Opinion: Don’t let your vehicle start a fire

By Teri Mizuhara

Keeping your vehicle up-to-date on its maintenance schedules can prevent wildfires.

By making sure all your vehicles are in good working order you can help reduce the potential of wildland fires occurring in California.

Recent examples of wild fires caused by vehicles are clearly visible in El Dorado County along Highway 50 below the Apple Café in Placerville, along Highway 50 near Cedar Heights Drive and along Highway 50 near Carson Road and in Amador County on Highway 88 and Toyon Road in Pine Grove.

When a vehicles engine is not well maintained, the exhaust system can become overtaxed thereby allowing fuel to enter the exhaust system which in turn overheats the catalytic convertor that melts and disintegrates while you are driving. Pieces of the catalytic convertor exit the muffler at about 1,200 degrees and can bounce into the dried grass along the edge of roads and start fires

Another common cause of wildland fires occurs when tires that are improperly inflated (too little or too much pressure) blow out and literally shred into pieces and bounce off the road coming to rest in the dried vegetation which during summer months can catch fire. And finally, towing vehicles, boats, campers, jet skis, etc., place added stress on a vehicles transmission and when that transmission hasn’t been properly maintained it can spell disaster.

Frank Rodriguez of the California Highway Patrol said, “If someone is having car trouble, we encourage them to find a

safe place to stop, such as a paved shoulder or parking area. They should avoid pulling off into the weeds if at all possible because this can cause a fire. Drivers should also be wary of driving long distances on a flat tire because the tire will detached from the rim and could cause a fire under the right circumstances. Best practice is for the driver to drive short distances at slow speeds to find a place to park."

Driving is something we do all the time, however we don't always give it much thought. A well maintained vehicle helps ensure that you won't end up on the side of the road with a trail of fires behind. This also saves you money, the better the engine runs the less fuel is wasted.

Teri Mizuhara is the public information officer with the CalFire unit that serves El Dorado County.

Opinion: Power tools can trigger wildland fire

By Teri Mizuhara

Recently there have been a number of wildfires caused by people using gas powered equipment to create defensible space at the wrong time of day.

Using equipment such as tractors, lawn mowers or weed eaters at the wrong time of day can end disastrously. It is best to operate gas powered equipment before 10am and after 7pm when the humidity is higher and temperatures are cooler. This will lessen the chance of sparking a fire.

We understand that many people are taking advantage of this

cooler than average weather and are outdoors creating additional defensible space around their homes. We want to encourage this, but at the same time we don’t want folks to endanger themselves or their community.

Here are some tips to do the right thing the right way:

– Operate gas powered equipment before 10 in the morning or after 7 in the evening.

– Maintain your equipment in good working order to prevent carbon buildup which can cause a fire.

– Make sure you have a spark arrester and that is it in good shape.

– Allow all equipment to cool for a minimum of 15 minutes before refueling.

– Remove rocks from the area to be mowed, a metal blade from a mower striking a rock can cause a fire.

– Never mow dry grass with a mower designed to cut green grass, this is a common cause of fires which may not only result in a wildland fire, but often destroys your mower. The dry grass can get caught inside the mower and catch fire, leaving in its wake a trail of wildland fires and a fire in the engine compartment.

– Use a weed eater to mow dry grass and weeds.

– Have a shovel, fire extinguisher or other water source available and phone nearby in case you start a fire. Never hesitate to call 9-1-1, fires can get out of control quickly and threaten life and property in a matter of minutes.

Following these fire safety tips will allow you to work safely in your yard.

Thank you and have a fire safe summer.

Teri Mizuhara is public information officer for the CalFire unit that includes El Dorado County.

Opinion: Be ready to use a fire extinguisher

By Tracy Franklin

This is the sixth of a series of articles highlighting emergency preparedness. Use these tools to prepare yourself for an emergency. More information is available in the city's website.

Pre-planning is key to your safety.

