Smoke detectors key to saving lives

By Christina Hansen

For any family, safety is paramount – especially related to fire and carbon monoxide poisoning. With their proven ability to double a family's chance of surviving a residential fire, smoke detectors are one of the most valuable fire safety tools on the market – yet we tend to take them for granted. And, carbon monoxide – appropriately dubbed "the silent killer" – also gets little or no attention in many homes.

Smoke alarms are such a common presence in our homes that it's easy to just expect them to work every time. But like many other devices and appliances around the house, smoke detectors require regular cleaning and maintenance to function effectively. Many models on the market offering smoke and carbon monoxide detection – an often overlooked consideration.



Change smoke detector batteries annually.

To ensure the best family fire safety, smoke and carbon monoxide detection possible, consider these tips:

Easy Fire Safety Strategies:

• If you have children in the house, always store candles and matches well out of their reach, either in a locked drawer or on a high shelf.

• Always keep space heaters a minimum of 3 feet away from flammable materials like paper, clothing, bedding and draperies.

• Never leave food that’s being cooked on the stovetop or under the broiler unattended – if you need to leave the kitchen, turn off the heat source.

• Keep a small multipurpose fire extinguisher (one that’s approved by a testing laboratory) in your home for putting out small fires.

• If you have a fireplace, be sure to have it cleaned by a professional once a year to remove flammable soot, and always keep screen in place to catch flying sparks.

• When grilling outdoors, always use the appropriate type of lighter fluid, and never add more after the fire is lit – this can cause flames to flare up and spread to other objects or areas.

Smoke Alarm Maintenance Musts:

• Keep them clean. Use your vacuum cleaner’s upholstery attachment to clear way dust and cobwebs. And if the manufacturer’s instructions say that it’s safe to, gently vacuum inside the detector as well.

• Change the batteries once a year. Choose a date that’s easy to remember, like a birthday, anniversary, or the day you switch over to daylight-saving time.

• Test your smoke detectors every month. Just press the test button – if the alarm sounds, it works. Want to be extra sure? Light a candle, blow it out, and then hold it below the detector – the trailing smoke should set the alarm off.

Facts to Know About Carbon Monoxide:

• Carbon Monoxide (CO) is produced when wood and fossil fuels like oil, natural gas, charcoal, kerosene and gasoline don’t burn completely.

• CO can’t be seen, smelled, or tasted – that’s why its nickname is “the silent killer.” Only a carbon monoxide detector can warn you that CO is present.

• CO poisoning often feels like the flu, with symptoms like fatigue, muscle aches, nausea and headache, but can progress to disorientation, elevated heart rate, convulsions, organ damage, and even death.

• Carbon monoxide harms people by blocking oxygen from entering the bloodstream. CO bonds to the hemoglobin in blood, preventing it from doing its job: carrying oxygen throughout your body.

• When you’re asleep, you can’t feel CO symptoms. Make sure that carbon monoxide detectors are installed in all bedrooms and sleeping areas of your home – they save lives.

Creating an Escape Plan:

Does your family know where to go and what to do if your smoke alarm or carbon monoxide detector goes off? If not, now is the time to make a plan.

• Walk through your home with your children and point out all possible exits, like doors, windows and fire escapes.

• Sit down together to draw a map of your home, and mark the shortest escape routes from each room.

• Choose someplace safe and familiar outside your home where family members can meet in an emergency, such as a neighbor’s house, a nearby street sign, or a lamp-post.

• Pair young, elderly, or handicapped members of your household with an “escape buddy” who can help them safely leave the house during a fire or any other emergency.

• Hold practice escape drills every few months, both day and night, so that your family is extremely familiar with the procedure should an emergency ever occur.

Christina Hansen is a product specialist at CableOrganizer.com.

AAUW home tour in Angora burn area

For the 2010 Home Tour, South Lake Tahoe AAUW Branch is featuring seven rebuilt and renovated homes in the North Upper Truckee Road neighborhood. Ranging from cozy to spacious, these homes are filled with carefully thought out details, fine craftsmanship, and environmentally friendly features. Light refreshments will be served in the garden of an eighth home.

Early on the windy Sunday afternoon of June 24, 2007, what came to be called the Angora Fire erupted near Seneca Pond. When it was over, 254 homes in nearby neighborhoods were destroyed and more than 3,000 acres of forest land burned. The residents never gave up and by this winter a majority of the homes had been rebuilt.

Proceeds from the tour benefit camperships and scholarships for local girls and women.

When: June 26

Time: Noon-4pm

Tickets:$20 in advance – $25 on tour day. Sold by AAUW members, and at vendors in town before the tour,and at featured homes on tour day.

