

Fire and Forest

Fire Prevention is Year Round ...

by Chris Kramer

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As we roll into December, many of us have just enjoyed a Thanksgiving with friends or family, gone to see the annual town tree lighting, awakened to find a dusting of snow on the ground or trees or noticed the smell of wood stoves in the air again.

Everything about the start of the fall season this year makes it feel different from the last. They say that in Southern California, fire season is year round, and our continuing drought conditions have made this a very real statement. Maybe the projected wetter than normal winter will allow us to relax a little from this threat in the coming months. Could it be that we dodged the bullet again this year? The bullet I'm speaking of is a large or catastrophic wildfire in our area. Yes we have been lucky since the Mountain and Silver Fires that occurred in the summer of 2013. But I have always said, there's nothing like a major fire to get everyone's attention. When it comes to reinforcing the need for everyone to do their part, to prepare for, and fire abate their property, we all need to be vigilant and continue this practice.

With the onset of the cold weather and more use of heating appliances, be sure that you have a working smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in or near each sleeping area of your home. These devices really do save lives. If using any kind of electric space heater, be sure it is plugged directly to a wall outlet. Never use an extension cord to these or any high wattage appliance because the risk of failure is too great. Forced air furnaces should have the filters changed before each heating season and even a regular service from a heating technician is a good idea also. Just ask anyone who has found a critter or rodent nest packed into their furnace. Fireplaces and wood stoves are another high hazard item this time of year. Be sure to keep screens and glass doors in place or closed especially when going to bed for the night. And always keep anything combustible or flammable away from these in all directions.

An inspection or cleaning of the chimney or flue pipe is also a wise investment if it has not been done in a while.

Living on this mountain, our threat of fire is something we all deal with in our lives. With common sense and proactive actions beforehand we can all reduce our exposure to this threat.