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Sounding the Alarm for Fire Safety

The Red Cross has installed 1.1 million free smoke alarms across the U.S.—and it's only getting started



The American Red Cross works with the Arlington County Fire Department to distribute free smoke alarms and fire education to area residents.

By the time she realized her apartment building was on fire, Fatrika Coleman says the flames had raced up two floors and spread to the roof. "I was in the kitchen, cooking," she recalls, "and I kept hearing a knocking sound. Then I saw smoke and the flicker of a flame." When she stepped into the bedroom, her balcony was engulfed.

Coleman grabbed her purse and ran. Once outside, she says, the scope of the damage became clear. "I realized the fire was a lot bigger than I thought it was."

Devastated while watching her home go up in smoke, Coleman stood there helpless, eager to leave the site of the fire. Then a police officer directed her to the building's rental office. There, she was greeted by a Red Cross volunteer. "She said, 'I need two things from you,'" Coleman recalls. "'I need your name. But first I need a hug.' In that moment, that's what I needed more than anything—a hug."

Coleman's story is shockingly common. "We respond to a home fire every eight minutes," says Gail McGovern, President and CEO of the American Red Cross.

Larger disasters dominate news cycles and social media, says McGovern, but for every massive hurricane or earthquake there are thousands of incidents like Coleman's that turn people's lives

upside down—or, too often, end them altogether. "More people die in house fires than from all other disasters combined," says McGovern. "This is really a crisis."

To address this, in 2014 the Red Cross launched its Home Fire Campaign, with the goal of reducing death and injury from home fires by 25 percent. One big way the organization is doing that is through *Sound the Alarm*, its initiative to teach fire safety and install free smoke alarms in homes where they're needed most. "We target communities with lots of kids, lots of elderly, and low-income communities," says McGovern. "Volunteers show up with stepladders and drills, and install them on the spot."

The Home Fire Campaign and *Sound the Alarm* are succeeding, in a huge way. The Red Cross has installed 1.1 million smoke alarms since October 2014, in more than 12,000 communities with the help of thousands of partners. "Our next big move is an initiative that will take place April 28 through May 13," McGovern says. "During those 16 days we'll attempt to install 100,000 smoke alarms in over 100 major cities."

"We respond to a home fire every eight minutes."

— Gail McGovern, President and CEO, American Red Cross

It's crucial work, and it wouldn't be possible without an army of volunteers; the Red Cross will rely on 28,000 of them during its upcoming installation spree. "Volunteering is an incredible way to help," says McGovern—whether it's offering to assist with *Sound the Alarm*, or training to join a Disaster Action Team. "I've heard from so many people that it's transformational. We are so very grateful to the dedicated volunteers and generous donors who empower our lifesaving mission."

After experiencing what the Red Cross does for their disaster survivors, Fatrika Coleman, became a volunteer herself. Today, she is a captain on a Disaster Action Team for the Red Cross. And yes, that means that now she's the one offering hugs in times of crisis. "I know firsthand what that hug means," Coleman says. "It's compassion and understanding. At times, you need all those things." ■

The Red Cross thanks our *Sound the Alarm* Home Fire Campaign Donors



Learn how you can get involved by visiting SoundTheAlarm.org

Asia

● India is attempting to sell a controlling stake in its state-run air carrier, along with two-thirds of the airline's

\$7.8b

debt. Air India's buyer may be required to pursue a public stock offering, which would provide an opportunity for the government to sell off its interest entirely.

● “There’s a lot of work that is still ongoing. The IPO is ongoing.”

Saudi Aramco CEO Amin Nasser told Bloomberg the company should be ready for a public listing in the second half of this year. The next day, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said the offering could be delayed until 2019.

● President Trump signed his first major trade deal, exempting South Korea from his 25 percent tariff on steel in exchange for an overall reduction in steel exports to the U.S., among other things.



● North Korean leader Kim Jong Un embarked on a surprise trip to visit President Xi Jinping in Beijing on March 25, ahead of planned talks with South Korea in April and an expected meeting with the U.S. sometime in May.

● Uber Technologies will swap its Southeast Asian ride-hailing business to rival Grab for a 27.5 percent stake in the combined business.

Americas

● The U.S. Federal Trade Commission confirmed it had opened an investigation into Facebook's privacy practices. At issue is whether the social network violated the terms of a 2011 consent decree in its funneling of user data to Cambridge Analytica without users' knowledge. ▷ 56

● As the gun control debate intensifies, America's oldest gunmaker, Remington Outdoor, filed for bankruptcy.

● Twitter erupted with calls from Brazil to #DeleteNetflix after the March 23 debut of *The Mechanism*, a fictional series based on the Car Wash anticorruption probe. Critics, including former President Dilma Rousseff, accused the story of “distorting reality.”