



NEWS RELEASE

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HUDGENS ANNOUNCES NEW ARSON DOG FOR GEORGIA

Atlanta – Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph T. Hudgens announced today that Georgia has a new canine to help human arson investigators solve suspicious fire cases.

Hudgens said the newest addition to his staff, “Ava,” an accelerant detection K-9 will investigate suspicious fires throughout Middle and South Georgia. Along with State Fire Marshal Dwayne Garriss, Commissioner Hudgens introduced the canine and her handler today in a ceremony held at the City of Macon Fire Department.

“I’m committed to fighting arson and fraud in Georgia,” Hudgens said. “By establishing another canine accelerant detection team, we can continue to cover all areas of the state, reaching fire scenes faster and solving more cases.”

Ava, a 19-month-old black Labrador, and human partner Fire Investigator Tim Roberts graduated on May 5th from a five-week canine accelerant detection course conducted by the Maine State Police and underwritten by State Farm Insurance Companies. During the course, Roberts and Ava were trained to work as a team, sniffing out petrochemical-based accelerants used by arsonists to start fires. The State of Maine pioneered the training of dogs to work fire scenes, a method that results in considerable savings of time and money in arson investigations.

Since 1993, State Farm has paid for the national program, which trains dogs and handlers for fire departments and law enforcement agencies across the U.S. At the end of the course, a chemist certifies that each dog can discriminate from among many accelerants used to start fires. That certification enables evidence found by the dogs to be used in criminal prosecutions. The dogs will be recertified annually.

“Thanks to training underwritten by State Farm, we can count on Ava’s sense of smell to help pinpoint the cause of suspicious fires,” State Fire Marshal Dwayne Garriss said. “Her ability will enable Tim to find evidence more quickly, evidence that can be used to solve more arson cases.”

Tim Roberts joined the State Fire Marshal’s Office in 2008, after serving as a detective with the Thomasville Police Department. Roberts has 19 years of experience in law enforcement.

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