

Emergency Preparedness (EP) Subcommittee Meeting Notes
Granada Hills North Neighborhood Council (GHNNC)
Tuesday, June 5, 2012

GHNNC office, 11139 Woodley Avenue, Granada Hills, CA 91344

Announcements and General Discussion

We will not have a meeting in July because of the July 4 holiday; next meeting will be on **Tuesday, August 7, 2012, at 7 p.m.** in the GHNNC office.

Available handouts for all attendees:

- GHNNC newsletter (stakeholders should have received one in the mail).
- Flyer for SOS Survival Products parking lot sale coming up on Friday and Saturday, June 8 and 9. In addition to sale prices, there will be vendor demos, including a demo of water purification. New SOS catalogs also available.
- Pink flyer: Suggested EP items to stock kits for car and pets.
- Yellow flyer: Suggested EP items for 72-hour kit and gift ideas to help friends and loved ones stock their EP kits.
- Salmon flyer: Organizing Vital Records and Home Security.
- Purple flyer: Nuclear Safety Checklist (newly updated).

Save the date: **October 6, 2012**, the date of the local Disaster Preparedness Fair. Five to seven Neighborhood Councils are involved. If you want to volunteer at the event, indicate your desire on the sign-up sheet. More details will be provided as the event gets closer or contact Bill via e-mail at w.hopkins@mindspring.com.

Upcoming classes at SOS Survival Products in Van Nuys:

- Wilderness and Remote First Aid, June 23 and 24 (fee required).
- Preparedness Training on July 14 at 11:00 a.m. (free).
- Pet Disaster Planning and Preparedness on July 14 at 2:00 p.m. (free).
- Emergency Food Storage 101 class on July 19 at 12:00 p.m. (free).
- Two Way Radios 101 class on August 4 at 1:00 p.m. (free).

Hams: Lake Balboa Sunday Morning EP simplex net, 9:00 a.m., on 145.570 MHz.

Patty, a CERT-trained attendee, related a story of how she assisted an injured woman in a local store who screamed for help after a slip and fall. None of the employees came to her assistance until Patty took charge of the situation. 911 was called. Patty asked employees for a blanket and an emergency kit and talked softly to the woman to calm her until help arrived.

The next Lake Balboa EP meeting on June 9, 2012 at 9 a.m. at the FlyAway at Woodley and Saticoy in Van Nuys will feature a talk on how to evacuate animals in a disaster.

Attendees received goggles for their emergency kits.

Featured Talk: Natural Gas Safety presented by the Southern California Gas Company

Speakers: Rochelle Silsbee and Chuck Poepke from the Southern California Gas Company.

The Gas Company speakers provided attendees with a *Home Energy and Safety Guide* leaflet and other informational handouts, a plastic bandaid holder, and a small clip-on flashlight with a swivel/angle head.

Natural gas is:

- Odorless (odor is added as a safety measure).
- Non-toxic (however, if there is too much in the room, it will displace air and the lack of oxygen can cause suffocation).
- Lighter than air.

Do not use the burners on your stove to stay warm.

Do not put carbon monoxide detectors in the kitchen or right near the garage; follow the instructions on where to put them.

The Gas Company will do a safety check at your house once a year, free of charge (although there is a \$25 charge if you want to make an appointment). If a problem is discovered, they will offer to fix it. If it's a hazardous problem and they can't fix it then and there, they may need to turn off the gas to the house.

The Gas Company sells regular (not earthquake) shut-off valves and dryer vents.

The Gas Company does not go door to door saying that they need to check appliances. If a person in a blue uniform presumably from the Gas Company comes to your door in regard to a leak, you can ask for ID and call the office to verify.

The Gas Company is required to swap out the gas meter every 10 years or check the accuracy of the meter.

Since natural gas is lighter than air, enclosed areas can vent by opening a window.

If you smell or hear gas leaking, don't light any matches or turn on any electrical appliances or lights. Evacuate the area and call the Gas Company (1-800-427-2200, available 24/7) or call 911. Response time depends on the description of the emergency. Only highly qualified employees are dispatched to emergencies. 24-hour crews circulate in neighborhoods, and the nearest one will respond.

If you hear a hissing or bubbling sound from the ground, it can indicate an underground natural gas leak.

Gas Company headquarters are in Chatsworth; experts live and work in the valley. Storage facility is in Porter Ranch.

The Gas Company buys natural gas when less expensive in the summer. Capped at how much it can earn and passes the savings on to the customers. During summer, 40% of electricity is powered by natural gas.

The gas bill inserts contain good information. Please read them.

Most gas pipeline is buried 22" below ground. Call 811 before digging for the free Underground Service Alert at least two days prior to excavating. Underground Service Alert coordinates with the Gas Company and other utility owners in the area to mark the locations of underground utility lines. Number one cause of breaks in gas lines is third-party damage. If you do break a gas line, you could be responsible for the damage it causes. Some pipes can go through your backyard.

If you have a pool heater, you can request to have it checked by the Gas Company.

Earthquake gas shut-off valves are set to go off at a 5.5 or 5.3 quake. If it trips by accident and gas is shut off to the house, the Gas Company will charge \$63 as a nuisance fee to restore gas to the house. The Gas Company receives lots of calls concerning accidental tripping of automatic shut-off valves. Will not charge to come out to turn gas back on after a sufficiently large earthquake. An earthquake gas shut-off valve is required to be installed when house is sold and for some remodeling work, and homeowners can opt to install one even when not so required. Costs about \$225 to \$250 to install, including hardware and permit. Advantage is that it can offer peace of mind when not at home when earthquake strikes; disadvantage is the accidental tripping.

After an earthquake, how do you know if you need to shut off the gas? Stand in front of the gas meter. If you don't see ½ cubic foot dial indicator moving very much and all your gas appliances are not on, then it is recommended to NOT turn off the gas. Don't need an expensive wrench to turn off—an \$8 or \$9 Crescent wrench (at least 12" or larger adjustable wrench) is fine and can chain it near the meter. Should not store the wrench on the meter or other gas piping.

If you decide to turn off gas at the meter, you're supposed to call the Gas Company to turn it back on. (Do not touch the packing nut on the back side of the shut-off valve because it could snap the valve core and create a hazardous condition.)

Attendees were provided an opportunity to experience turning off a demo gas meter, and to view several different kinds of earthquake gas shut-off valves.

The Gas Company website: socialgas.com. For safety information, click on Safety in the top menu bar. On the Safety page, you'll find safety brochures (available in several languages) and information on emergency preparedness.