

Opinions

Everybody has one...

Home Fire Extinguishers

One of the major goals of Union County Emergency Management and Fire Department is to have a prepared and resilient community. We provide education and safety tips on how to prepare your home and how to deal with emergencies. Home fire extinguishers are a vital part of any home safety plan. They are simple to use and can be readily available to extinguish a small fire before it becomes a large one.

When purchasing a fire extinguisher, you must consider the class and size. Fire extinguishers are classified based on what materials may be burning. Class A extinguishers are used on burning ordinary materials such as paper or wood. Class B extinguishers are used on burning flammable liquids such as grease, gasoline, or oil. Class C extinguishers are used in electrically charged burning material such as electric wires or motors. A multi-purpose, class ABC fire extinguisher, is the most common and should be sufficient for most homes.

The size of extinguisher depends on the potential amount of fire. Fire extinguishers for the home range from 2 1/2 to 20 pounds. The larger the extinguisher, the more fire that can be extinguished. You want to get an extinguisher big enough to put out a fire but small enough to be able to use. Most people purchase a 5 to 10-pound extinguisher. Once you have made your purchase, you need to learn how to use it. Almost anyone can use a fire extinguisher. Most people use the P.A.S.S. technique: P. Pull the pin on the fire extinguisher; A. Aim the fire extinguisher low, with the nozzle pointed at the base of the fire; S. Squeeze the handle to release the extinguishing agent; S. Sweep the nozzle from side to side while pointed at the base of the fire until it is extinguished. It is best to familiarize yourself with the use and practice often.

Fire extinguishers should be stored near areas of potential fires, such as kitchens, fireplaces, or garages. However, do not store them so near the potential fire areas that the fire or smoke prevents access to them. They should also be inspected periodically to ensure they are ready to use. Having fire extinguishers in your home is an especially important part of an overall safety plan. They are simple to use, remarkably effective, and can extinguish small fires before they become larger, out of control fires. Union County Fire Department ~Our Family Protecting Your Family~

Fire Dept. from Union County Fire Chief
David Dyer



Coming of Age

That year, I felt bold enough to make a trip to Santa's chair – on my own. Under the watchful eye of my parents I had already presented Santa my predetermined list. But as I roamed the department store, my eyes landed on a battery powered airplane. I powered my way back to Santa. I petitioned for a revision to our pending transaction. "OK, but you need to make sure you tell your Mom what you just told me!" To be "good," I had to do what he said, but I left wondering why she needed to know. And so began a line of inquiry that hastened my coming of age.

The birth of Jesus and the appearance of Santa Claus are linked by tradition. With tender care, a parent can tease apart truth and myth when a child raises an inquiry into these things. To some, God will always be the one who makes a list and checks it twice, who knows if you've been naughty or nice. So if you're good nice things happen. That might be the transactional myth of Santa Claus, but it is an errant caricature of Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Consider four differences. (1) Santa comes by stealth after dark. Jesus is "the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (John 1:9). He meant to be seen and heard. (2) Santa only shows up once a year. Jesus said, "I am with you always" (Matt. 28:20). (3) Some children are warned that Santa gives a lump of coal if they've been bad. We are all bad, so one wonders by what standard Santa judges badness. Jesus said, "God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:17). (4) Children are encouraged to focus on what Santa brings, not Santa himself. Jesus offers friendship with God, "who reconciled us to Himself through Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18).

As a child, I didn't question the transactional nature of my dealings with Santa. Santa gives earned rewards, not gifts. Big difference! Our Father offers a transformational gift. "The gracious gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 6:23). When you receive that gift by faith, the Light of Christmas fills your life and you are not the same. C. S. Lewis said, "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only

All Things New
Wayne Fowler



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Commissioner's Questions

Q. Why is it so important to shop at home?

A. I have to answer that by reminding everyone of the three pennies of sales taxes we currently have in Union County. Four pennies of every dollar you spend in Union County goes to the State of Georgia, while the other three pennies go to SPLOST, ESPLOST & LOST. The SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax) penny goes to county government sales tax for capital expenditures (buildings, equipment, roads and property). The ESPLOST (Education SPLOST) penny goes to the school system for buildings, equipment and property. The LOST (Local Option Sales Tax) penny goes for operation of county government and comes directly off your property taxes!

So the new schools, the roads and bridges and other county buildings and capital projects are paid for with two pennies. However, the third penny saves us approximately 30% to 40% on our property tax bill. So shopping at home helps EVERYONE in this county.

