

Notary Publics Face Stiffer Regulations



As many of you know, the District has traditionally provided complimentary notary public services. Unfortunately, due to an upsurge in litigation surrounding fraudulent transactions (especially in the real estate market), tougher training and legal requirements, bonding requirements and severe fines are now a sign of the times.

Due to a higher liability exposure to the District for providing this service, the Board of Directors adopted a Notary Public Services Policy at their meeting of November 24, 2009. This policy now provides up to three notarized signatures, per individual, per visit, on a complimentary basis. Additional notarized signatures will be charged \$10 per signature. Payment is required at the time the service is provided. If you have any questions, please contact the office and we will be happy to assist you.

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The District has taken steps to improve service and protect customers since the leak rate was eliminated. We now make available remote meter readers that can be placed inside a customer's home so they may track their water use. These remote readers are available at the District office; if you are interested in borrowing one or purchasing one just stop by. Customers can also track their water consumption via the internet. We post water consumption for every customer each month after the meters are read. If you go to the District's website, www.svpsd.org, you can look up your water usage. To protect your privacy you will

need your customer number. Customer numbers are available by looking at your bill or calling the District office.

Today's policy is clear and easy to understand. If a leak occurs on the customer's side of the meter, they pay for the water; if the leak occurs on the street side of the meter, the District is responsible. The District may consider re-establishing a leak rate in the future, but it should be kept in mind that for every \$10,000 written off to benefit the few with leaks the water rate would need to be increased for everyone by approximately 1%.

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SQUAW VALLEY PUBLIC SERVICE DISTRICT

January 2010 Newsletter

BEARS! BEARS! BEARS!



Although the local newspaper reports fewer bear incidents for 2009, that probably does not hold true for Squaw Valley.

We have had many reports this year of bears entering homes and creating a tremendous amount of property damage, including starting a fire in one home and turning the water on in others causing a lot of water damage as the water ran on the floor. There was also an incident where a woman was injured in her home when she got between the bear and the exit.

The bears continue to be active even though we have snow on the ground. Typically bears hibernate this time of year because of a lack of available food. Many people believe that bears hibernate in the winter be-

cause of the weather, but that is not true. They normally hibernate because the snow covers the food supply. Now that they have figured out how to access human food either from garbage left out or by breaking into homes, they do not need to hibernate.

There is a cute little family of four, sow and three cubs, which have been frequenting the community dumpsters at 1810 Squaw Valley Road. District staff is working with California Dept. of Fish and Game to divert the bears away from the dumpsters; however we are having a hard time convincing them to go hibernate because some folks continue to leave their trash on the ground or fail to close the dumpsters. We ask when you use the dumpsters, please make sure all trash is put inside of them and they are latched when you leave. Failure to take these precautionary actions may have grave consequences for this bear family.

What Happened to the Leak Rate?

Back at the turn of the century, the District had a leak rate for customers that had experienced a water leak and could prove they met specific criteria. But like many good things in life, the leak rate was abused. Every year when the water bills went out some customers would claim leaks in an effort to get their water bill reduced. This became a real administrative headache, taking a tremendous amount of staff time and budget costing all of our customers money. We received all sorts of claims, some that were legitimate and some as creative as "the voles ate my



soaker hose". This kind of abuse is expensive to administer, reflecting in everyone's rates.

Simply stated, water rates are established by distributing the cost of operating the system over the number of gallons of water sold. When one cus-

tomers gets a discount for a leak, the remaining customers pay for the discount, thereby reducing the equitability of the rate system.

Elimination of the leak rate has reduced water demand and lowered operating costs. Customers are now much more conscious of their water use and the request for leak consideration have gone from many per year to one or two per year. Our water demand has gone down every year since the restructuring of the water rates and elimination of the leak rate.

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Fire and Safety Notes

January 2010

NEW PERSONNEL!

During 2009, Squaw Valley Fire Department welcomed some new people to our extended family: Jessica Gates is a volunteer Firefighter-Paramedic for our Department and also works as a Paramedic in rural Plumas County. Jessica is the recent bride of part-time Firefighter-Paramedic Randy Gates. Congratulations to the new Mr. and Mrs. Gates and welcome, Jessica!

We first got to know Ryan Hall when we was a student in the ROP fire science program - he was one of the students who was detailed to our Department as an intern during the spring semester. Ryan now lives in Squaw Valley, works at the Resort at Squaw Creek and is a volunteer Firefighter for our Department.

Firefighter-Paramedic Jeff Geigle and partner Amy Page have taken the plunge and purchased a home in Truckee. Firefighter-Paramedic Travis Smith and girlfriend Erin Prado have also become homeowners recently and we have a strong suspicion that there will be another announcement from them before long.

