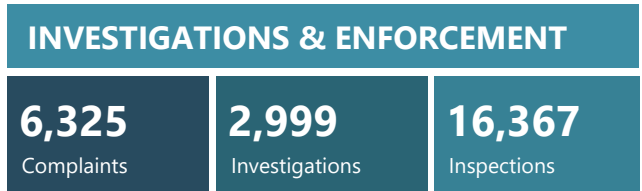
In FY2025, 66% of new license transactions and 92.6% of renewals were completed online—both steady growth trends over five years. This success is due to expanding the online application portal to 11 additional credential types and upgrading the system so applicants can provide required details online without switching to paper forms. These improvements create a true end-to-end digital licensing process, reducing delays and improving the applicant experience.

Strengthening Leadership and Consistency

Two years after LLR’s FY22–23 organizational restructuring, four Program Directors continue to lead groupings of licensing boards with similar professions and processes. This structure has allowed for standardized operating procedures, particularly for board meeting protocols and common licensing processes, ensuring greater consistency and efficiency across all boards.

Improving Investigations and Enforcement

In FY25, LLR enhanced its ability to protect the public by resolving complaints against licensed professionals more efficiently. For the first time, Building/Business investigations were tracked separately from Health/Medical investigations, giving a clearer measure of performance.



Building/Business cases averaged 114 business days to complete—11 days faster than the 125-day target—due to new leadership, refined processes, closer coordination with the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC), and improved case tracking tools. Health/Medical investigations, which involve more complex steps such as medical record reviews, subpoenas, and expert evaluations, averaged 145 days—35 days faster than the 180-day target—helped by the addition of more than 20 expert reviewers.

Although investigation times improved, the percentage of cases completed within target timelines fell short because of high case volumes and staffing turnover. ODC also faced challenges, closing 0.76 cases for every new one opened, primarily due to attorney vacancies. A new Chief Disciplinary Counsel, appointed in March 2025, is

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

leading restructuring efforts, implementing a new case processing policy, and working with the agency’s complaint processing portal to enhance tracking and reduce delays.

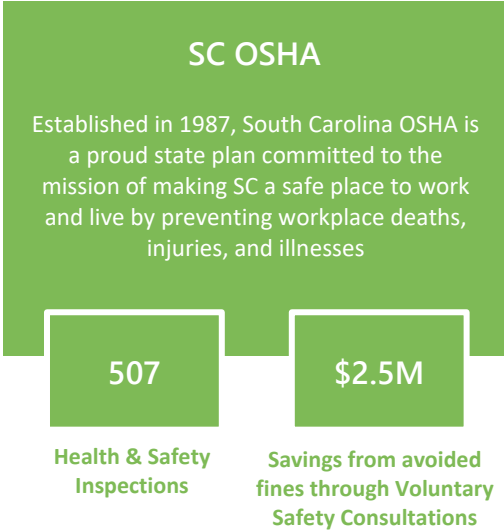
In FY26, the agency will continue process improvements, share best practices across investigative teams, and target resources where they are most needed to resolve cases more efficiently while maintaining fairness and thoroughness.

GOAL 2

Champion workplace safety and health through compliance assistance and enforcement of occupational safety and health regulations

Advancing Workplace Safety Through Compliance and Education

SC OSHA, a proud state plan dedicated to protecting workers and employers, reported 43 workplace fatalities in FY24-25. The Compliance Division conducted 507 inspections, prioritizing imminent dangers, fatalities, worker complaints, and high-hazard industries; these inspections identified 446 total violations, including 379 serious hazards, while confirming compliance in 290 workplaces. Through its Office of Outreach and Education, SC OSHA completed 523 consultation visits across 523 workplaces, assisting 8,666 employees in achieving full compliance and avoiding enforcement referrals—saving businesses an estimated \$2.5 million in potential fines. To further strengthen workplace safety, Outreach delivered 261 training programs with over 8,136 contact hours, reaching 6,583 employees and employers on critical topics such as workers’ rights, lockout/tagout, and workplace violence, underscoring SC OSHA’s role in both enforcement and prevention.

