

Public Education Committee

The Educators Get Educated!

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Issue 7



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Laughlin Nevada was home to the **2nd Annual Desert Southwest Fire and Life Safety Conference**. In attendance: NorCal Pub Ed Committee members. If you missed it, here were some highlights.

The conference was designed for public educators that are interested in promoting fire & life safety education in their communities. Topics focused on fire and life safety, Juvenile Firesetting and education methodology.

Once you arrived at the conference and made your way to registration, you would be lucky to make it down the hall without being squirted by a remote controlled fire truck with Sparky in the drivers seat. If you made it safely past Sparky, you were soon ap-



proached by a guy in a 10 foot tall firefighter costume looking to get a laugh.

One of the best parts about the conference was being able to network with agencies

across the country. Although sessions began at 8:30am and ended by 4:30pm, the networking never stopped. The NorCal members took full advantage of the chance to share what their agencies were offering to the public as well as gaining knowledge from people who had been in the business for years.

Returning from the conference, it was encouraging to know that California is on top of it's game when it comes to Public Education through the Fire Service.

"Change Your Clock, Change Your Batteries"

Fire Safety is a community effort in our district. Each year, on the Saturday we change our clocks to "fall back" the Cosumnes CSD Fire Department distributes more than 2000 replacement batteries during our annual "Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery" ride. Approximately 100 on and off-duty fire personnel, Fire Science interns from Cosumnes River College, and local cub scouts jump on a hay ride and travel door-to-door delivering batteries and fire safety brochures to homes in older Elk Grove neighborhoods. The Elk Grove Rotary Club cooks a BBQ lunch for the hungry volunteers at the end of the ride. Members of the Elk Grove Adult Community Training Center (work experience for disabled adults) assist with the event by stuffing the battery bags the week beforehand.

We know that winter is our peak period for household fires, and the first line of defense for our residents is a working smoke detector. With this event we get batteries out to our residents, and start our cub scouts on the path to fire safety. Plus, who doesn't love a hay ride?

~ Jennifer Rubin, Public Education Officer



February 3-9, 2008 is Burn Awareness Week, and Shriners Hospitals for Children is using this week to kick-off a year-long campaign designed to help prevent gasoline burn injuries.

The Shriners Hospitals for Children specializing in burns have treated more than 800 children since 2002 for acute burn injuries resulting from ignition of highly flammable materials such as gasoline. Kids ages 13 and older are in the highest at risk group for gasoline and other flammable substances.

Most gasoline injuries are avoidable through proper use and storage of gasoline. We hope that by visiting this Web site and utilizing the available materials, you'll join us in our mission to prevent burn injuries.

(Article and graphics obtained from Shriners Hospitals for Children™)



Burn Awareness Week
Preventing Gasoline Burns

AARBF to Launch a Scald Safety Campaign

In an effort to prevent common scald injuries to children under the age of five, the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation is working on a Protect Your Child, Infant, and Toddler scald prevention media campaign that will run in Northern and Southern California in April of 2008. The media campaign will operate in specific neighborhoods in both San Francisco County and Los Angeles County. Printed campaign ads will be posted on various types of public transportation and bus shelters within each targeted region. In addition to increasing public education and awareness about scalds through the media campaign, Protect Your Child scald prevention kits specific for both infants and toddlers will be available for parents and caregivers of young children. These kits will be printed in both

English and Spanish. Kits are provided free of charge to any family residing in California. If you would like more information about this campaign, or if you would like to request an Infant or Toddler scald prevention kit, please contact Catie Heringer at 415-495-7223 or cheringer@aarbf.org.



Cosumnes CSD Fire Department Rescue's Santa



When the reindeer leave old St. Nick stranded, the Cosumnes Community Services District Fire Department comes to the rescue. Old Town Elk Grove hosts the Dickens Fair and Holiday Kick-off the Saturday after Thanksgiving. Santa drops by to say hello to the children in attendance and seems to get stuck on the roof every time. If you promise not to tell the kids, I'll tell you how it works. Santa goes to the roof top of an obliging local business located in the center of the street fair. We publish the time he'll be there in the newspaper announcements and fliers for the events for parents. He stays on the roof for a while asking the kids that gather "have you seen my reindeer?". I ask parents for their children's names and stand behind them with a small dry erase board, writing their names so Santa can see and shout down to each of them. They can't figure out how Santa knows their name, and their looks of confusion and amazement are priceless. Pretty soon our reserve truck comes down the street with lights and sirens, followed by an antique engine carrying off-duty firefighters. They do a short routine of rescuing

Santa with all the wrong equipment, such as a rope or a ladder that is too small, and eventually put the aerial ladder up and bring him down. The crowd cheers and Santa rides off in the antique. Rescuing Santa has become a fun holiday tradition for the firefighters involved and we get to meet a lot of residents that come by our booth to say thanks for saving Christmas. ~ Jennifer Rubin, Public Education Officer





Carbon Monoxide Poisoning, "The Silent Killer"

Hundreds of people die from carbon monoxide poisoning each year. During the winter, the weather poses an even greater risk due to people using portable heaters to keep warm and generators when the power goes out.

Recent tragic events throughout the country have served as sad reminders that carbon monoxide poisoning can result in death when it reaches unsafe levels. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) urges the public to be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide and to take measures to ensure safe practices.

Although the popularity of carbon monoxide alarms has been growing in recent years, it cannot be assumed that everyone is familiar with the hazards of carbon monoxide poisoning in the home. Often called "the silent killer" carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil and methane) burn incompletely. In the home, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel are potential sources of carbon monoxide. Vehicles or generators running in an attached garage can also produce dangerous levels of carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide enters one's body through breathing. Carbon monoxide poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning and other illnesses. Some symptoms include shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light-headedness or headaches. High levels of carbon monoxide can be fatal, causing death within minutes. If you have any or all of these symptoms get in contact with your doctor as soon as possible.

Here are a few safety tips to keep you and your family safe from carbon monoxide poisoning.

- ~ Install carbon monoxide alarms inside your home to provide early warning of accumulating carbon monoxide. These alarms should be installed in a central location outside each separate sleeping area.
- ~ Test carbon monoxide alarms at least once a month and replace them according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- ~ Carbon monoxide alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms. Know the difference between both sounds.
- ~ Have fuel-burning heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood and coal stoves, space or portable heaters) and chimney inspected by a professional every year before the cold weather sets in.
- ~ When using a fireplace, make sure the flue is always open for adequate ventilation.
- ~ Never use your oven or grill/BBQ to heat your home.
- ~ If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle, generator, or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if the garage doors are open.

If you have any questions about carbon monoxide poisoning, please contact the Vacaville Fire Department at (707) 449-5452. Most carbon monoxide alarms can be purchased at local hardware stores for a nominal fee.

CONTRA COSTA FIRE HAS 3RD ANNUAL "HALLOWEEN AT THE FIREHOUSE"

A busy Fire Prevention Month for Contra Costa Fire Protection District was brought to an exciting close with "Halloween at the Firehouse". The event was held at two different stations, Sta. 82 in Antioch and Sta. 11 in Clayton on Halloween Night.

Every year this event gets more popular with families, who bring their children to a fun family night, with non-scary games, sweet treats and fun prizes for everyone. The games are safety related and help the kids learn fire safety while enjoying Halloween with their families. A lot of work and planning for public education staff, but as you can see, well worth it all!



What's So Funny About Fire Safety?

As Fire Prevention Specialists, we are always seeking the best way to reach the audience with our safety message. One effective way is to use humor. Since our message is a serious one, naturally we must be very careful about making jokes. Nevertheless, humor can be a great learning tool to reach youth, adults and senior citizens.

When thinking of your audience, you can probably more easily gauge children's' willingness to respond to specific humor than adults. Puppet shows and Sparky, the Fire Dog, are examples that bring smiles to kids' faces while reinforcing fire safety. The adult population, however, can be trickier. Above all, we want to avoid offending the audience we want to make sure our presentation is serious – humor must be used judiciously.

One advantage of humor is that it can make our audience more open to our message. The joke gets a laugh and thus our audience is put at ease. A connection is formed between presenter and audience resulting in increased receptivity to our cautionary counsel.

Finding appropriate humor may involve research, or borrowing jokes found on the Internet. For example, perhaps you are going to be talking about fire safety during the summer season. Here's a joke I found that works well to introduce the topic of wildfire and/or BBQ safety: *How is it one careless match can start a forest fire, but it takes a whole box to start a barbecue?*

Big Au, a Fire Prevention Specialist for Contra Costa County, uses word play while making his presentation on how to use a fire extinguisher.



