



NEWS RELEASE

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HUDGENS: MAY 4 - 10 IS NATIONAL ARSON AWARENESS WEEK

Atlanta – Marking the start of National Arson Awareness Week, Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph Hudgens reminded Georgians that they can get personally involved in the fight against the crime of arson.

“Vehicle Arson: A Combustible Crime,” this year’s National Arson Awareness Week theme, wants to focus the public’s attention on vehicle arson by drawing attention to the astounding statistics about Vehicle Arson.

According to the United States Fire Administration and the National Fire Protection Association, over the last 10 years there has been an average 14,737 vehicle arsons reported, accounting for 26.5 percent of total arsons annually. Vehicle arson also accounts for \$169 million in property damage, each year in the United States.

Last year, Commissioner Hudgens’ Fire Investigation Unit investigated 37 vehicle arsons in Georgia that caused more than \$400,000 in property damage. Fire investigators made six arrests in these vehicle fire cases.

"We want to urge Georgians to report any information they may have about a suspicious vehicle fire," Hudgens said. "Arson is a difficult crime to prosecute. In many cases, investigators rely on evidence provided by witnesses to convict an arsonist."

Vehicle arson is not a victimless crime in addition to the higher insurance premiums passed on to innocent customers and the responding firefighters are exposed to increased dangers because of the gasoline inside of the vehicles.

Commissioner Hudgens and the Georgia Arson Control Board co-sponsor a 24-hour toll-free arson hotline. Anyone with any information about arson may call 1-800-282-5804. Callers may remain anonymous; rewards of up to \$10,000 are given for information leading to the arrest and conviction of an arsonist. The Georgia Arson Control Program has distributed more than 450 rewards totaling more than \$1.6 million since 1979.