When it comes to fire – be smart. If the fire is too big for you to handle, immediately get out of the house. Don't stop to gather anything or to do anything. Once you are outside, stay outside. Intense heat and toxic fumes can kill you.

Planning and practicing fie safety:

1) Choose a reunion place outside of your home. Regularly remind all household members where this place is.

2) Draw the floor plan of your home, and discuss two ways to exit each room.

3) Hold a fire drill at least twice a year. Blindfolded,

practice crawling your exit routes to simulate getting out of a smoke-filled house.

Fire extinguishers:

Locate your fire extinguishers with care. Ready access to them is critical. Fire moves quickly. Quick access can be the difference between putting a small fire out or suffering much damage.

Several smaller extinguishers located throughout the house are better than one large one that may be difficult to get to quickly.

Key places for your extinguishers are:

• The kitchen

• The garage

• One on every level if your home has multiple floors.

A:B:C extinguishers are recommended:

• “A” fires – ordinary combustibles such as wood, paper, cloth and many plastics.

• “B” fires – flammable liquids such as gasoline, paints, kitchen grease, and oils.

• “C” fires – electrical equipment, such as fires in wiring, motors and appliances.

* Check your extinguishes on a regular basis to ensure they are properly charged.

Using a fire extinguisher:

• Try to keep calm

• Vital: Keep an escape route open between you and the small fire you are attempting to extinguish. If the fire is large or

becomes too large, immediately get out of the house. Close the door on your way out to slow the spread of flames.

• Always point the extinguisher at the base of the fire rather than at the top of the flames.

• Remember, if the fire is too big for you to handle, immediately get yourself and your family out of the house. Don’t stop to gather anything. Seconds can make all the difference.

• Once you are outside, stay outside. Intense heat and toxic fumes can kill you in seconds.

P.A.S.S. – A proven and effective system for putting out a fire

• P. Pull the pin.

• A. Aim at the base of flame.

• S. Squeeze the handle.

• S. Sweep the hose side to side.

Possible fires following earthquakes:

Natural gas fires:

· First, shut off the gas.

· Second, put the fire out by using an extinguisher, dirt, or water.

Electrical fires:

· First, shut off the electricity.

· Second, put out the fire by using an extinguisher, dirt, or water.

Oil or grease fires:

· Use baking soda, a lid, a bread board, or a fire extinguisher to smother the flames.

· Never use water on a grease or oil fire.

Tracy Franklin is the public information officer for South Lake Tahoe.

Opinion: What you need to know about gay marriage

Although I wish I could take credit for this, I can't:

Millions of people, most of whom are neither gay nor looking to get same-sex married, are loudly asking on the Internet how exactly this case impacts their life.

For them we have provided a handy guide:

If you are a homosexual and are already married:

The federal government now recognizes your marriage as a thing, and you are eligible for tax, health, and pension benefits under federal law like any other married couple, pending further political shenanigans. You can file taxes jointly, all that stuff.

If you are a homosexual and want to get married:

This does nothing to affect you *unless* you live in California. States are still free to decide whether or not same-sex marriage is legal; if you live in Mississippi, this does not help you. But, the voter initiative to ban gay marriage in California is now dead, pending further legal challenges or

other shenanigans.

If you are a heterosexual and do not want to enter into a homosexual marriage:

You will not be required to marry a gay person. This is a common misunderstanding. This decision actually does not affect you in any way.

If you are currently in a heterosexual marriage:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are a heterosexual who is not currently married:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are a heterosexual who hopes to eventually marry:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are a member of a church that performs wedding ceremonies but that does not believe in gay marriage:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are a religious official who performs wedding ceremonies but who thinks gay marriage is wrong:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are an individual who believes gay marriage or homosexuality in general is wrong for religious reasons, and wish to continue expressing those beliefs:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are an individual who believes gay marriage or homosexuality in general is wrong for non-religious reasons, and wish to continue expressing those beliefs:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are a heterosexual who fears this decision adversely affects your marriage or the concept of marriage in general:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are a heterosexual who fears this decision negatively affects you in some way:

This decision does not affect you in any way.

