

# Campus Safety Quarterly

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## In this Issue:

Wildfire: Are You Prepared? .....	1
EH&S Web Page Updated .....	1
Electronic Waste Recycling .....	2
West Nile Virus in California .....	2
Campus Safety After Dark .....	3
Turkey Fryer Cautions .....	3

## EH&S Web Page Updated

Environmental Health and Safety recently updated our web page to a more user-friendly format consistent with SDSU design guidelines. Diane Slagle of Business and Financial Affairs provided invaluable assistance and ongoing support to this project. We hope you will visit our site at <http://bfa.sdsu.edu/ehs/> to access information about our services.

**Safety is  
Always in  
Season**



## Wildfire—Are You Prepared?

Wildfires dominated our local news stories this summer. After the fourth consecutive year of lower-than-average rainfall, fire officials have declared that the fire threat throughout most of San Diego County is high. During the 2001-2002 season San Diego received a total of 3.01” of rainfall, less than one third of our annual average and the lowest rainfall since 1850 when records were first kept. With our official rainy season still months away, drought conditions remain extreme throughout Southern California, and the associated fire risk remains severe. Advance preparation now could determine your ability to survive a wildfire.

Wildfires have always been a part of the natural environment. They serve a useful purpose in controlling the growth of shrubs and brush that might fuel the spread of future fires. Yet, with people moving into more remote areas and controlling or preventing wildfires, this natural cycle of burning has been interrupted. Dead trees, fallen branches and dry grass remain, ready to ignite when exposed to a spark. Houses and other structures add more fuel for the fires. While lightning causes most natural wildfires, human causes include campfires and sparks from tools and cars. One cigarette thrown from a car ignited the disastrous Alpine fire of 2001. An automobile fire on Interstate 15 sparked a blaze near the Cajon Pass earlier this summer.

Wildfires are a fact of life in California. Your ability to protect your family, home and property may depend on pre-fire planning and preparation. Once you smell smoke, it's too late!

Three strategies for fire survival are:

- Creating defensible space
- Maintaining defensible homes
- Evacuation planning



### Defensible Space

The first step to protecting your home is creating a defensible space around it. The space should be defined in zones, starting from the house and moving outward. These zones are approximate and will depend on local conditions and terrain. Contact your local fire department for specific requirements and recommendations.

The first zone (0-50 feet) should contain low growing plants with low fuel volume. Remove tall plants close to the house that fire could use to climb to the roof; also remove branches or vines overhanging the roof. All trees in this zone should be selected for fire-resistance and be trimmed away from structures. Junipers, conifers, palms and broadleaf evergreens like eucalyptus should be avoided because they contain oils, waxes and resins that  
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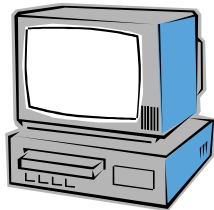
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## SDSU Initiates Electronic Waste Recycling

In 2001, California followed Massachusetts to become the second state in the U.S. to ban the disposal of televisions and computer monitors in landfills. The cathode ray tubes (CRTs) that comprise the bulk of these items contain high concentrations of lead, mercury and other toxic metals that have been linked to immediate and long-term health problems. This ban will prevent further contamination of soil and groundwater under landfills. According to the *San Diego Union Tribune*, ten thousand televisions and computers become obsolete in California every day resulting in tons of electronic waste, or *e-waste*.

To comply with this ban, the SDSU Departments of Environmental Health and Safety and Materials Management have initiated a recycling program to dispose of campus e-waste. For campus departments, the disposal process will remain unchanged. When equipment becomes surplus, fill out the SDSU Moving Services Request Form and send to Materials Management at Mail Code 8515. It is helpful to mark the equipment as working or not working; this will determine how it is recycled. Equipment that is not working will be disassembled at a licensed facility and the useful elements such as copper cable, glass and plastic will be separated for reuse.

