**March**

**Week 1- Smoke Alarms and 9-volt Battery Safety:**

Smoke alarms should be installed in every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, on every level of the home, including the basement. The larger the home is, the more smoke alarms required. Interconnected smoke alarms, when one smoke alarm sounds they all sound, provide the best protection. For the best protection, use ionization smoke alarms and photoelectric smoke alarms or combination ionization-photoelectric alarms.

Test your smoke alarms monthly using the “test” button. Make sure everybody in your home knows the sound of a smoke alarm and what to do when they hear it. If there are deaf people or people hard of hearing you should have alert devices that meet their needs.

Replacing your smoke alarms should occur every 10 years. If the alar, does not respond after a new battery is installed, it needs to be replaced even if it has not been 10 years since the last replacement.

Rental homes are required to have working smoke alarms. Landlords are required to provide smoke alarms under Georgia Law (O.C.G.A 25-2-40).

**9-Volt Battery Safety:**

9-volt batteries can be dangerous because the positive and negative ends of the battery are close together. If a metal object touches both ends, it can cause a short circuit, which can cause enough heat to start a fire. Even if you think the battery is weak, it can still start a fire. Throwing away a 9V battery along with other metal objects can start a fire as well. These batteries need to stay in the packaging until use. If the battery is loose, keep the ends covered with masking, duct, or electrical tape. They should also be stored standing up.

The way you dispose of 9-volt batteries is not throwing them in the trash. They can be taken to a collection site for household hazardous waste. Even when disposing in this way, be sure to cover the ends with masking, duct, or electrical tape.

**Week 2- Apartment and Multifamily Dwellings:**

For the best protection in an apartment building or multifamily dwelling, select a building with a full sprinkler system throughout. Speak with your landlord about fire safety features in your building. This consists of evacuation plans, how to respond to alarms, and voice communication procedure. It is your responsibility to know all available exit stairs from your floor in case the nearest one is blocked by fire or smoke. Report fire hazards such as blocked exits and piled trash.

If a fire occurs, pull the fire alarm and close all doors as you leave. If an announcement is made through the building, listen carefully. Use the stairs to get out, never an elevator unless directed by the fire department.

Everyone in your building needs to know where all manual fire alarm boxes are (alarms with the pull bar). Usually they are within 5-feet of an exit door. Everyone needs to know what the alarms sounds like and how to react. Leave as soon as you hear the alarm and wait outside until you’re told the building is safe to enter. Even if the alarm is for practice, treat each alarm as an emergency and get outside.

**If you cannot just go outside and find yourself stuck in your building:**

**1. Stuff wet towels or sheets under door vents to keep smoke out.**

**2. Call the fire department and tell them where you are.**

**3. Open a window slightly and wave a bright cloth to signal your location. Be prepared to close the window if it makes the smoke worse.**

**Sometimes evacuation of high-rise buildings can take a long time. Communicate with the fire department to monitor evacuation status.**

**Week 3- Medical Oxygen and Fire:**

Portable medical oxygen presence in homes has grown over the past decade. Fire needs oxygen to burn, an oxygen enriched environment makes a fire burn more quickly. Having an oxygen tank presence requires specific fire safety regulations to stay safe.

There is no safe way to smoke in a home with oxygen in use. Candles, matches, wood stoves, and even sparking toys can easy ignite a fire and should not be used in the home. Store oxygen cylinders at least 5 feet from any heat source, open flame, or any electrical device. Items containing oil or grease, such as lotion, can easily ignite and need to be kept away from areas where oxygen is in use. Do not use aerosols containing any combustible ingredient near oxygen tanks. “No Smoking” and “No Open Flame” signs should be posted in and outside of the house as a warning to guests and residents to not smoke.

**Week 4-Plan Your Escape:**

Your ability to get out of a fire relies on your smoke alarms and advance planning. Fire spreads rapidly, sometimes only giving you 1 to 2 minutes to get out safely once your smoke alarm sounds.

The most important part of insuring your safety is to plan ahead. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room, outside each separate sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement. Make a home escape plan. Your escape plan should include a drawn out map with all doors and windows with 2 ways out of every room. Practice the plan with your family and visitors. If anyone in your house may need assistance getting out, designate a person to help him or her. Children should know how to escape without your help in case you cannot tend to them. Any room with a window air conditioning unit should have another way out. Make sure you have a designated safe place outside to meet and ensure everybody in the household has escaped safely.