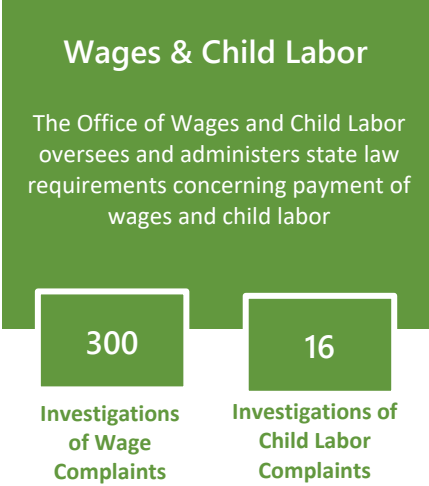


In FY24-25, SC OSHA’s Consultation Program underwent a federal Regional Annual Consultation Evaluation Report (RACER), which measures the effectiveness, quality, and reach of its services. The FY24-25 RACER highlighted SC OSHA’s success in delivering high-quality consultations to employers, achieving results even in hard-to-reach areas and industries, and improving overall compliance and safety outcomes across the state. Despite budget and staffing challenges, the program continued to meet and exceed federal performance expectations, demonstrating accountability in protecting workers while helping employers voluntarily strengthen their safety and health systems.

Recognition programs play a vital role in strengthening workplace safety, and South Carolina’s Voluntary Protection Program (VPP)—known as the Palmetto Star program—honors employers who go beyond OSHA’s minimum requirements in building strong, self-sufficient safety and health systems. In FY24-25, Milliken’s Limestone facility earned Palmetto Star recognition, demonstrating years of consistent performance, strong management commitment, effective hazard control, and injury and illness rates at least 50% below industry averages. Because applicants must show sustained excellence and undergo a rigorous onsite evaluation, achieving Palmetto Star status is a significant accomplishment that signals a worksite can operate maintaining the highest standards of safety. This recognition not only brings the honor of certificates and flags but also

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

tangible benefits such as improved morale, productivity, and quality, along with reduced injuries, illnesses, and costs. LLR views voluntary programs like Palmetto Star as an essential component of its mission to ensure safe and healthy workplaces across South Carolina.



Proactive Wage and Child Labor Enforcement

The Wages and Child Labor Division plays a critical role in ensuring lawful, fair, and safe workplaces by investigating wage complaints, enforcing child labor laws, and helping employers understand and meet their responsibilities. In FY25, the division investigated 300 wage complaints and 16 child labor complaints, reflecting an increase in wage-related cases but a continued reduction in child labor cases compared to previous years. Alongside these outcomes, the division achieved a notable decrease in average case resolution time, underscoring its shift toward more proactive, efficient, and results-driven enforcement.

A major driver of this progress has been the Division’s proactive compliance strategy, which blends enforcement with outreach and education. Child labor follow-up visits now prioritize on-site education—particularly when new management is in place—to reinforce restrictions for minors aged 14–15 and clarify employer responsibilities under state and federal law. By addressing risks early, strengthening employer understanding, and expanding its on-site presence, the Division is preventing violations before they occur while still responding swiftly to formal complaints. This proactive approach will not only continue to improve compliance outcomes, but also advance LLR’s broader mission to protect workers and ensure accountability, ultimately fostering safer and fairer workplaces across South Carolina.

Improving Responsiveness in Immigration Compliance

The Office of Immigration Compliance enforces South Carolina’s E-Verify requirements through both complaint investigations and, primarily, employer audits. Employers are strategically selected from the Department of Employment and Workforce’s new-hire database, issued audit notices, and required to provide documentation. Non-responses trigger on-site visits and, if necessary, subpoenas to compel compliance. This layered approach ensures that employers either respond voluntarily or are brought into compliance through enforcement.

In FY25, the division conducted 3,603 audits and verified more than 88,545 employees, bringing 275 employers into compliance and registering 298 new businesses for E-Verify—an 81% increase from the prior year. The audit process was further strengthened through data-driven improvements, including filtering out residential and closed business addresses and launching the upgraded management system. These enhancements improved subpoena and site visit return rates, boosted efficiency, and supported a 253% increase in completed site visits.



AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

Most notably, the program has transitioned from a largely paper-based process to a proactive, field-driven model that integrates electronic tracking, on-site engagement, and stronger enforcement tools. This evolution has significantly improved employer responsiveness, with mailed audits averaging only 44% returned, compared to overall return rates of 90–95% when visits and subpoenas are included. Through these efforts, LLR continues to strengthen compliance with E-Verify requirements and ensure accountability in South Carolina’s workforce.

Advancing Workplace Safety Through a Unified Approach

The Labor Division has strengthened its effectiveness by uniting SC OSHA, the Office of Wages and Child Labor, and the Office of Immigration Compliance programs within one coordinated effort. While these programs previously operated independently, they now collaborate to serve the same customers – employers and employees – through a unified focus on workplace wellness, safety and compliance.

All field staff have access to information related to wage compliance, child labor laws, workplace safety and E-Verify requirements and are able to use this access for the benefit of the state’s employers and employees who are often impacted by one or more of these programs. Many times, joint site visits and other coordinated efforts are also used. This integrated approach reduces duplication, providing consistent guidance, and enhancing accountability – ensuring safer, fairer, and a more compliant workplaces across South Carolina.

GOAL 3

Reduce fire and disaster related deaths and damage by leading statewide fire and emergency training and responding to disasters and emergencies



State Fire

The mission of SC State Fire is to be the focal point for service and support to save lives and property. The Division consists of the **Office of the State Fire Marshal, the SC Fire Academy, Emergency Response,** and Division-Wide Operations.

Office of State Fire Marshal

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) provides essential service and support to protect lives and property across South Carolina through engineering services, fire codes enforcement, and community risk reduction initiatives. Each fire prevented represents lives saved, homes protected, and stronger, more resilient communities statewide.

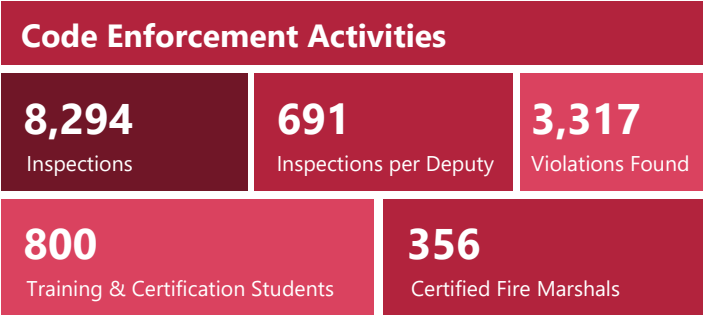
The **Engineering Services** section provides technical assistance and plan reviews for fire sprinkler systems, aboveground fuel storage tanks, and hydrogen facilities, supporting state and local officials, contractors, and the public. The team includes SC-licensed Professional Engineers, all with International Code Council (ICC) Fire Inspector I and Fire Plans Examiner certifications, and additional specialized ICC credentials.

Engineer Services Activities FY25		
1,419 Plan Review Projects	84% Project Volume Increase Since FY14	14.5 Average Days to Complete a Project
Days to complete projects were well below the mandate of 30 days		

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

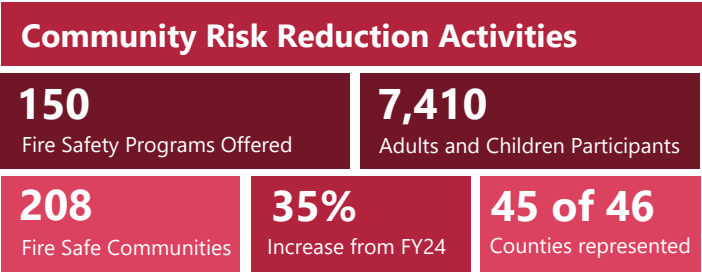
The **Codes Enforcement Team** ensures consistent application of South Carolina’s Fire and Life Safety codes by conducting inspections, providing fire marshal training, and certifying local and state officials who perform inspections.

