



Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians

Environmental Protection Department

Newsletter

Volume II, January 2014: Indoor Air Pollution/ Fire Safe Winter Homes/ Backyard Bird Count

Indoor Air Pollution Issues and Prevention

Indoor air pollution can be a problem throughout the year, but it is often more pronounced during the winter months because homes are more closed off to outside ventilation a higher percentage of the time.

Indoor air pollution can cause serious health problems and can impact individuals with chronic conditions, the elderly and infants disproportionately. Indoor air pollution can cause respiratory ailments and aggravate asthma. It is also known to cause headaches and general feelings of illness. Some types of indoor air pollution can even lead to death.

Radon gas is a dangerous indoor air pollutant and January is National Radon Action Month. Radon is responsible for nearly 20,000 lung cancer deaths each year. Radon gas cannot be seen or smelled and is a radioactive gas

found throughout the United States. It occurs from the breakdown of rocks containing uranium and from some building materials. Testing the home is the only way to know if it is contaminated with Radon and is inexpensive. Information on testing can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/radon/pubs/citguide.html#howtotest> among other sites. If Radon gas is found in the home there are very inexpensive and effective Radon Reduction Systems which can be installed.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless odorless gas which is poisonous. Over 150 people each year die of non-fire related CO poisoning in this country. It is produced any time there is a fuel burning device. It is important to have these devices properly installed and vented. Low to moderate CO poisoning can result in nausea, dizziness, headache, fatigue, and/or shortness of breath. More

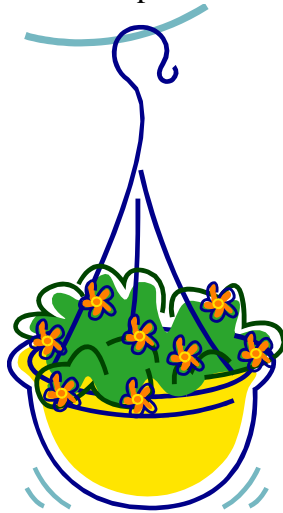
severe CO poisoning can result in mental confusion, vomiting, loss of coordination, loss of consciousness and/ or death.

One of the problems known to occur here is mold and mildew. Part of this is due to the tightly constructed nature of the homes. However, there are multiple issues which can cause this but air conditioning units in windows which leak, unreported water leaks, and unclean filters on swamp coolers or other air circulation units. There can also be other biological pollutants like dust mites and animal dander. Most commonly these cause allergic reactions, but can also cause headaches, breathing difficulties, itching, congestion, dizziness and fatigue. They can also worsen chronic conditions and other illnesses.

Keeping rooms clean and dry, disinfecting any units which circulate air and changing filters

regularly, circulate air into the house, keeping generators and other fuel burning devices at least ten feet from the house, having appliances properly installed, cleaned and maintained, properly venting any appliance that burns any kind of fuel, and maintaining house plants can all help reduce indoor air pollution.

On Wednesday, February 12th the Environmental Department will be planting indoor plants with the youth at the learning center to help reduce indoor air pollution.



Keep Your Home Fire Safe in the Winter

Winter is the most common time to have home fires. The most common cause is related to cooking, however one in seven winter home fires are related to heating devices. Especially in these drought conditions a house

fire can quickly spread to trees, other homes, and become a wildfire.

Wildfires endanger people, pets and wild animals and when there is a high fuel load they can damage ecosystems and cause major erosion issues. Take precautions to prevent fires and be prepared in case of a fire.

Each year more than 3,400 people are killed in fires in this country with another 17,500 injured. Many of these deaths and injuries are avoidable by following fire safety guidelines, having working smoke detectors and an escape plan. A small flame can turn into a raging fire in less than thirty seconds and a house can become engulfed in flames and thick smoke within minutes, so the key is to be prepared!