NEW BREATHING APPARATUS

Squaw Valley Fire Department recently purchased all new Scott self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). Scott SCBA have become the *de facto* standard in the Truckee-Tahoe region and the acquisition of 19 units for our Department helps to assure compatibility with the units used by adjoining agencies at a time when virtually all fires are suppressed using forces from mutual aid departments. The new Scott SCBA are smaller, lighter and lower-profile than the units they replaced, allowing our crews greater safety and agility at fires.

Proper Ash Disposal Key to Fire Safety

The Squaw Valley home that is **not** equipped with a fireplace or wood burning stove is a rarity indeed. Many - if not most - structure fires that occur during the cooler months are caused by improper disposal of ashes from a fireplace or wood stove. Avoiding a fire resulting from improper disposal of ashes is pretty simple, if you follow these steps:

- ◆ **Always** assume that ashes are hot enough to start a fire. The fact that the fireplace or stove has not been used for a few days isn't enough to assure that the ashes are cool and are not capable of igniting combustible materials.
- ◆ Dispose of ashes only in a metal container with a lid that isn't used for any other purpose. Never empty a fireplace or wood stove into a plastic trash can or trash bag or place them in a container with other materials.
- ◆ Store your metal ash container outside the home, well away from combustible materials or surfaces - again, assume that all ashes are always hot.
- ◆ Instruct guests, tenants and visitors not to remove ashes from the fireplace or wood stove unless they have been instructed in the safe disposal of ashes.

At least two serious structure fires in Squaw Valley within the past few years have been caused by improper disposal of ashes by well-intentioned renters or guests who placed ashes that they believed were cold in the same container as flammable household trash. Within hours, the 'cold' ashes had come back to life, ignited the household trash and the house with devastating results. Fortunately, no one was injured in either fire, but the property loss was significant and the potential for injury or death was very real, particularly if the fire had started at a different time of day.

Appropriate disposal of fireplace or wood stove ashes is simple and is the single most important fire prevention measure for protecting your home and family.

Avalanche Listing Revision

Thanks to the eagle-eyed Googling by some Squaw Valley residents, the Fire Department's web page listing properties in the Placer County "Potential Avalanche Hazard Area" is being revised. Even though the list has been posted for some seven years, there were undiscovered inaccuracies that are now being addressed. The list of properties designated as being within a potential avalanche hazard area was created by Placer County in the 80's and 90's and any comments on the appropriateness of that list should be directed to the Placer County Planning Department, not the Fire Department!

Pick Out Your Favorite Hydrant for Adoption

The just-in-time, pre-Christmas dump has been awfully good for skiing, but it presents some challenges for firefighters when our small red partners in fire suppression vanish into the drifted or plowed snow along the roads. It is a tremendous help when residents (even part-timers!) "adopt" the fire hydrant closest to their home and help keep it free of snow. The water purveyors and Fire Department work diligently to shovel out the hydrants after each storm, but we would be delighted with your generous assistance!

When digging out a hydrant, please keep in mind that we need at least 24" clearance in all directions from the center of the hydrant.

EASEMENT PROJECT IS MOVING ALONG

The District would like to thank those homeowners who have worked to clear easements on their property in Squaw Valley. The District began our easement clearing project several years ago by implementing a series of newsletter articles educating valley residents about utility easements. In 2007, the District notified approximately 225 homeowners of the easement(s) located on their property. In 2008, residents were notified of new regulations requiring that easement(s) be kept clear. In 2009, the District began systematically inspecting, surveying, and notifying customers of encroachments on easements that had to be removed, often at great expense to our customers. We know that clearing the easement(s) can be an emotional, frustrating, and expensive undertak-

ing and we applaud those who have helped us to maintain access to our facilities by clearing your easement(s). Due to efforts by homeowners on Tiger Tail and Forest Glen Roads, the District was able to complete a series of projects to rehabilitate over 1,800 feet of sewer main in that area. Additional projects are planned as aging sewer pipes in Squaw Valley reach their expected service life.

If you have an easement on your property and want to landscape, please call our office before you start; we will be glad to offer assistance. Keep in mind, the District will remove natural growth on easements at no expense to our customers.

CONSERVATION EFFORTS PAYING OFF

Congratulations! Your conservation efforts are paying off. The graph below shows the water production each year for the past 15 years. It indicates we have reduced our water production by more than 35 million gallons per year or 23% since our peak production in 2000. This has been accomplished through your conservation efforts, reducing leaks in the

water system and changes in the rate structure. It is also noteworthy that we accomplished this saving during the biggest real estate boom in history while bringing on-line 300 condominiums, 50+ new single family residences and the commercial operation of the Village at Squaw Valley.

SVPSD Water Production 15 Year Trend