For consumers with electronics to recycle, the City of San Diego cites three local resources that will dispose of electronic equipment for a fee: the recycling center at the Miramar landfill (858-268-8971); IMS Recycling (619-702-0254); and RMD Technologies (619-326-1345). Universal Recycling at the Sycamore Landfill (619-448-4295) will accept newer televisions but no computers. The San Diego County Household Hazardous Waste Program holds periodic e-waste collection events for residents of the unincorporated areas of the county. An East County event is planned for November 9, 2002. Call 1-877-713-2784 for details.



## West Nile Virus in California

Although West Nile Virus was first detected in New York State in 1999, California did not confirm its first case until September of this year. Human illness from West Nile Virus is rare and most people who become infected experience only mild symptoms. However, in the nearly 3,000 confirmed cases of infection nationwide, there have been 150 deaths. The elderly seem to be most susceptible to developing serious illness from the virus. There have been no cases of West Nile Virus in San Diego County.

Since the West Nile Virus is spread by mosquito saliva, preventing mosquito bites can effectively prevent infection. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offer these suggestions:

- Apply insect repellent containing DEET following package instructions. Do not use this product on young children (use a repellent developed specifically for infants and toddlers).
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants treated with permethrin or DEET to prevent mosquitoes from biting through clothing.
- Try to stay indoors at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Eliminate standing water sources where mosquitoes can lay their eggs.

West Nile Virus was first detected among birds on the East Coast. Scientists have tracked the progression of the disease by testing dead birds for the virus.

If you find a dead bird in San Diego County, call the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health at 858-694-2888. They may want to collect the bird for analysis or give instructions on how to dispose of it. To be tested, the bird must be dead less than 24 hours. Although there is no evidence that the virus can spread from bird to person, you should not attempt to handle the bird yourself.



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For more information about West Nile Virus and how you can prevent becoming infected, see the County of San Diego Environmental Health Web site at: <http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/>  
There you can also download the California Department of Health Services brochure, *California Surveillance and Facts about West Nile Virus*.

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## Campus Safety After Dark

As winter approaches and daylight shortens, more people will be on campus after dark. It's important to be aware that the campus environment is different at night. Keep the following safety tips in mind as you travel to and from campus locations.



- Use well lit routes. Report any broken or burnt out lights to Physical Plant Work Control at 44754.
- Walk with a partner or group after dark.
- If you must walk alone, call the Escort Service from a safe location and wait there. The call is free from any campus pay phone at **7-1-1** or call 594-6659.
- Park in well lit areas if you know you will be leaving campus after dark.
- Have your keys in hand and check around and inside your car before entering.
- Always keep your car locked while you are in it and when it is parked.
- Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.
- Trust your instincts! If you feel unsafe, go to a safe location and call Public Safety at 41991 for help.
- Report any suspicious person or activity to Public Safety at 41991 (**9-1-1** for emergencies).

Public Safety recently published their 2002 Safety and Security Report. It is available at their Web site along with other valuable crime prevention information and safety resources. Call 41985 to request a printed copy or view the report at: <http://www.police.sdsu.edu/>

Remember that we are all responsible for making the SDSU campus a safer place to work and learn.

## UL Issues Safety Alert on Turkey Fryers

The Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) has decided not to certify any deep fat turkey fryers with their trusted UL Mark. Company spokesmen are concerned with reports of fires caused by the fryers and have concluded that the great-tasting turkey is not worth the associated risk. When the UL recently tested several turkey fryer models, they found that this method of cooking could be extremely dangerous. A summary of their results found:

- Fryers can tip easily, releasing 5 gallons of hot oil.
- If the pot is overfilled, oil may spill onto the burner below when the raw turkey is added, causing the entire unit to become engulfed in flames.
- When adding the turkey, oil may splatter causing a burn hazard.
- With no thermostat control, oil may overheat to the point of combustion.
- The cooking pot, lid, and handles can get dangerously hot, posing a severe burn hazard.

The UL hopes that consumers will use extreme caution if they decide to use turkey fryers and offers these tips for safety:

- Always use turkey fryers outdoors away from buildings or other material that can burn.
- Never use on wooden decks or in garages.
- Make sure fryer is placed on a flat surface to reduce chances of tipping.
- Never leave fryer unattended. Most do not have temperature controls and can overheat to the point of combustion.
- Never let children or pets near when fryer is in use.
- To avoid spillover, do not overfill with oil.
- Use well-insulated potholders or oven mitts when touching fryer.
- If practical, wear goggles or safety glasses to protect eyes from oil splatters.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. Never try to use water to put out a grease fire.

Following these safety precautions could prevent a holiday tragedy.



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are highly flammable. Deciduous trees are generally more fire resistant because they have high moisture content when in leaf and low fuel volume when dormant.

The second zone (30-100 feet) should consist of low-growing groundcovers that are fire resistant and low in fuel volume. Woodpiles, construction material storage, or propane tanks should be at least this far from the house and surrounded by 10 feet of cleared space. Remove dead wood and dry leaves and replace with irrigated, well-maintained flowerbeds or lawns that serve as natural fire barriers.

The third zone (70-100 feet) may overlap the second; this is a transition zone that should be planted with low fuel volume plants or native vegetation that has been thinned to leave 20 feet of space between large shrubs and trees. Remove “ladder fuels” (undergrowth and debris) from under trees that can carry fire upward into the branches. Prune out branches lower than 15 feet and all dead branches. Remove debris and dispose of properly.

Establishing this 100 foot fire-resistant zone will improve your home’s chance of surviving a wildfire. The next step is making the home itself defensible.

### **Defensible Home**

The roof is the most vulnerable part of your home to fire. Firebrands—burning embers that can be carried by the wind far beyond the firefront—can ignite combustible materials wherever they land. Most wildfire caused home fires are the result of airborne firebrands. Combustible roofing such as wood shakes and shingles are a hazard to the structure they cover and can become firebrands themselves, igniting roofs of nearby homes. When building a home or replacing an existing roof, install a non-combustible roof. Check with your fire department or building department for local requirements. Clear dead leaves and other combustible debris from roofs and rain gutters.

Use fire-resistant materials such as stucco or masonry for the exterior of your home. Enclose undersides of eaves, balconies, decks and other projections with fire-resistant material to prevent trapping burning embers and flames.

Ensure that address numbers are visible from access roads and access roads and driveways are accessible

to emergency vehicles. Clear combustible vegetation at least 10 feet away from roads and cut back overhanging tree branches. Fire trucks require a minimum of 14 feet vertical clearance.

Have tools on hand that can be used to fight a fire such as rakes, axes, handsaws, chainsaw, buckets and shovels. Every home should also have garden hoses long enough to reach any part of the home or other structures on the property. Use the tools and hoses only as long as there is no imminent danger.

### **Evacuation**

Prepare an evacuation plan long before a fire threatens. Know at least two ways out of each room in the house and at least two routes away from the house. Pre-arrange a meeting place with family members and practice your evacuation plan periodically. Develop a list of important items to take with you and assemble an emergency supply kit.

If there is time, be sure that windows and doors are closed and locked. Leave the outside lights on so that firefighters can find the house in smoke. Do not leave sprinklers on as this can reduce water pressure needed by firefighters. Items that could block firefighter access should be moved away from the house.

If ordered to evacuate, or if you feel threatened and decide to leave on your own, drive calmly with headlights on for visibility. Follow orders of law enforcement and fire officers, and do not block access for fire trucks. Once you leave the area, do not attempt to re-enter until officials declare it safe.

Finally, remember that preparing for wildfires can prevent death or serious injury, reduce property loss, and protect wildlife and natural resources.

For more information on fire safety and prevention, check out the following Web sites:

[www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty/cntydepts/landuse/fire\\_resistant.html](http://www.co.san-diego.ca.us/cnty/cntydepts/landuse/fire_resistant.html) – County of San Diego Department of Land Use and Environment – *Fire, Defensible Space and You*

[www.firesafecouncil.org](http://www.firesafecouncil.org) – Educational brochures regarding home fire safety may be downloaded.

[www.sunset.com](http://www.sunset.com) – *Living with Wildfire*—Describes how one San Diego County home escaped destruction by wildfire.

