

BURN RELAY: SCHOOLCHILDREN LEARN ABOUT FIRE PREVENTION



TRIBUNE PHOTO BY JAYSON MELLOM

From right, Sparky the Dog, Andrew Garcia, Phillip Goldbloom and Brian Leathers of the Oceano Fire Department teach Harloe Elementary School students in Arroyo Grande about fire safety in the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation's Burn Relay.

Making fire safety fun

Local firefighters visit elementary schools to teach children about fire prevention and safety techniques

The message to local youngsters Thursday was clear: "prevention, prevention, prevention."

Firefighters from throughout San Luis Obispo County made 30-minute fire safety presentations at more than a dozen elementary schools as part of the 17th annual Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation's Burn Relay.

The parade of fire equipment, local firefighters, KSBY news anchors, and characters such as U.S. Forest Service mascot Smokey Bear and Sparky the Dog demonstrated safety techniques such as stop, drop, cover (your face) and roll.

Other safety mantras included "get down, get low, get out" when smoke is in the air, calling 911 for help and planning evacuation routes at home in case of emergency.

If someone gets burned, cool the burn with tap water for 15 minutes. Never run if you catch on fire — running just makes the flames spread.

Children were also told to make sure their home has a smoke detector, change its batteries twice a year and test it monthly to make sure it works.

"Last year 40 percent of burns under the age of 11 were caused by fires that the kids started themselves," Morro Bay Fire Department Capt. Steven Knuckles said. "We can prevent those fires. If your child has a curiosity about fire, call your local fire department."

— AnnMarie Cornejo

Tips on how to keep kids safe

According to the American Burn Association, more than 1 million burn injuries are reported each year.

Statistics show that on average in the United States in 2003, someone died in a fire every 134 minutes, and someone was injured every 29 minutes.

Simple prevention techniques such as turning down water heaters below 120 degrees can help prevent serious burns.

According to Morro Bay Fire Capt. Steven Knuckles, a majority of toddler burns are caused by scalding water.

The Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation offers an educational kit with several simple steps parents can take to make their home safe from scald burns.

The Baby Blues Infant Scald Program provides parents with a safety kit that includes a bathwater thermometer. For details, visit www.aarbf.org.

ONLINE EXTRA



Visit sanluisobispo.com to download a checklist for fireproofing your home.

Serious burns can also be prevented by carefully choosing your kids' pajamas.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission encourages all parents to make sure children's sleepwear is either flame-resistant or snug-fitting.

Loose-fitting cotton clothing can catch fire easily and burn rapidly, and is associated with nearly 300 emergency-room-treated burn injuries to children each year.

Statistics show that children are most at risk from burn injuries that result from playing with fire just before bedtime and in the early morning.