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**Lafayette Fire Department Promotes Fire Safety, Hearing Health Awareness  
with Free Smoke Alarms**

“Can you hear that?” Lafayette Fire Department’s (LFD) new [public service announcement](#) poses a crucial question to Lafayette Parish residents about their smoke detectors.

Since October is both Fire Safety Month and Audiology Awareness Month, LFD is working with audiology professionals and community partners to distribute free specialized smoke alarms to the deaf and hard of hearing in Lafayette Parish. The initiative includes educating the public on the importance of having one’s hearing assessed.

The high-frequency sound of smoke alarms alert residents of a fire. However, for those who are deaf or have some degree of hearing loss, that warning sound may be difficult, if not impossible, to hear. “This is why getting your hearing assessed by a hearing care professional is so important,” said audiologist Ashley B. Thom AuD. “Knowing you have difficulties hearing is the first step in getting the information and devices necessary to alert you in the event of a fire.”

According to Thom, high frequency hearing loss is one of the most common conditions that affects adults in America. “One-third of adults between the ages of 65 and 74 have some sort of hearing loss. When that age is increased to 75, that number goes up to about one-half of adults in America.”

LFD’s smoke alarm program seeks to help individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing by installing free specialized smoke alarm systems that utilize movement, flashing light and low frequency sound to alert them of a fire. These devices are available thanks to a fire prevention and safety grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The program only requires that the applicant be a resident of Lafayette Parish and have documentation of deafness or hearing loss.

Alton Trahan, Public Information Officer for LFD believes this program can help many residents of Lafayette Parish. “Everyone should have a working smoke alarm, but it is also important to have a working smoke alarm that works for you. Recent studies suggest that occupants have as little as two minutes to escape home fires. Hence, the importance of having adequate working smoke alarms as part of your home escape plan. This program gives Lafayette Parish citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing the opportunity to get the protection they need at no cost to them.”

For more information on the program, visit: <http://lafayettela.gov/FireDepartment/Pages/FSS.aspx>

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