If you are a heterosexual who suffers anger or anxiety at the thought of gay couples getting married as an abstract concept, and believes the only cure is to legally prevent gay marriage:

This decision will cause you some degree of anger or anxiety. Otherwise, this decision does not affect you in any way.

Hope this helps!

— Submitted by John Spinola, South Lake Tahoe

Opinion: Freedoms are eroding in the United States

Publisher's note: ***Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Granite Bay, on June 27 delivered the following remarks on the House floor.***

Mr. Speaker:

Three major developments have occurred within the last six weeks that are each disturbing by themselves, but extremely alarming when viewed together.

The first was the revelation that for more than two years, one of the most powerful and feared agencies of the federal

government was used to harass and intimidate individual Americans based upon their political beliefs.



Tom McClintock

Evidence has already established that hundreds of conservative groups were subjected to invasive interrogations when they sought to participate in the political process. This pattern of conduct was not limited to applications under section 501(c), but included audits of established conservative groups and individuals as well. This conduct reached the highest levels of the IRS. A similar pattern of abuse has been demonstrated in several other agencies including the Department of Labor and the Environmental Protection Agency.

These facts are undisputed and their implications are utterly toxic to a free society.

The second development was news that the Justice Department had surreptitiously seized the telephone records of some 20 reporters covering Congress for the Associated Press in an obvious attempt to discourage whistleblowers from talking to the press.

Fox News reporter James Rosen and his family were stalked by authorities as he tried to get to the bottom of the Benghazi scandal. To obtain the search warrant to allow this, the Attorney General of the United States filed an absolutely spurious claim with the federal court charging that Rosen had conspired to violate the Espionage Act – the same act under which the Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed in 1953.

The message to reporters asking inconvenient questions of the administration could not possibly have been more powerful or terrifying. And this week, the head of AP reported that their news sources have dried up in response to these naked acts of intimidation.

The third development is that the federal government has swept up the phone and internet records of millions of Americans in the name of state security.

The practice of the government searching your personal records without having first established reason to believe you have committed a crime is expressly forbidden by the Fourth Amendment –which was adopted in direct response to British officials indiscriminately searching homes and records for evidence of contraband.

Yet this government has done precisely that on a scale unimaginable in colonial times searching for evidence of terrorism.

If I know what websites you've visited and what phone numbers you've called – I know a very great deal about your political and religious beliefs, your personal relationships, your sexual interests, your mental and physical health, your family finances.

And with that information in the hands of officials who have already demonstrated a clear willingness and ability to use their power to intimidate political adversaries into silence and to discourage reporters from asking embarrassing questions, our society could very quickly cross a very bright line between freedom and authoritarianism.

As if to underscore the point, the administration's spokesman recently told a national television audience that quote – "the law is irrelevant." He called these matters "a distraction." What does that say about a society that once prided itself on being a nation of laws and not of men?

All around us in this Capitol are the trappings of the Roman Republic. They serve as an inspiration – but also as a warning.

The Roman Republic didn't end because Caesar crossed the Rubicon with his legion. It ended because that illegal act was not effectively resisted and led to another usurpation and then another and then another over a period of years. It was the accumulation of many such infringements that brought the inexorable decline of freedom and set the stage for Rome's age of tyrants.

That is what Jefferson meant when he said the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. My great fear, as we adjourn tomorrow to celebrate the 237th anniversary of American freedom, is that sometime between the barbecues and the fireworks we shrug off these profound developments and go about as if nothing has happened.

This summer of 2013 has brought us to a crossroads, and I rise today to urge the House to give these events its full and undivided attention. All the facts surrounding these matters must be fully laid out, those responsible held fully accountable, and the rule of law – and especially of our Constitution – fully restored.

Letter: Time to celebrate equality

To the community,

Yesterday was a momentous day, not only for LGBT Americans, but for all beings who hold the vision of justice and equality

for our country.

