



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



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Chief's Corner: Sierra Sun and Bonanza

"Tips for Safely Ringing in the New Year"

New Year's Eve is notoriously a time to gather with friends and family to celebrate. It can be a time to reflect on the previous year, and look forward to the upcoming. But, as many of us know, this evening for celebration can sometimes get carried away by the use of alcohol and unsafe decision making. North Tahoe Fire is providing you with these tips, in hopes of keeping you from spending your holiday with our paramedics, rather than your friends and family.

Just like any other night, if you find yourself out on New Year's Eve, please make sure you have a designated driver. If possible, make arrangements to stay where you are celebrating. You may be the designated driver, but you don't know about the driver next to you. Statistics show that during Christmas and New Year's, two to three times more people die in alcohol-related crashes than during comparable periods the rest of the year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In addition, 40 percent of traffic fatalities during these holidays involve a driver who is alcohol-impaired, compared to 28 percent for the rest of December. If you've had too much to drink or are otherwise impaired, don't get behind the wheel.

For those in your party that choose to consume alcohol, and opt out of driving, alcohol should only be consumed in moderation. Alcohol poisoning deaths are caused by drinking a large amount of alcohol in a short period of time. This can result in very high levels of alcohol in the body, which can shutdown critical areas of the brain that control breathing, heart rate, and body temperature – resulting in death. There are more than 2,200 alcohol poisoning deaths in the U.S. each year, averaging 6 alcohol poisoning deaths every day according to the Center for Disease Control. Please drink responsibly, and always in moderation.

Besides the consumption of alcohol being a health and safety issue, one can actually cause injury to themselves doing something as simple as opening the bottle. Champagne is a common beverage for celebration, and on New Year's Eve, it is a likely addition to a party. Once the cage of the champagne cork is removed it should always be covered either by your hand or a towel. The improper aim of popping Champagne corks is one of the most common causes for holiday-related eye injuries, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO). It is overwhelmingly recommended that champagne corks be popped at a 45 degree angle, and not within range of people.

Lastly, as a reminder, fireworks are always prohibited in the Tahoe Basin. Please do your part in preventing wildfire in our beautiful community. On behalf of North Tahoe Fire, be safe and enjoy your holiday.

Michael Schwartz joined the North Tahoe Fire Protection District as its Fire Chief in 2012, after serving 29 years with a neighboring fire agency. Along with his wife Jean, they have been a part of the Lake Tahoe community since 1978.