



News Release

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GRANT MONEY HELPS TRACK GEORGIA ARSONISTS

The Georgia Forestry Commission has been awarded a federal grant that enhances the safety of residents by strengthening the agency's forest arson investigation program.

"Close to 700 suspicious forest fires involving almost 4,000 acres occurred in Georgia last year," said Alan Dozier, Chief of Protection for the Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC). "This funding will provide our team with badly needed equipment and training to help protect Georgians from the threat of arson fire."

The \$150,745 Assistance to Firefighters grant for fire prevention and safety projects was awarded to the GFC on behalf of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Homeland Security. It is the first time GFC has received this grant. The grant was approved in mid-April and will be utilized during the next 12 months.

According to Brian Clavier, GFC Chief Investigator, several pieces of equipment will be purchased for surveillance purposes, including digital video cameras and binoculars. Funding is earmarked as well for a special crime reporting database, fire investigation training, redesign of GFC's law enforcement and fire prevention website, and media campaigns.

"All of these tools will help enable our team to keep up with investigations, link cases across the state, and become better detectives," said Clavier. "In light of current budget realities, this grant is welcome news for our agency and for every Georgian."

In 2009, Georgia legislators passed Senate Bill 400, sponsored by Senator Ross Tolleson (R-Perry), which made forest arson a felony offense in Georgia. Conviction carries a penalty of imprisonment for up to 20 years, a fine of \$50,000, or both.

"With this grant, wildfire investigators will have the modern tools needed to investigate more fires and incarcerate more arsonists," added Dozier. "It will create a safer Georgia for us all."

For more information about fire prevention in Georgia and the services of the Georgia Forestry Commission, visit GaTrees.org.

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