

“NEIGHBOR BUDDY”

During the recent fires, our street was very lucky not to have had any loss of homes. But did you know what happened in our neighborhood?

A neighbor evacuated the night before but got lost because she doesn't see well driving at night and didn't know where to find the high school evacuation center.

A neighbor tried to make a phone call to friends but his Time Warner cable phone stopped working when the electricity went out.

A neighbor was packed and ready to leave when the electricity went out and she couldn't get her garage door open.

A neighbor couple in their 90's spent four days sleeping on cots at San Diego Stadium because it was the only place they knew to go.

Our block captain, who just happened to be out of town during the last two fire emergencies, tried to call neighbors who had been evacuated to find out the latest information and relay it to others, but didn't have their cellphone numbers so had no way to contact them.

Also, within the past year

A neighbor felt ill and went to the hospital in the middle of the night without telling anyone. When other neighbors became concerned because they hadn't seen him for several days, they called police who broke into his home to check on his well-being.

A neighbor was accidentally locked out of the house when she went out to get the morning newspaper. She had to call a locksmith to get back into her home.

Some of us may rely on relatives or friends who are not in the immediate area, but in emergencies there may not be enough time for them to arrive to help us.

Some of us may not know how to turn off our gas and water and electricity in an emergency.

Some of us may not hear the phone or hear people knocking on our door.

Some of us may go away for a few days or on vacation without telling anyone. If strangers are seen around your home, neighbors may call police.

City resources are extremely strained and we cannot rely totally on reverse 911 calls or emergency response people or police officers to get here in time to help. We all need to be able to help ourselves and our neighbors. Here are some ways we can help:

1. Select one or two immediate neighbors to be a “neighbor buddy”. Let your neighbor buddy know when you are going out of town or to a medical facility for a time. Let them know if people will be coming to your home to house sit, pet sit or otherwise enter the home while you’re away.
2. Give your neighbor buddy a key to your home to use in emergencies (or when you forget and lock yourself out).
3. Give your neighbor buddy a copy of your Neighborhood Watch information sheet that lists emergency phone numbers of people to contact, all residents and pets in the house, and your home alarm codes. (Your Neighborhood Watch Block Captain can provide these forms to you.)
4. In emergency situations, help each other by making sure everyone knows when they need to evacuate or turn off utilities. A neighbor buddy would know if someone cannot hear the phone or knocking on the door, and they could use the key to enter their buddy’s home to be sure they are notified.
5. If evacuation is necessary, we can make sure we help our buddies get out and find a place to stay, perhaps even taking them in our car or having them follow us to a safe location.
6. Check on each other often enough to determine that everyone is okay and has not fallen or needs medical attention or family notification.
7. Put a Vial of Life packet on your refrigerator with emergency contact numbers, such as your neighbor buddy, your doctor, hospital and family members, and list any special medical instructions for EMT’s.
8. Contact your neighborhood Block Captain and give them your cellphone number, especially if your home phone doesn’t work in emergencies.
9. Listen to KOGO radio 600 AM for instructions in an emergency.
10. Attend our fun Neighborhood Watch block parties and learn the latest information about keeping all of us safe.