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Ralph Hudgens
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NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL ARSON AWARENESS WEEK - MAY 6 - 12

Atlanta, GA -- National Arson Awareness Week is May 6-12, and Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph Hudgens wants to remind Georgians that they can get personally involved in the fight against the crime of arson.

"Reducing Arson at Vacant and Abandoned Buildings," this year's National Arson Awareness Week theme, recommends everyone -- not just fire and law enforcement -- report arson, one of the nation's most devastating crimes.

In 2017 approximately 568 fires were reported at structures that were either vacant or abandoned. Hudgens' Arson Unit investigated 371 suspicious fires (131 were arson) in Georgia that claimed 38 lives, injured 25, and caused more than \$15 million in property damage. Arson investigators made 31 arrests.

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

Commissioner Hudgens and the Georgia Arson Control Board co-sponsor a 24-hour toll-free arson hotline. Anyone with any information about an arson should 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 600 rewards totaling more than \$1.7 million since 1979.