



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



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PRESS RELEASE

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Carbon Monoxide Close Call – 13 People Lucky to be Alive

Tahoe City, Calif. Dec. 2, 2019 – A Thanksgiving celebration in Lake Tahoe could have turned into a tragedy for a family of 13 had it not been for two family members that left the holiday dinner to be checked out at a local hospital.

The family members, which spanned multiple generations, were visiting the area for the holiday and all fell ill to varying degrees shortly after arrival. They attributed the sudden onset of their illness to altitude sickness. Hospital staff identified Carbon Monoxide (CO) poisoning in the initial two patients, and alerted the North Tahoe Fire Protection District. With 11 patients at risk still in the vacation home rental, crews from North Tahoe Fire stations 51, 52 and 56 responded along with crews from Meeks Bay Fire, North Lake Tahoe Fire (Incline Village), and Truckee Fire. Two additional patients were transported to Renown, and nine other patients were treated at the scene.

The maximum recommended indoor CO level is 9 parts per million (PPM). Upon arrival the home was reading as high as 55 PPM, even with windows and doors open for ventilation. The home was not equipped with CO alarms.

There are over 2,700 registered short-term rentals in North Tahoe Fire's service area, which many renters assume are equipped with the safety measures one would expect in a hotel. North Tahoe Fire has been aggressive in supporting Placer County's adoption of an ordinance to require these units be inspected periodically for life safety issues, such as smoke alarms, CO alarms, and fire extinguishers.

"We are so thankful to report that this holiday disaster was averted," said Fire Chief Mike Schwartz. "Situational awareness is so important. Whether you are at home or traveling, it is important ensure that smoke and CO alarms are in working order anywhere you stay. It's not a bad idea to consider bringing your own alarm when you travel, just to be safe."

Carbon Monoxide is often referred to as the silent killer. It is undetectable to people because it is odorless and invisible. The toxic gas kills by depriving the blood stream of oxygen, essentially suffocating its victims. Symptoms include headache, dizziness, disorientation, nausea, and difficulty coordinating or breathing.

To learn more about the signs and symptoms of Carbon Monoxide, visit <https://www.carbonmonoxidekills.com/>. ###