Today we celebrate the Supreme Court and its defeat of the discriminatory and misnamed Defense of Marriage Act. We celebrate the return of marriage equality rights in the state of California.

Thank you to all the justices who sided with fairness on this issue. This decision has been a long time coming and we have worked hard to make it happen. Those of us, LGBT and our "straight" allies, should feel proud of the work we have done these many years and decades. We have made history. LGBT civil rights join the ranks of those won by women, by racial minorities, and by people with disabilities.

This great country of ours has never been better than when we live by our own motto, "Liberty and justice for all".

As a community, LGBT rights have slowly evolved for decades, with the gradual overturning of sodomy laws, adoption laws, and the protections of hate crime legislation, fair housing, and job protection just to name a few examples. We still have much work to do, as too many states still do not have these rights and protections. Almost 75 percent of America's states still do not recognize same gender marriage, despite Wednesday's Supreme Court ruling.

We have every reason to feel gratified, but we should not be satisfied until full equality, in all aspects of life, is the law across this great country, with no exceptions. But, for today, let's take time to celebrate and dance and sing and shout out the joy that we feel. Tomorrow, we can roll up our sleeves and get back to work with the huge momentum we have gained.

Today my heart is very full. When I heard the Supreme Court announcement I turned to my beloved Heide and told her, "I have been waiting for this moment all of my adult life"; the right to legally marry the person I love and have committed my

life to. I am going to propose to Heide and say those words I have been longing to say to her for 14 years, “Will you marry me?”

Janice Eastburn, South Lake Tahoe

(**Note:** Heide said yes.)

Opinion: Online gaming is bad for society

By Sheldon Adelson

“Click your mouse and lose your house” isn’t a marketing slogan for advocates of legalized online gambling. But it should be.

Right now, several state legislatures, including the populous states of California and Pennsylvania, are considering proposals to allow the legalization of online gaming. Nevada, New Jersey and Delaware have already approved it. Congress is also interested in the issue as multiple pieces of legislation, both limiting and expanding online gaming, have recently been introduced.

As an industry leader, and more important as a father, grandfather, citizen and patriot of this great country, I am adamantly opposed to the legalization and proliferation of online casino gaming.



Sheldon
Adelson

You would think the chairman of the world's largest gaming company would pursue any aspect of gaming which could increase profits, right?

Ordinarily that is true – but online gambling is "fools' gold."

Whether it is full casino gaming, poker only, or anything in between – this is a societal train wreck waiting to happen.

With the expansion of Internet gaming now taking place at the state level, I strongly urge Congress to either rewrite the Federal Wire Act, or pass new legislation making internet gaming illegal nationwide.

Additionally, I encourage greater enforcement of the laws currently prohibiting off-shore Internet gaming companies from engaging in transactions with U.S. citizens.

Critics will claim I have ulterior motives in taking such a strong stand on this issue. They'll say I'm just afraid to compete for this business or that I'm worried about the impact on my land-based casinos in Nevada and Pennsylvania.

First, with our popular brands – like the Venetian – we would be very effective competitors in this market place. Having started more than 50 different successful businesses over the course of my nearly seven decades- long business career, I'm not afraid of competing with anyone.

Second, our company makes twice as much money from our non-gaming attractions in the United States than we do from our casino operations. Finally, almost all our casino profits come from Asia, where online gambling doesn't exist and won't be legalized soon, if ever.

So while the impact on my company's business would be limited, the hit on other commercial casinos, Native American casinos, and racetrack-casinos across the land could be substantial and even lead to their eventual demise.

Recent research from a number of European countries shows that the proliferation of internet gaming has, as a start, resulted in a 20 percent decrease in visitation to the land-based casinos in those countries. That number is bound to worsen as internet gaming dependency grows.

The research also shows that over the past 10 years internet gambling revenue in Europe has gone up on average 26 to 28 percent. Meanwhile, land-based casino revenue has been flat or even contracted during that same period of time, even though it was expected to increase at 5 to 10 percent per year.