Prevention of avoidable fires is essential in keeping your family safe. Some simple guidelines to follow to reduce your risk are: stay in the kitchen and watch your food while it's cooking, use the oven for cooking rather than heating, keep anything which can burn a minimum of three feet from a heater, turn off space heaters before leaving the room or going to bed, use only one

heating device per outlet, choose portable heaters with auto shut off if they get knocked over or they become too hot, have a professional service heating equipment, vents and chimneys at least once a year, and if you have a wood stove make sure ashes are set in a closed non-flammable container at least ten feet from your home with no flammable items under or near them. When using a clothes dryer clean out the lint filter after each use, check behind the dryer regularly for lint build up, clean out dryer vents about every three months, and ensure that the outside vent is clear and lint free. As with all appliances make sure it is connected properly and all electrical and gas hook up are appropriate to the appliance being used. Be careful not to overload the dryer, over dry clothes, or put in items which are highly flammable, and do not leave the home or go to sleep while it is operating.

Fire Extinguishers can be useful, but are not applicable in all circumstances. There are different types of fire extinguishers for fires of different materials like the difference between kitchen grease and an electrical fire. Some extinguishers are multipurpose, but be



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aware of what they can be used for before you buy them and make sure you know how to use them and keep up maintenance on them. Check with the store, fire department or manufacturer on how to do this. Fire Departments can train people in proper use and maintenance of fire extinguishers. Remember, these are only for small, contained fires! Once a fire spreads beyond a pot on the stove or a wastebasket there will not be enough material in the extinguisher to put out the fire and you need to leave before the fire or toxic gases prevent your exit.

Working smoke detectors are important in giving a timely warning to people in the home whether asleep or awake. Some of them can also be combined warning systems for indoor air pollution from dangerous gasses. There are several types to choose from. Dual detection smoke alarms are preferable because both main types detect different

types of fires better. Then these can be combined with carbon monoxide monitors and other gas monitors. Additionally, you can get smoke detectors with strobe lights if you have hearing impaired members of your household. Local fire departments can help you with selection and sometimes know of programs for free or reduced cost alarms. However, smoke detectors are not expensive the most basic (not dual sensor) can be found for under ten dollars.

Keeping your batteries up to date on smoke detectors is important. Even those that are hardwired usually have a backup battery for power outages. You should test your smoke detector once a month and replace the batteries at least once a year unless you have a ten year rated battery. Those with the ten year rated batteries are intended to be replaced after the life of the battery and smoke

detectors should be replaced about every eight to ten years.

Place a smoke detector on every level of your home and it is recommended to place them inside of and outside of sleeping areas.

Escape plans are important because time is off the essence when there is a fire. Practicing escape routes once a month is recommended, particularly with children and elderly so it becomes automatic and allows you to see what they are capable of navigating. Never open a door that is hot to the touch, use an alternate route. Every room should have an alternate route out even if it's just a window. If there are safety bars on windows and doors install a quick release mechanism for emergencies and ensure everyone in the home knows how to operate it. Get out of the home as quickly as possible don't waste time on possessions. Once you are out of the home stay out. Have a

designated meeting place in case of an emergency. Remember to use prevention tips and be prepared.



Great Backyard Bird Count

February 14-17 is the Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) an annual event in which you watch and count the birds in your back yard, park, school or other area and report the results online. This is a great activity for children. This helps children learn to spot and identify birds and gain a better understanding of the surroundings. Enter the information online allows data to be collected on which birds are seen in winter and see whether this number is increasing or decreasing from year to year. Birdsource.org has links to register for this as well as fun games and activities related to birds including identifying them by their song, puzzles and more. Allaboutbirds.org has an online bird guide to

assist with identification. Information can be found about issues impacting migratory birds, as well as some bird fact sheets, at nationalzoo.si.edu and there is a link on their site to other educational materials. I hope you will consider participating in GBBC; it only takes fifteen minutes a day for a few days.



Department Notes

The Environmental Department is planting houseplants with the youth at the learning center on Wednesday, February 12th and would appreciate people washing their milk cartons and delivering them to our office or the education department so that we may use them for potting the cuttings.

Anyone with personal belonging by the barn area should make arrangements with the Tribal Office to collect them prior to March 1st so that the area is available for Tribal Agricultural uses.

The department really enjoyed making

recycled Christmas Crafts with the youth and talking to them about waste reduction. Here are some pictures below:

