



# NEWS RELEASE

## COUNCILMEMBER MARTI EMERALD

### Seventh District

**Date:** December 17, 2010

**Contact:** Geni Cavitt  
**Phone:** 619-236-6677  
**E-mail:** [gcavitt@san-diego.gov](mailto:gcavitt@san-diego.gov)

**For Immediate Release**

### **COUNCILMEMBER EMERALD'S TOWN HALL FOR HOLIDAY SAFETY**

In recent weeks, neighborhoods in District Seven and other areas of San Diego have been hit hard by burglaries and car prowls. Why? Because thieves know their targets are buying holiday gifts for under the tree and leaving valuables in their cars.

Tierrasanta residents heard the message loud and clear from San Diego Police this week at a Public Safety Town Hall. For those who couldn't make it, here are some highlights:

Community Relations Officer Ed Zwibel says most burglaries can be prevented by locking doors and windows. Police investigators find many victims left their garage doors, patio doors, or windows wide open. That's like rolling out the Welcome mat for burglars.

Zwibel reminds us to remove valuables from our cars or lock them out of sight. Bottom line: if you want to keep it, don't leave it in the car, whether you're parked at a shopping center or in your own driveway.

District Seven Residents also report an increase in door to door solicitors selling magazines or asking for donations for youth programs. If they come to your door, ask to see a City-issued solicitation permit. If they can't produce one then they're operating illegally. Police say some of these solicitations are really fronts for would be thieves casing your neighborhood. If you have any questions, call San Diego Police at 619-531-2000.

Fire safety is also a big concern, especially this time of year. Candles, cooking, heaters, and smoking materials are the main causes of home fires during the Holidays, according Fire Captain Julie Bardsley. She told the Tierrasanta Town Hall if you do have a fire, get out of the house and call 911. The same goes for medical emergencies. Don't wait to call for help. Make it your first move.

Bardsley says every family should have an evacuation plan and every home should have a working smoke alarm. It's the cheapest way to keep your family safe. Make sure the smoke alarm has batteries in it and those batteries are working. Low income senior citizens may qualify for free smoke alarms, installed. Check with your neighborhood fire station for details.

Be alert and be safe.

###



# SAN DIEGO FIRE/RESCUE

## Home Safe Holiday

The holidays are a wonderful time to spend with close friends and family. Large holiday feasts, logs on the fire, and seasonal decorations help make the fall and winter seasons so special to us all. Unfortunately, holiday entertaining also brings an increased risk of home fires. As you plan your holiday celebrations, factor in a few moments to make sure your home is safe for everyone to enjoy the holidays.

## Christmas Tree Safety

Christmas trees, although a beautiful symbol of the season, can prove dangerous (even deadly) if not cared for properly. Lights, cords and plugs are the leading causes of Christmas tree fires. Electrical arcing, alone, accounted for 34% of the 370 Christmas tree-caused fires in 1999.

### Selecting a Tree

- Always choose a freshly cut tree. When picking out a tree, strike the stump down on a firm surface; if needles fall off, the tree is too dry.
- Once your tree is home, cut off 1/2 to 1-inch of the stump before placing it in the stand. Fill the stand with water immediately.
- Beware that your tree could absorb as much as a gallon of water the first day. Check your tree's water and refill it often.

### Safety Tips

- Decorate your Christmas tree with safe tree lights and non-combustible decorations. Some lights are not made for indoor use and should not be put on Christmas trees. If you are using larger tree lights, be sure a reflector is placed around each light, rather than a bare bulb.
- All lights should be listed by a testing laboratory, (i.e., UL or FM Approved)
- Never use electric lights on a metal tree.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions on proper use of tree lights. Any string of lights with worn, frayed or broken cords or loose bulb connections should be discarded immediately.
- Avoid overloading electrical circuits or creating an "octopus" with too many cords.
- Always unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to sleep.
- Never use lit candles to decorate your tree. Place all decorative candles far from tree branches & other flammable Christmas decorations.
- Keep your tree well-watered.
- Choose a sturdy tree stand that won't tip over easily.
- If you will be purchasing an artificial tree, be sure it is labeled fire-resistant.
- Keep watch over children around Christmas trees; never let children play with wiring or lights. Keep all matches and lighters in a locked cabinet, far from children's reach.
- Keep your tree and all other flammable materials at least three-feet away from heat sources.

## Discarding Your Tree

- Dispose of your tree immediately when it begins dropping needles. Dried-out trees are highly flammable and should not be left in a house, garage, or leaning against the outside of the house.
- Tree recycling has become more wide-spread; check to see where facilities exist in your area.
- NEVER burn your tree in a fireplace. Christmas tree branches put off a large amount of heat and could cause a fire. Christmas trees also cause oily soot which may damage your fireplace.



In 1999, 370 home fires were attributed to Christmas trees, causing 5 deaths, 60 injuries and accounted for \$15.7 million in property damage

## Holiday Decorating

**Use caution when choosing your holiday decorations and lighting.**

- Decorations should be made from flame-resistant materials whenever possible.
- Purchase holiday lights that bear the UL (Underwriters Laboratories) label
- Always follow the manufacturers' instructions for installation and maintenance.
- Before hanging lights, inspect all light strings carefully and replace any broken or damaged items before plugging the lights in.
- Always unplug lights before changing bulbs or fuses.
- Take care not to hang lights in a manner that could damage the cords; use clips instead of nails.
- DO NOT overload electrical sockets, and don't run electrical cords underneath rugs.
- Lastly, be sure to turn off all decorative lighting before leaving the house or going to bed.



## HEATING SAFETY

**The San Diego Fire Department wants to alert citizens about the potential dangers posed by home heating units. Use these helpful tips to use your heating units safely.**

- Keep children and pets away from supplementary heating appliances.
- Never use a space heater overnight in the room where you are sleeping. It should never be left unattended.
- Place heaters at least three feet away from objects such as bedding, furniture, draperies, and other combustibles.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions in installing, operating, and maintaining your heating appliance.
- Keep a properly maintained smoke detector on all levels of your home and close to sleeping areas.

### **Electric Space Heaters:**

Portable electric heaters are responsible for 2600 fires and 130 deaths annually. These heaters are not substitutes for central heating. Nor are they designed for extended use.

- All types must be kept at least 36 inches from anything that can burn, including furniture, bedding, clothing, pets and people.
- Space heaters must not be left operating when you are not in the room, or when you go to sleep.
- Make sure the venting system is open--a blocked vent can cause your space heater to exhaust carbon monoxide into your living space.

### **Gas Heaters:**

- Allow five minutes or more for the gas to go away before trying again.
- Do not allow gas to accumulate.
- Light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot. This avoids the risk of a flashback, which could occur if you allow gas to accumulate before you are ready to light the pilot.
- IF YOU SMELL GAS, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LIGHT THE APPLIANCE. Turn off all controls and open a window or door. Leave the area, and then call a gas service person. DO NOT touch any electrical surfaces.
- Never sleep in a room where a gas heater is burning.

**\*See flipside for information on storm safety\***



## **Carbon Monoxide Awareness**

In the past decade, people have become more aware of the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) 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. When CO is breathed in by an individual, it accumulates in the blood and forms a toxic compound known as carboxyhemoglobin (COHb). Hemoglobin carries oxygen in the bloodstream to cells and tissues. Carbon monoxide attaches itself to hemoglobin and displaces the oxygen that the body organs need. In short the body is unable to receive oxygen, the cells and tissue die because of a lack of oxygen, and when the cells and tissue die so does the person.

### **Facts & figures**

- According to the National Safety Council, 400 gas-poisoning deaths occurred in 2000, 300 of them in homes.
- The risk of unintentional CO death is highest for the very old (ages 75 or above).

### **Safety tips**

- Install CO alarms (listed by an independent testing laboratory) inside your home to provide early warning of accumulating CO.
- CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each separate sleeping area.
- After purchasing an alarm, call your local fire department's non-emergency telephone number to find out what number to call if the CO alarm sounds. Post that number by your telephone(s) and make sure everyone in the household knows the difference between the fire emergency and CO emergency numbers (if there is a difference).
- Test CO alarms at least once a month, and replace CO alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- 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 garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.
- During and after a snow storm, make sure vents for the dryer, furnace, stove, and fireplace are clear of snow build-up.
- Have fuel-burning household heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood and coal stoves, space or portable heaters) and chimneys inspected by a professional every year before cold weather sets in.
- When using a fireplace, open the flue for adequate ventilation.
- Open a window slightly whenever using a kerosene or gas heater. (Kerosene heaters are illegal in many states. Always check with local authorities before buying or using one.) Only refuel outside, after the device has cooled.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Only use barbecue grills – which can produce CO – outside. Never use them in the home or garage.
- When purchasing new heating and cooking equipment, select products tested and labeled by an independent testing laboratory.
- When purchasing an existing home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking systems, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house.
- When camping, remember to use battery-powered heaters and flashlights in tents trailers, and motor homes.
- CO alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms. Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of the home and in or outside all sleeping areas.

- Know the difference between the sound of the smoke alarms and the sound of the CO alarms.

#### **If your CO alarm sounds**

- If it is a battery-powered intermittent alarm, check the battery.
- If it is a steady alarm or you are unable to determine, evacuate the dwelling. Do not re-enter until the responding agency says it is ok.
- Report the CO alarm warning by calling the appropriate phone number.
- Call a qualified technician to inspect all equipment.

Symptoms of CO poisoning consist of: severe headache, dizziness, mental confusion, nausea, or faintness. Many of these symptoms are similar to the flu, food poisoning or other illnesses.

#### **Candle Safety**

Candle safety is also a necessity of the holidays because candles serve as a popular decorative purpose. Remember that a candle is an open flame, and it can easily ignite any combustible nearby.

#### **Facts and figures**

- During 2002, an estimated 18,000 home fires started by candles were reported to public fire departments. These fires resulted in an estimated 130 civilian deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries and an estimated direct property loss of \$333 million. Homes include one- and two-family dwellings, apartments and manufactured housing.
- The estimated number of home candle fires was unchanged from 2001 to 2002. For the first time since 1991, the number of home candle fires has stabilized rather than increasing.
- Candle fires accounted for an estimated 5% of all reported home fires.
- Two-fifths (40%) of the home candle fires started in the bedroom, resulting in 30% of the associated civilian deaths.
- Reported home candle fires have more than tripled since the low of 5,500 in 1990.
- December had almost twice the number of home candle fires of an average month.
- Half (50%) of home candle fires occurred when some form of combustible material was left or came too close to the candle; Eighteen percent occurred after candles were left unattended, abandoned or inadequately controlled; Five percent were started by people (usually children) playing with the candle.
- Falling asleep was a factor in 12% of home candle fires and 25% of the home candle fire deaths.
- Christmas Day was the peak day of the year for home candle fires in 1999-2002. New Year's Day and Christmas Eve tied for second. Source: National estimates based on NFIRS and NFPA survey.

#### **Safety tips:**

- Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- During power outages, avoid carrying a lit candle. Use flashlights
- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire, like clothing, books and curtains.
- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily, are made from a material that cannot burn, and are large enough to collect dripping wax.
- Keep candles and all open flames away from flammable liquids.
- Keep candle wicks trimmed to one-quarter inch and extinguish taper and pillar candles when they get to within two inches of the holder. Votives and containers should be extinguished before the last half-inch of wax starts to melt.



City of San Diego



# Winter Fire Safety... Are You Prepared?

Captain Julie Bardsley  
Tierrasanta Fire Station 39  
December 16, 2010



# Common Causes of Residential Fires

- Candles
- Cooking
- Heaters
- Smoking materials





## Some Do's and Don'ts

- DON'T stove or BBQ coals to heat a house, garage or shed s
- DO make sure furnace is checked annually
- DO have fire extinguishers in house and garage – know how to use them
- DON'T become a “victim” of your Christmas tree





# What to do if You Have a Fire

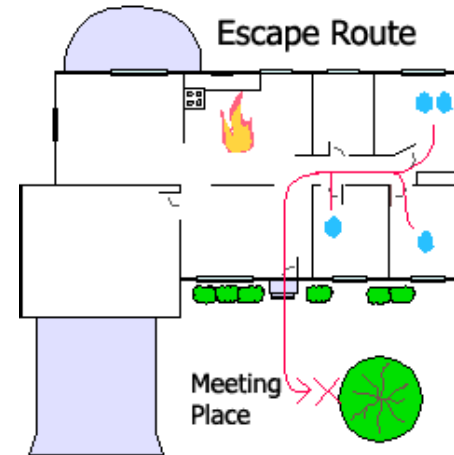
- Call 9-1-1. Be calm. Know to say: address; problem etc.
- Don't try to fight larger fire before calling 9-1-1; Delays can happen
- Don't try to save belongings or go back inside to get things





# Fire Escape Plan

- Have an escape plan and make sure all family members know it.
- Keep emergency numbers and a flashlight near the telephone.
- Identify an outside meeting place in case of a fire.
- Practice your escape plan.



|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br><br><br><br> | <br><br><br><br> | <p>(building name &amp; room number, list subrooms, if any)</p> <p>Hazards Within:</p> <p>List hazards such as Flammables, Acids, Bases, General Chemicals, high pressure compressed gases, Biohazards, Radioactive materials, etc</p> <p>Primary Contact: (name &amp; office phone)</p> <p>Second Contact: (name &amp; office phone)</p> <p>Building Monitor/Safety: (name &amp; office phone)</p> <p>Department Head: (name &amp; office phone)</p> <p>Fire/Police/Ambulance: 911</p> <p>Envir. Health &amp; Safety (or RSO, if needed) 646-3327</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



# Escape Route

- Each member of the family should know how to get out safely by at least 2 routes.
- Family members should practice opening their windows to become familiar with their operation.





# Practice Your Escape Plan

- Practice your plan in the day and at night with the lights off.
- Position every family member in their own room and practice as if it were real.





# Realize the Danger of Smoke

- Each family member should understand the importance of crawling low under smoke.
- Smoke and heat rise so the best place to find fresher, cooler air is near the floor.





City of San Diego



# Questions to Ask Yourself About Household Safety

- Has your chimney been inspected or cleaned in the past 12 months?
- Are space heaters at least 3 feet away from walls, sofas, and anything else that may burn?
- Are paints, gasoline, and other flammable liquids stored away from flames and sparks?





# Smoke Detectors Can Save Your Life

- You should have a smoke detector on every level of your house.
- Have one in every room of the house.
- Change the batteries when you change your clocks twice a year.





# Questions