In short, the rise of Internet gaming has clearly come at the cost of land-based casinos in Europe.

What does that information foretell for us here in the United States? To begin with, a loss of 200,000 direct gaming industry jobs and additional 200,000 lost indirect and induced jobs. That's 400, 000 lost jobs in casino-hosting cities across America.

On top of the negative economic impact, the plague it could bring to our society is even more far-reaching.

Online gambling makes it possible for bets to be placed by anyone at any time. When gambling is available in every bedroom, every dorm room and every office space, there will be no way to fully determine that each wager has been placed in a

rational and consensual manner.

For example, the possibility of underage children finding ways to place online wagers and the possibility of people betting under the influence of drugs or being coerced are all scenarios that can happen when the person is only monitored by their own computer screen.

On the other hand, when a person makes an effort to get dressed, join some friends and head to the local casino for a night of entertainment they must show themselves as adults, and their behavior can be observed and ultimately managed by security and other staff if needed.

Let’s also focus here on the impact of online gambling on children and young adults.

As a father of two teenage boys, I’m well aware that we now live in an age where many kids are already dangerously addicted to Internet games.

What started with arcade games, like Pac-man 30 years ago, has now morphed into an environment where kids’ formative years are spent immersed in tablets, smart phones, home video games and other portable electronic devices.

Let me quote some important words from gaming counselor Liz Woolley who established Online Gamers Anonymous. In a letter to the BBC, she wrote:

“For some, the enjoyment turns to suffering when they become ‘addicted’ to the games. They no longer have the ‘choice’ to play, but are driven to play….”

After spending so many years playing addictive Internet games, kids and young adults today have been primed for the pump, and online gambling advocates know there’s a lot of money to be made from exploiting them.

To make matters worse, young adults in America are also

suffering under nearly a trillion dollars in student loans. To tempt them to solve their financial problems with a click of the mouse is unconscionable.

So, no, online gambling is not a threat to my business.

It's a threat to our society – a toxin which all good people ought to resist.

Sheldon Adelson is chairman and CEO of Las Vegas Sands, the largest gaming company in the world. This first appeared in Forbes.

Opinion: CTC out of step with its original mission

Publisher's note: ***The following was read into the record June 20 at the California Tahoe Conservancy meeting by Ann Nichols, president of the North Tahoe Preservation Alliance. She asked for it to be reprinted here.***

When you search for the CTC website, Google states, "Founded to protect, preserve & restore the water quality, wildlife, public access, recreation, and natural beauty of the Lake Tahoe Basin."

The Asset Lands program is an ill-conceived radical departure by the CTC that conflicts with these claims. We challenge you to do the right thing and restore public confidence:

1. Cancel the existing program

2. Inaccurate parcel identification information has or is being distributed

a) 37 conservation easements not owned by the CTC included

b) 18 erosion control facilities included

3. Estimates and inaccuracy erodes public confidence in the selection process

4. Eliminating existing public access, including existing large open space parcels used exclusively for public access and recreation in direct conflict with the primary mission of the CTC, for example:

a) 14.56 acres of public access in Tahoe Vista

b) 5.76 acres of public access in Kingswood

c) 9.21 acres of public access off Ward Creek Road

5. Including primarily steep parcels if they have a buildable site is in conflict with the CTC claim that steep properties would not be developed.

a) Sherman Way 15 acres

6. CTC Public outreach has been nil and only in response to public outcry.

7. Starting slow by selling off sites on the South Shore is hardly reassuring.

8. Patrick Wright's claim that only "3-7 parcels on the South Shore are being sold now, so don't worry" is condescending at best. All neighbors should be notified in writing that nearby parcels could be sold to private parties and that those properties could be developed and fenced.

9. Asset Lands program should be vetted in advertised public meetings that are on the North and South Shore locations. The

CTC owes it to every California citizen to have a full comparison and review of the CTC's old and new missions, as well as the significant change in course under its current leadership. The CTC owes the public an explanation of the sharp turn it has taken with regard to Tahoe's protected lands.