Explaining the PASS System for using the fire extinguisher, Big names what each letter stands for (P for pull the pin, A for aim, S for Swish and S for Sweep) Later, he "tests" his audience by

asking what each letter stands for. When they get it right, he says "You all pass!"

(Gotcha! S for Squeeze)

Big reports the double meaning for the word PASS always gets a good laugh. Who doesn't want to pass?

Fire Prevention Specialist Mary Paris said she uses humor when she talks about a potentially life-threatening circumstance. During her fire extinguisher presentation, Mary said she points to the written directions on the unit and says, "Of course, the wrong time to read the directions is when there is a fire." The dark humor is effective as audi-

ence members may visualize themselves reading the directions while there IS a fire. They realize the danger of being ignorant in this dangerous situation and resolve to make sure they know how to use the extinguisher before an emergency.

In an example of using humor to break up a presentation and make an audience more receptive, another Fire Prevention Specialist remembered a time when she spoke to senior citizens on the topic of disaster preparation.

As she went through the contents of the disaster prep kit, when she came to the feminine hygiene supplies, she said, "Well, I guess we won't need to worry about having these in our kit."

This is an example of a joke that is effective based on its author. The same joke told by a man or young women would probably be offensive, or certainly fall flat.

Once I spoke at the medical clinic where I am a client. The topic was how to use a fire extinguisher. My primary physician was not present, but I planned on using the following joke for my introduction. "It's a pleasure to be here. I want to let you know I'm also a client here and I want to commend the staff for the excellent service, and to my doctor, for performing my successful lobotomy." Full disclosure: I didn't have the nerve to use it, but I think some sort of self-deprecating humor could have been well-received given the unique circumstances.

Self-deprecating humor -- when you allow the audience to see your foibles (as well as make them feel superior) is a time-honored way to induce laughter. For example I could have said, "I see nurse's assistant (blank) here. I apologize for all that screaming the last time I was here for an appointment. There's something about waiting rooms that scare the heck out of me."

Or I could have opened the presentation by personalizing a joke on the Internet: "The last time I was here, I asked Dr. (blank) what I need to do to live a long life. She said I should give up drinking, change my diet so I eat only raw vegetables with no dressing, and non-fat cottage cheese, and go to bed every night by 7. I was shocked, so I said, "Are you sure I will live longer this way." She said, "I have no idea, but however long you live, I assure you it's going to seem like an eternity!"

Then there's the humor that comes naturally during a presentation as an impromptu remark. If it goes over well, we might make it a regular part of our talk.

Humor. As a learning tool, it's no joke.

Scott Badler is a Fire Prevention Specialist for the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District.

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NorCal FPO's Public Education Committee was established to discuss new and innovative ideas to make public education more effective. This committee develops public education programs which can be implemented by local jurisdictions. This committee also coordinates with other public education committee's worldwide.
Visit us at
www.firepreventionofficers.org

The NorCal Pub Ed Committee meets the 3rd Thursday of every month. Meetings are held at the Contra Costa County Fire District Training Center, located at 2945 Treat Blvd, in Concord, CA.

Meetings commence at 1000hrs.

TRAINING

Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Specialist I & II ~ Offered at the National Fire Academy. Go to www.fema.gov for more info.

Fire Instructor 1A ~ Offered through Industrial Emergency Council, May 19, 21, 23, 28, 30, 2008. Call (650) 508-9008 for sign-up information.

Public Education I ~ Offered through Industrial Emergency Council August 4th-8th, Call (650) 508-9008 for more info.

NFPA World Safety Conference & Expo ~ June 2-5th in Las Vegas, Nevada. Go to www.nfpa.org for more info.

EVENTS

FireWise Assessing Wildfire Hazards in the Home Ignition Zone ~ 2 day workshops held in 4 locations. Go to www.firewise.org for more info.

8th Annual California Senior Injury Prevention Conference ~ May 15th in Sacramento. For more info contact Colleen Campbell @ (510) 577-3535.

18th Annual California Fire Prevention Institute Workshop ~ March 10-14th in Beullton Ca., contact Penni Overstreet @ (909) 386-8472 for more info.

NORCAL PUB ED MEMBERS: Don't forget about the February 22nd NorCal FPO meeting in Woodland where Co-Chairs Sandy Wargo & Selena Brown will be presenting "What's In Your Program". Please show up and support your committee! (Pre-registration is required) For info about the presentation contact Sandy Wargo @ swargo@novatofire.org.

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