



OCTOBER 4-10, 2004 IS FIRE PREVENTION WEEK IN VALLEJO

Vallejo Fire Chief Donald Parker would like to remind everyone that during Fire Prevention Week we should make sure that we are as fire safe as we can be, both at home and work. We all need to also take this week to prepare your "Disaster Supplies Kits" in the event of a disaster.

Tips for Preparing Your Disaster Supplies Kits

- Keep items in separate airtight plastic bags. This will help protect them from damage or spoiling.
- Observe the expiration or "use by" date on stored food and water. If you have prepared your own containers of water, replace them every six months to ensure freshness.
- Rethink your kit and family needs at least once a year. Replace batteries, update medicines, clothes, etc.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications.
- You may find that the best solution is to gradually acquire a reserve by refilling prescriptions a little early, but always using those on hand first to avoid having the expiration dates lapse. Be sure they are stored to meet instructions on the label. It may be difficult to obtain prescription medications during a disaster because stores may be closed or supplies may be limited. Keep copies of essential prescriptions with you at all times.
- Use easy-to-carry containers for the supplies you would most likely need for an evacuation. Label them clearly. Think about using:
 - A. Large trash container with handles and a cover
 - B. Camping backpack
 - C. Duffel bag
 - D. Cargo container that fits on the roof of your vehicle
 - E. Insulated cooler that protects stored items in hot climates
 - Store water separately to prevent damage from leakage.
 - Always keep your cell phone with you, if you have one. Do not pack it in the kit. Consider getting an extra cell phone battery to keep with your Disaster Supplies Kit.

The Vallejo Fire Department also strives to educate the public in fire prevention and fire safety education. The following are statistics produced by the National Fire Protection Association on fire deaths and smoke detectors.

Fire deaths

- In 2002, 79% of fires in the United States occurred in the home, resulting in 2,670 fire deaths.
- In the U.S., someone dies from a home fire roughly every 197 (2002) minutes.
- In Canada, someone is fatally injured in a home fire roughly every 31 hours.
- Roughly half of all home fire deaths in the U.S. resulted from fires that were reported between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. But only one-quarter of home fires occur between those hours.
- Although children five and under make up about 9% of the country's population, they accounted for 17% of the home fire deaths.
- Smoking was the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January and February, smoking and heating equipment caused similar shares of fire deaths.
- Smoke alarms
- Since the 1970's, when smoke alarms first became widely available to households in the United States, the home fire death rate has been reduced by half.
- Nineteen of every 20 homes (95%) in the U.S. have at least one smoke alarm.
- More than half of home fire deaths result from fires in the 5% of homes with no smoke alarms.
- In one-quarter of the reported fires in homes equipped with smoke alarms, the devices did not work, most often because of missing, dead or disconnected batteries.
- In a 1999 survey, only eight percent of those whose smoke alarms had sounded in the past year initially thought that a fire had caused the alarm to sound and thought they should get out of their homes as a result.
- Smoke alarms that are 10 years old have a 30% chance of failing to work properly and should be replaced.

Smoke Alarms

- If you have a fire, smoke alarms can cut nearly in half your risk of dying in a fire. Smoke alarms sense abnormal amounts of smoke or invisible combustion gases in the air. They can detect both smoldering and flaming fires. National Fire Protection Association 72, the National Fire Alarm Code, now requires in new homes hard-wired, interconnected smoke alarms with battery back-up on every level of the home, outside each sleeping area, and inside each bedroom. It also requires that alarms be wired together so that if one sounds, they all sound.
- If smoke alarms are not already in place, at a minimum install them on every level of the home and outside each sleeping area. If a fire occurs inside a bedroom, dangerous gases can cause heavier sleep. Smoke alarms inside bedrooms will be more likely to wake you.
- To prevent nuisance alarms, vacuum cobwebs and dust from your smoke alarms monthly. Never disable a smoke alarm, even if you experience nuisance alarms while cooking or showering. Clean the smoke alarm following the manufacturer's instructions

and, if possible, relocate it away from the kitchen or bathroom. If nuisance alarms are a persistent problem, look for a different type of smoke alarm.

- Use the test button to test your smoke alarms monthly. The test feature tests all electronic functions and is safer than testing with a controlled fire (matches, lighters, cigarettes). If the smoke alarm manufacturer's instructions permit the use of an aerosol smoke product for testing the smoke alarm, and you prefer that method, choose one that has been listed (examined and tested to appropriate product safety standards) by a third-party product testing laboratory, and use it in accordance with the product instructions.
- If you have battery-powered smoke alarms, replace the batteries at least once a year. (Replace the batteries in your carbon monoxide (CO) alarms at the same time you replace your smoke alarm batteries.) Some agencies recommend that you replace batteries when the time changes from standard to daylight savings each spring and then back again in the fall. "Change your clock, change your batteries." Replacing batteries this often certainly will not hurt; however, data show that fresh batteries will last at least a year, so more frequent replacement is not necessary unless the smoke alarm begins to chirp. Also, Arizona, Hawaii, the eastern portion of Indiana, Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and Guam do not use daylight savings time. Pick an easy-to-remember anniversary, such as your birthday or a national holiday, as the day to change the batteries each year.
- Replace your smoke alarms every 10 years. This is the recommendation of the National Fire Protection Association and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Smoke alarms become less sensitive over time.
- Be sure to install smoke alarms in areas where pets are and in other buildings that house animals.

The Vallejo Fire Department will visit schools throughout Vallejo to educate the students about the importance of fire prevention and fire safety.