Q. Who all pays these sales taxes in Union County?

A. The great thing about sales tax is that everyone who shops locally participates. Whether a person lives here, works here or is just passing through or even comes to Union County and Blairsville to eat in some of our great restaurants, they are helping to pay our taxes - and we certainly appreciate them.

Q. We like to purchase gas at the RaceTrac in Jasper on Hwy 515 when we go to Atlanta because it is cheaper. Does that impact Union County?

A. Absolutely it does. In the past when it only cost a few dollars to fill up our gas tank, it was not such a big deal, but now it is. Every time you fill up in Jasper or any other out-of-county station for \$100 (the cost to fill up many trucks and SUVs), that is \$3 lost to another county. It is estimated that we could easily be losing \$50,000 a year in gasoline sales taxes alone. That additional revenue could help pay for road resurfacing or any other basic county need.

Q. Are you telling us to shop at home and pay more for our fuel?

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Q & A from Union County Commissioner
Lamar Paris



Letters to the Editor

Lamar

Dear Editor,

When our family moved here 32 years ago from Florida, it was because our mom and dad wanted a better life for themselves and their children. As outsiders, we never tried to change the way things were, instead we viewed it as a privilege to be accepted into this great community.

Blairsville draws many people here every year because of its beauty, kindness and hometown feel. Since our sole commissioner, Lamar Paris, has been in office, we have been witness to so many wonderful changes that enhance that same lovely, small town atmosphere.

Lamar has fully dedicated the last 20-plus years of his life and career continually looking out for the best interests of Union County. He has done this while maintaining a very low cost to taxpayers. We personally have a deep respect for someone who has been able to balance growth with the preservation of our town's charm.

We can't deny that our population is growing, and those of us who already live here understand why; it's an amazing place. We worry that the continued campaign of criticism waged against him by a select few would in some way hamper his efforts or tarnish his and our county's accomplishments.

Lamar, we are so appreciative of all you have done for our great community. Thank you.
The Ekebergs & Arne's Auto Service

2021 County Budget

To All Union County Taxpayers:

Your 2020 property tax bills are due Dec. 20, 2020. The last opportunity to express your tax and spending concerns will be at the Public Hearings for the proposed 2021 budget that will include your 17% property tax increase. Your properties are also scheduled for reassessments in 2021.

The December hearings are usually held a day or two before Christmas and New Year's Eve, thus assuring that the hearings will be lightly attended and that there will be no serious questions or challenges to the proposed budget. The current year's budget didn't include nearly \$2 million for two major land purchases and semi-private gun range design and construction, to be partially covered by the proposed 2021 budget and tax increase.

Your attendance is essential in reviewing the major budgeted items to attempt to hold the Sole Commissioner to those legally adopted items, not others (i.e. land purchases) added mid-year at his sole discretion with no accountability or opportunity for public input.

D. B. Swaim

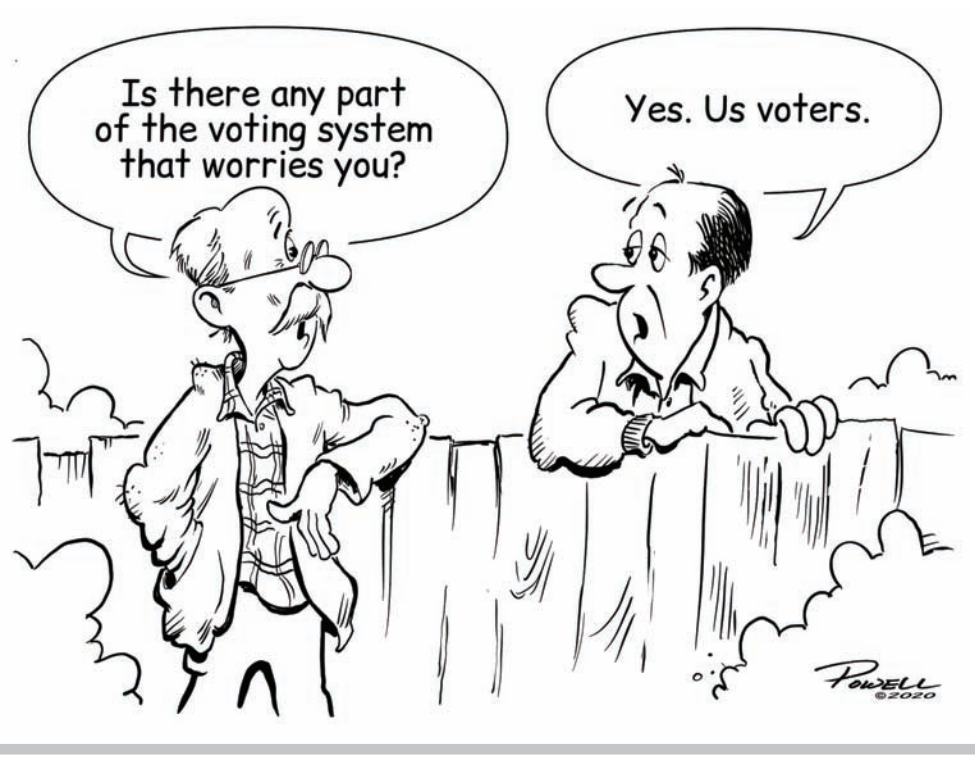
Re: "Freedom vs Fear"

