A recent fire initiated a warm-weather proactive prevention event: installing smoke alarms for residents who may not have them.

After the Plano Fire Department responded to a manufactured home structure fire at a local mobile home park, Fire Safety Coordinator Capt. Peggy Harrell decided to schedule a smoke alarm program day, even though the temperature was sweltering.

“I try to make it cooler on the days we go out,” Harrell said. “That day, it was so hot outside - but I thought the community could benefit from the smoke alarm program while the images of the fire were still fresh in all the residents’ minds.”

On July 5, residents had escaped the fire without injury; however, an investigation revealed that there were no working smoke alarms in that home.

Jonathan Sennetti, president of the Plano Fire Rescue Associates, said fire chiefs immediately became concerned that there may be other mobile homes within the park that didn’t have working smoke alarms.

“In preparation for the program, PFRA members Bettye Phillips and Barb Homrighausen teamed up with Harrell and PFD Operations Assistant Chief Alan Storck,” said Sennetti.

“They pre-walked the entire community on Thursday, hanging flyers on each door which notified the residents of the upcoming program. Then on Saturday morning, it was time for action,” Sennetti said. “Thirteen PFRA members showed up ready to walk, despite the summer heat approaching 100 degrees.”

PFRA members paired up with firefighters from PFD Engine 3, Medic 3 and Truck 8, as well as Harrell and PFD Chief Hugo Esparza. Teams of two knocked on the doors of more than 150 mobile homes and were able to test and verify smoke alarms for 105 residents.

“Most residents did have smoke alarms; however, many of those units had dead batteries, which left them as vulnerable as homes that had no smoke alarm at all,” Sennetti said. “The teams ended up replacing 151 batteries in old alarms, and they installed 54 new smoke alarms across the 105 homes. Two of these alarms were special units equipped with strobe lights, which were installed in a home with deaf residents.”

While inside each home, PFRA members discussed the importance of smoke alarms with the residents, provided them with a fire-safety checklist and answered questions.

“All of the PFRA members who volunteered for this quickly organized smoke alarm door-to-door event were hot and exhausted but very proud to have participated,” said Sennetti. “The Plano Fire Department also recognized the importance of this event, and...
they expressed appreciation to PFRA for their side-by-side assistance.

“PFRA looks forward to participating with the Plano Fire Department in the next smoke alarm door-to-door event as well as their other fire-prevention programs that help keep the city of Plano and its citizens safe,” said Sennetti.

“The PFD has been doing this door-to-door campaign since 1996,” Harrell said. “The last two years, PFRA has been assisting us with it. This allows us to use less firefighters from the station and team them up with a volunteer.”

The campaign is usually implemented three times a year but can be implemented whenever it is needed.

PFRA is a local fire corps program of citizen volunteers who donate their time, skills and talents with education and awareness activities that support and assist the PFD and its firefighters in their efforts to promote fire and life safety. It has more than 50 active members and was founded in 1995 for the purpose of raising funds to support the PFD annual awards banquet.”