Deputy State Fire Marshals are strategically assigned across the state to inspect a wide range of facilities while also assisting resident fire marshals upon request. Additionally, the Fire Marshal Training and Certification program delivers education for design professionals, fire officials, and building inspectors. These training courses provided necessary continuing education hours and were taught at the SC State Fire campus in Columbia.



In FY24-25, a new Information Management System (IMS) was fully completed, with the final licensing module successfully implemented. This unified platform now brings together all code enforcement, plan review, and licensing and permitting programs into a single electronic system. The completed IMS will significantly improve efficiency by streamlining permit issuance, expediting plan review and approval processes, and enhancing communication with customers and stakeholders.

The **Community Risk Reduction (CRR)** team manages the Fire Marshal’s initiatives related to data collection, education, outreach, and coordination of the Community Loss Education and Response (CLEAR) Team. To strengthen community preparedness, the CRR Section provides ongoing training for fire and life safety educators and delivers public education programs for citizens of all ages. The State Fire Marshal’s Office collects and analyzes data on fire fatalities to better understand the civilian death rate and the factors contributing to fire fatalities in the state. In FY25, there was a 15.5 percent decrease in the number of fire deaths (87) compared to the previous fiscal year (103). The five-year average number of fire fatalities in the state is 95.



At this year’s annual Fire-Rescue Conference, 208 fire departments were designated as Fire Safe South Carolina Communities. These departments were acknowledged for their efforts to reduce fire-related injuries and fatalities through various initiatives, including the implementation of fire safety measures, such as public education, data-driven response strategies, and community partnerships. This marks a significant increase in the number of fire departments participating in the program compared to previous years, with representation now in 45 of the State’s 46 counties.

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

South Carolina Fire Academy

The South Carolina Fire Academy provides essential training and certification for firefighters, fire officers, instructors, and emergency response personnel across the state and beyond. Offering more than 300 courses aligned with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and SC OSHA regulations, the Academy ensures consistent, high-quality instruction in areas such as firefighting, driver/operator, hazardous materials, rescue, inspections, and investigations. Located on a modern, 200+ acre campus in Columbia, the Academy features specialized classrooms, on-campus housing, and advanced simulation structures that allow students to train in realistic emergency environments. In addition to classroom and hands-on instruction, the Academy delivers online, hybrid, and independent study programs to increase accessibility, serving nearly 39,000 students in FY25. By preparing both career and volunteer firefighters, as well as junior members, industry customers, and out-of-state participants, the Fire Academy plays a vital role in building a skilled, certified workforce that protects lives, property, and communities.

SC Fire Academy Activities

39,424 Students Enrolled	2,876 Training Classes Offered
32,357 Students Completed Classes	94% Passage Rate on IFSAC Exams

In FY25, the Academy advanced its curriculum through the accreditation of rope rescue courses and piloting of revised Firefighter I & II and auto extrication programs, slated for full implementation in FY26. To expand accessibility for students both within South Carolina and outside the State, the Academy delivered more than 250 courses to over 6,000 participants through online platforms and independent study. Nearly 90 South Carolina fire service members also attended the National Fire Academy’s State Weekend, further strengthening statewide leadership development. The Academy’s accreditation, testing, and certification section also modernized exam administration by transitioning multiple licensing and permitting tests to electronic testing for the Office of the State Fire Marshal. These improvements strengthened South Carolina’s fire services while positioning the Academy as a national leader in training students in-state and out-of-state.

Emergency Response

The role of Emergency Response is to assist local, regional and state governments by providing subject matter experts, guidance and on-scene professional resources during disaster or emergencies that overwhelm local resources. They provide responses to all phases of firefighting, structural collapse, helicopter rescue, water rescue, and hazardous materials incidents. This response can range from sending subject-matter experts to providing hundreds of responders to assist with a large-scale disaster. State Fire’s Emergency Response Programs successfully manages LLR’s responsibility to lead the State’s firefighting and search and rescue emergency support functions within the State Emergency Operations Plan.