Dear Editor,

I would like to respond to the Nov. 25 letter to the editor entitled "Freedom vs Fear." First, let me address the quote from the CDC study of people wearing masks and contracting COVID-19. He said the study was 85%, when in reality it was 70% of those tested wearing masks who still caught COVID-19. However, the CDC has made a more recent recommendation as of Nov. 12 that anyone age 2 and older wear a mask when out in public. It also states that people should wear masks not only to protect themselves, but to protect others who may have COVID-19 and no symptoms.

I wear a mask anytime I am out in public. I do not wear it in fear. Only God knows the day that I will die and how. It could be from COVID-19, a heart attack, or naturally in my sleep, etc. However, my God gave me a brain with which to make decisions. He gave me a brain and a heart that respects others and treats them accordingly. Therefore, I wear a mask, not out of fear, but respect for myself and respect for others. It does provide some protection from COVID-19 and also provides protection for others in case

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Smoke Alarms

Smoke Alarms – The Wake-up Call We Need to Hear: This is an article that I write this time every year because it is about something most of us take for granted, but can be the most important appliance we have in our homes and we need a reminder each year to check our Smoke Alarms and make sure they work. That annoying little twitter that we hear is a reminding us that it is time to change smoke alarm batteries, not to disable them because the noise is annoying. Most of us use alarm clocks to wake up in the morning and if we miss it, we are just late for work, but a more important wake-up call we need to hear can save our lives and is a Smoke Alarm.

When a smoke alarm detects smoke, it emits a shrill sound that as my granddaddy said, "could wake the dead", which in the case of a house fire is critical so we don't become one of those. Most deaths in house fires are caused by smoke inhalation as it overtakes its victims who never wake up.

A smoke alarm can give us a head start so we can survive a house fire. Smoke alarms are installed on ceilings where smoke will gather first, and the alarm will sound to alert us before the lethal smoke moves down to claim lives. We should have smoke alarms in each bedroom in the house so when a fire starts, and smoke begins to flow along the ceilings we can be alerted to the danger and escape.

Smoke alarms provide a critical early warning of fire, allowing additional time to escape. National estimates of reported fires show that in 2011-2018, fires in homes with no smoke alarms caused an average of 940 deaths per year. An additional 510 people per year were fatally injured in fires in which smoke alarms were present but failed to operate. Power source problems were the leading cause of smoke alarm failures. Hardwired smoke alarms were more likely to operate than those powered solely by batteries.

In reported home fires in which the smoke alarms were present but did not operate, almost half of the smoke alarms had missing or disconnected batteries. Nuisance alarms were the leading reason for disconnected smoke alarms. The risk of dying in reported home structure fires is cut in half in homes with working smoke alarms. Installing smoke alarms is the first step, but it is most important to be sure they are working.

Half of the home fire deaths resulted from fires reported between 11 p.m. and 7 a.m. when we are usually asleep and not aware of what is going on around us.

Statistics show that the percentages of

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RC&D Executive Director



Frank Riley

The Baker Place

Let me describe one of my mother's favorite places. The farm of her grandfather, Charlie Baker, whom everyone called Dad. Shirley Adams was born on Dad Baker's farm in October of 1939, about 9 miles east of a little place called Phil Campbell, Alabama. She was able to spend a great deal of time with Dad and Mommie Baker because they lived so close together. The first time she went to town was with her grandparents. The first time she had store-bought ice cream (Black Walnut) was with her grandparents. One of her favorite activities was brushing out Mommy Baker's long black hair. She had a grand childhood living close to her grandparents.