10. Adjacent open space parcels now having development potential greatly affects neighboring property values.

a.) In the case of the 5.76 acres on Queens Way, property values could swing by as much as $100k each.

11. Develop new program where adjacent property owners could purchase CTC lands at a discounted price with deed restrictions against new development.

12. Rather than sell of protected lands, perhaps it's time for the CTC to wind down the agency just as the State Coastal Conservancy is doing.

13. At the very least, since the Asset Lands program now promotes "developable parcels in highly urbanized areas that could support sustainable compact development consistent with local area plans", the CTC should eliminate "conservancy" from the title.

14. The new change of mission and use of public bond monies is a breach of public trust.

Opinion: Be prepared to evacuate

By Teri Mizuhara

It’s your day off and you’re home relaxing when suddenly you hear sirens, a lot of them, off in the distance. So you wander outside to see what’s happening when you suddenly spot a large column of smoke from a wildfire on the horizon growing fast.

Your stomach knots up as you realize your worst nightmare is happening before your eyes and you have seconds to respond. What would you do.

Preplanning for an evacuation is in your best interest. When you walk through your home, room by room, and consider exactly what you would need to do when the real thing happens, you will be far better prepared to handle the stress of the situation.

Pre-evacuation preparation steps

When an evacuation is anticipated, follow these checklists (if time allows) to give your home the best chance of surviving a wildfire:

Inside the house

Shut all windows and doors, leaving them unlocked.

Remove flammable window shades and curtains and close metal shutters.

Remove lightweight curtains.

Move flammable furniture to the center of the room, away from windows and doors.

Shut off gas at the meter. Turn off pilot lights.

Leave your lights on so firefighters can see your house under smokey conditions.

Shut off the air conditioning.

Outside

Gather up flammable items from the exterior of the house and bring them inside (patio furniture, children’s toys, door mats, trash cans, etc.) or place them in your pool.

Turn off propane tanks.

Move propane BBQ appliances away from structures.

Connect garden hoses to outside water valves or spigots for use by firefighters. Fill water buckets and place them around the house.

Don’t leave sprinklers on or water running, they can affect critical water pressure.

Leave exterior lights on so your home is visible to firefighters in the smoke or darkness of night.

Put your emergency supply kit in your vehicle.

Back your car into the driveway with vehicle loaded and all doors and windows closed. Carry your car keys with you.

Have a ladder available and place it at the corner of the house for firefighters to quickly access your roof.

Seal attic and ground vents with pre-cut plywood or commercial seals.

Patrol your property and monitor the fire situation. Don’t wait for an evacuation order if you feel threatened.

Check on neighbors and make sure they are preparing to leave.

Animals

Locate your pets and keep them nearby.

Prepare farm animals for transport and think about moving them to a safe location early.

For more information, go online.

Teri Mizuhara is public information officer for the CalFire Amador-El Dorado-Sacramento Unit.

Letter: Is something better than nothing?

To the community,

On June 11, the City Council promised us tomorrow. That day the council approved the permit for part of the original plan for the Chateau project that was billed at $400 million. The plan present on the eleventh will cost under $20 million.

No one knows when what's left of the Chateau project will be built. If ever. The process adopted on the eleventh, if continued, looks like a cut and paste piecemeal idea for a project.



Bill Crawford

Of course, the council did stipulate conditions that have to be met for the project to move forward. Such as bonds to protect the city's interest. But the rub is, as of the eleventh, nothing was agreed to on paper. It remains to be seen what will be the result of negotiations. But if past performance by the city is a guide, things don't' look promising. The council is sitting on pins and needles to get something in the ground at the Chateau site. And that spells trouble.

The councilperson with the most at stake in the present deal is Hal Cole who was a heavy lifter for the Chateau in 2006, which became the embarrassing Hole in the Ground. Cole needs redemption for that mistake. There, it's said, something is better than nothing. So let's cut and paste tomorrow.

Bill Crawford, South Lake Tahoe