More info: Contact Kay at kmhende@charter.net

Tickets go on sale June 1 at the following South Shore outlets:

Alpaca Pete’s, 3008 Highway 50, Meyers

Visitor Center, 3066 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe

Curves, 2482 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe

Explore Tahoe, 4114 Lake Tahoe Blvd., South Lake Tahoe

Or mail ticket orders to:

AAUW Home Tour

c/o Bonnie Driscoll

P.O. Box 18523

South Lake Tahoe, CA 96151

Tahoe added to firm’s list of destinations

Rocky Mountain Vacation Rentals added Lake Tahoe this month to its inventory of vacation rental units.

“By extending our online availability to these new locations,

our customers will gain access to an additional 2,000 rental units that can all be reserved online," Rocky Mountain Vacation Rentals owner and founder Tommy Z. Hoffman said in a statement. The rentals will be accessible online 24 hours a day where potential and returning customers may browse, view, and reserve vacation condos, townhomes, lodges, and private homes.

The addition of online booking for the new markets will be accessible this summer.

Rocky Mountain Vacation Rentals' current online inventory includes vacation rentals in Vail, Beaver Creek, Aspen, Snowmass, Breckenridge, Keystone, and Copper Mountain resort markets.

In addition to Lake Tahoe, the new areas include Crested Butte, Jackson Hole, Park City, Mammoth and Whistler vacation rental markets.

Fallen Leaf Lake – an opening without controversy

By Kathryn Reed

FALLEN LEAF LAKE – Not a cloud in the sky – it's a bluebird day. Boats fill the slips. Children run around; some getting wetter than their parents would like. Ice cream is one of the most sought after items in the store. Hikers are in short-sleeves. Those from off the hill are the ones in the turtlenecks on a day like this. Unfamiliar drivers wonder what kind of road they are on – some of the potholes seem as wide as the narrow, mostly one-lane road.

It must be Fallen Leaf Lake.

With the bevy of activity going on, evidence of all of the unrest and name-calling that went on during the winter at this small mountain enclave on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe is well hidden.



Fallen Leaf Lake from the back counter at the store. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The worst thing, and some would argue the best, is the store ran out of food Saturday and had to borrow from its neighbors – Stanford Sierra Camp.

Rob and Sandy Wirth took over the concessionaire this season, with this being their first weekend to be open.

“We’ve had lots of compliments,” Sandy Wirth said in between helping customers at the store.

Stephanie Bryan and Mona Brauer looked around the outside before going in. They commented on the outdoor teak tables, giving them their approval.

“The store feels more open. You don’t feel like you have to squeeze between the aisles,” Brauer said after perusing the inside.

Bryan owns a house at the lake, while Brauer is an occasional

guest at the lake. Neither frequents the store a ton, but they like being able to pick something up they may have forgotten and they like to browse the T-shirt selection.

The Wirths opened the interior of the store by pushing one of the coolers to a wall, and bringing the shirt and hat selection toward the middle of the store.

It’s clear on Day 2 of being open that all the shelves are not stocked. That was planned. A variety of sundries, fishing goods, some fresh produce, mixings for s’mores and other items are available. More will be added.

The menu choices will also grow as the season takes off. For now, burgers, sandwiches, soup and ice cream are the staples. Vegetarians will be accommodated as summer truly unfolds.

The Wirths are working on securing their beer and wine license so people can have a cocktail.

On the back deck are two old sugar pine slabs that have been turned into counters.

Mother Nature didn’t help the Fallen Leaf Lake opening. It was snowing in Lake Tahoe this past week. Piles of snow had to be cleared from the area. A team of about 20 volunteers helped get the docks in the water and grounds looking as though it’s been spring in the mountains for more than two days.

Ted Wendell spent about four hours in a wetsuit cleaning the lakeshore of debris.

General Manager Tom Barnes is walking around the docks with a clipboard on Saturday in the late afternoon. He is smiling.

He points to Rob Wirth with a rake in his hand on the shore making sure the sand is just right. He calls the people by name who are helping make sure opening weekend comes off without a hitch – people who are volunteering their time.

Barnes talks a bit about what it’s been like since coming on board last August. He doesn’t want to badmouth anyone, but he said things had not been as well kept as they could have been.

At the morning community meeting at the firehouse, resident Tom Beales sang the praises of the Wirths and commended them for their efforts in getting things going in such a short period of time. (The Wirths had six weeks to get the site ready, having taken over for the John and Ruth Rich who had the concessionaire job for the last 14 years.)

Rob Wirth gave a brief presentation to the board and nearly 50 people at Saturday’s meeting. He told them about the two electric boats the marina has for rent – and that had already been plying the glass-like morning water.

A couple aluminum fishing boats are also new.

Gas is selling for $3.99 a gallon. That wasn’t stopping people from churning through the dark, cold waters that sit on the edge of Desolation Wilderness.

Wirth even said he would deliver food to the firehouse. This may be good news for Gary Gerren; the board hired him that day to be the fire chief.