Emergency Response Activities

184 Task Force Team Members	75 + SC-HART Rescues
100 + SC-TF1/SC-HART Activities	11 Firefighter Mobilization Requests

South Carolina Task Force 1 (SC-TF1), the state’s all-hazards Urban Search and Rescue Team and the Helicopter Aquatic Rescue Team (SC-HART) deployed as part of the State Emergency Response Tax Force System, through the Firefighter Mobilization program. These programs provide rapid disaster response, aerial rescue capabilities,

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

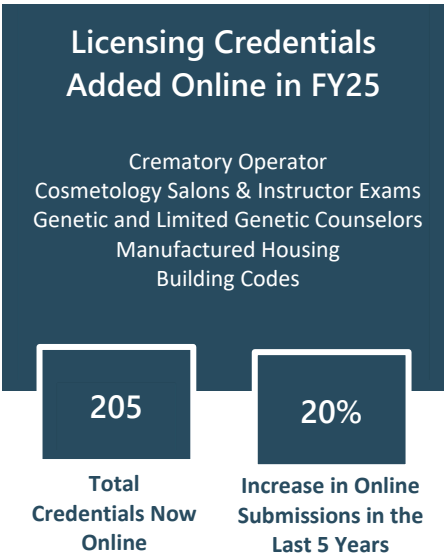
and coordinated mutual aid across all 46 counties and across state lines when called upon. During FY24-25, SC-TF1 and HART had more than 100 activities (events, exercises, and incidents), including 72 helicopter rescues during Tropical Storm Helene. SC-HART also had an out-of-state deployment to Hurricane Milton in Florida, as well as two mutual aid rescues near Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina. Firefighter Mobilization assisted with 11 requests related to moving firefighting and rescue resources to different areas of the state to respond to severe weather events as well as major fires. In March, Firefighter Mobilization coordinated resources for two major wildland fires, the Covington Drive Complex Fire in Horry County and the Table Rock Complex Fire in Pickens/Greenville Counties. The Table Rock Complex Fire resulted in the largest mobilization of firefighting resources in the history of the program.

GOAL 4

Maximize organizational excellence and effectiveness to improve the quality of customer service in all programs

The South Carolina Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation remains committed to delivering high-quality customer service by maintaining a stable and well-trained workforce and continuing to enhance the accessibility and efficiency of customer processing platforms.

The Agency’s Human Resource (HR) division played a critical role in supporting customer service by maintaining a stable and well-trained workforce. Through an efficient recruitment process, HR sustained an average 92% fill rate for full-time positions, reducing the average days to fill vacancies from 34 to 33, and maintained a stable turnover rate of 14.88%. These efforts ensured vacancies were addressed quickly with quality candidates, allowing the Agency to sustain responsiveness to licensees, applicants, and the public. HR also successfully implemented the State’s revised classification and compensation system and expanded workforce development by launching monthly mandatory training sessions for all full-time staff, focused on skill development, organizational effectiveness, and employee well-being.



To further improve customer service, LLR continues to expand the accessibility and efficiency of licensing through online platforms. Over the past year, 11 additional credential types were made available for online application, renewal, and management, reducing paperwork and wait times for licensees. These advancements have contributed to nearly a 20% increase in online submissions over the past five years, with 205 credential types now available electronically. This modernization streamlines the licensing process, increases transparency, and provides greater convenience for professionals regulated by the agency’s 42 licensing boards and commissions.

Together, LLR’s efforts to reduce turnover, streamline hiring and expand online credentialing demonstrate a strong commitment to customer service, operational efficiency, and financial stewardship. By investing in both its workforce and its systems, the agency continues to improve responsiveness and reliability for licensees and the citizens of South Carolina.

AGENCY NAME:	Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation		
AGENCY CODE:	R360	SECTION:	81

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

If the Agency is unable to accomplish its objectives, the result would be less safe working and living conditions in the State, from worksites to fire safety and emergency response to occupational and professional services that require regulation to ensure public safety and welfare. The Agency appreciates the General Assembly's continued approval of requests for FTE positions to ensure sufficient staff to provide excellent customer service and implement the various number of Agency services, and its continued support of adequate funding to fulfill those missions.