Athel was a cousin of Mom's and was raised by Mommie and Dad Baker. She and Mom were as close as sisters. Dad Baker owned a large tract of land and had a fine garden, including apple trees, muscadine and grape vines, peach trees and pear trees. Mom has always loved green apples. However, Dad Baker would not allow anyone to pick any apples until he said it was time. This did not prevent Athel from helping her younger cousin to steal a green apple or two before they were ripe.

The whole farm was one huge playground for Mom and all of her cousins. Athel would always look after Mom and Sherwon, another cousin. They loved playing in the garage on rainy days. The garage was detached from the house, and Dad's car was always parked in the middle. On either side of the garage were two big rooms with tools stored in them. In front of the car was a long stage-like structure off which the girls could jump and play. The girls loved playing hide and seek with their older cousin Athel.

Mom also enjoyed the wash house. All of the Baker kids came to the farm to use the wash house because it had a fancy washing machine with wringers to help dry the clothes. Mom loved going there because it smelled of bleach and was always kept so clean. When she was young, she just had to try running the wet clothes through the wringers. She held on to the clothing a little too long and the wringers caught her hand, and before she knew it, her arm was caught in the contraption. The little girl was scared to death because she just knew that machine was going to pull her whole body into it. She said, "To this day I can still hear my mother laughing. Her laughter actually calmed my nerves, and I then knew I would be OK."

The Baker Place also had a blacksmith shop on the farm. Dad Baker could make or repair anything related to his farm in that shop. It

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Around The Farm



Mickey Cummings

Chamber of Commerce

There's nothing like falling snow to trigger the Christmas spirit, and we were blessed with a beautiful start to the season blanketed by the fluffy white stuff. Just on the heels of the early December dusting came the kickoff for our Tour of Trees featuring 45 Chamber members' exquisite creations, our distanced Holly Jolly Christmas with the Mayor's Train and breakfast with Santa, The Kris Kringle Market, the Holiday Stop and Shop, and an incredible evening downtown including our Annual Tree Lighting, caroling, live music, a DJ, our first Moonlight Market, and an open house at the historic Courthouse. Downtown was bustling with happy shoppers enjoying the Jingle Bell Buys, the cider and cocoa, cookies, hand painting, and most of all, the twinkling lights warming what could have been a chilly evening.

Certainly things are different this year. We're promoting outdoor and distanced, safe opportunities for our community to participate

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Blairsville - Union County Chamber President



Steve Rowe

Feed Hay Efficiently

Winter-feeding is one of the most costly parts of running a livestock operation. It is also necessary to get livestock through the winter. I know that everyone is being stretched this year, financially, emotionally, and mentally. As we are stretched, we have to find new ways to make do with fewer resources. Let's talk about how to improve the efficiency of your hay, and some practices that you can use to make it go further.

Feeding hay in a hay ring is one of the largest gains in efficiency that you can have if you haven't been using one. Research has shown that cattle will waste 45% of hay if it is fed by simply put out on open ground. Using a hay ring can reduce waste to 20% or less. Modified cone rings are the most efficient design at 5% waste; they are usually the most expensive too. Hay rings are not cheap, but they will pay for themselves over time, because they make your hay go further. Hay trailers or wagons will reduce waste, and are in the 15-20% reduction range. The advantage of using a trailer is that you can move where the hay is fed so that the manure is spread over the pasture more evenly.

Chopping hay increases your efficiency because your hay comes in shorter pieces. This makes it easier for the cattle to get the hay out, resulting in less waste. It's estimated that shorter pieces of hay reduces waste by 5-10% because less hay ends up on the ground. Chopped hay is also easier for cattle to digest in their rumen. This is because smaller objects have a larger surface area to volume ratio than small objects. A larger ratio means that there is more space for the bacteria in the rumen to break down the hay.

You can sort feeding by groups, which means evaluating which of your animals need the highest quality hay, and which ones can take the lower quality hay. Lower quality hay (50% total digestible nutrients and 7% crude protein) can be fed to cattle in mid-gestation. Mid-quality hay (55-58% TDN and 8-9% CP) should be fed to cattle in late-gestation. Your highest quality hay (59-65% TDN and 10-13% CP) should be fed to first calf heifers throughout gestation, growing calves, and mature cows during early lactation. Understanding cattle's body condition scoring also helps you sort which cattle need which hay.

Hay testing is important so that you know what your total digestible nutrients and crude protein are. Ideally you want to wait about 2 weeks after baling to test hay to let the moisture settle. For haylage or baleage, you should wait about a month before testing. A basic hay test

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Watching and Working



Jacob Williams

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