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Geotourism meeting in Tahoe City

The National Geographic Society has partnered with the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and Sierra Business Council to capture the history and heritage of the Sierra Nevada in order to create

an interactive Web site and print map. The project partners are inviting the public to make nominations inspiring history buffs and adventurers, backpackers and foodies, birders and sightseers to discover unique destinations in the Sierra Nevada.

The Sierra Nevada Geotourism project is an effort designed to create consumer awareness of sustainable destinations in the region by engaging local communities in defining those places. The project aims to stimulate rural development, cultivate local pride and foster stewardship of the region's unique natural and cultural assets by identifying, documenting and sharing them through print and online media.

Nominations can be made by attending a regional forum or by visiting the Sierra Nevada Geotourism website.

What: An insider's view on submitting successful nominations followed by networking reception

Where: Granlibakken Conference Center & Lodge, Tahoe City

When: June 2, 3:30pm

Learn about migratory birds in Tahoe basin

The U.S. Forest Service Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit has partnered with the newly formed Tahoe Institute for Natural Science to bring an International Migratory Bird Day Festival to Lake Tahoe.

The event is from 9:30am-3:30pm June 5 at the Taylor Creek Visitor Center on Emerald Bay Road in South Lake Tahoe.

The festival will provide an opportunity for the whole family to learn about migratory birds and how local scientists are working for their benefit. It will include games, crafts, and a special bird walk for children. Aspiring birdwatchers can learn about the latest binoculars and spotting scopes, and homeowners can get tips on dealing with those pesky woodpeckers. Raptor enthusiasts will enjoy a talk on osprey, presented by California State Parks biologist Lisa Fields, and a presentation from a local falconer featuring a live bird of prey.

In addition, guided bird walks will take place at Spooner Lake, Cove East, and Blackwood Canyon from approximately 8am to 10:30am. Walks are free, but space is limited and preregistration is required.

For walk registration, call Will Richardson at (530) 587.6895 or email will@tinsweb.org.

For more information on the festival, call Forest Service wildlife biologist Rena Escobedo at (530) 543.2733.

Judge: Villalobos' assets to remain frozen in CalPERS case

By Dale Kasler, Sacramento Bee

A judge kept intact the freeze on former CalPERS board member Alfred Villalobos' assets Friday, dealing a setback to the man accused of bribing top officials with the pension fund.

Villalobos' gambling habits weighed heavily on Los Angeles Superior Court Judge John Reid, who refused the Lake Tahoe

businessman’s attempt to unfreeze his real estate holdings, luxury cars and other assets.

Attorney General Jerry Brown is suing Villalobos for $95 million, saying he bribed officials with the California Public Employees’ Retirement System to influence investment decisions. Brown’s lawyers said Villalobos has squandered $68 million already and could dissipate the rest of his fortune before the state can collect on its lawsuit.

Read the whole story

Clean Tahoe’s Dump Day

Clean Tahoe Program’s Annual Community Cleanup Day – known by locals as “Dump Day” – is June 5 from 8am-4pm at the South Tahoe Refuse Transfer Station at 2140 Ruth Ave. in South Lake Tahoe.

Clean Tahoe sponsors this community event where local residents can dispose of a truckload of unwanted household and bulk items for $5.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe



• Squaw Valley will have beginning and intermediate terrain open May 29-30.

• Motorists may want to avoid driving around Lake Tahoe the morning of June 6 because America's Most Beautiful Bike Ride is that day.

• The 2010 North Lake Tahoe Travel Planner, a collaborative marketing piece of the Incline Village Crystal Bay Visitors Bureau and the North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, won a gold ADDY Award in the Collateral Marketing Category. Smith + Jones, the advertising agency of record for North Lake Tahoe, and HD96, both headquartered in Incline Village, officially took home the award.

• Adam Bradley, who set a Pacific Crest Trail speed record with Scott Williamson last summer, will give a free talk about the experience June 2 from 6:30-8pm at REI, 2225 Harvard Way, Reno.

• June 12 is Free Fishing Day in Nevada. The statewide event allows anglers to fish in any public fishing water in the state without a fishing license or trout stamp, while all limits and other regulations apply. Visit www.ndow.org to find out about local events.

Vail Resorts buys Bay Area snow-sports website

By Mark Harden, Denver Business Journal

Vail Resorts Inc. said Friday it has acquired Mountain News Corp. (MNC), which operates the snow-sports website OnTheSnow.com.

In a statement, the Broomfield-based ski-resort operator and

real estate company (NYSE: MTN) said it will operate Orinda, Calif.-based MNC as a separate business, and that its editorial content “will be maintained separate and independent from Vail Resorts’ five mountain resorts and lodging and real estate businesses.

Terms were not disclosed.

OnTheSnow.com offers news reports, reviews and other information about ski resorts. Vail Resorts says it is the world’s most visited online snow sports portal.

Read the whole story