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North Valley News

Volume 3, Number 18 January 17, 2025

Serving Porter Ranch, Northridge, Granada Hills & Chatsworth

News in Brief

IRS Announces Tax Extension for Those Affected by Wildfires

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the state of California have recently announced tax relief for individuals and businesses that have been affected by the wildfires. These taxpayers now have until Oct. 15, 2025 to file various federal individual and business tax returns and make any tax payments. The IRS will automatically identify those located in the covered disaster area and apply filing and payment relief. For full details, visit irs.gov/newsroom/irs-announces-tax-relief-for-taxpayers-impacted-by-wildfires-in-california-various-deadlines-postponed-to-oct-15.

With Wildfire Displacement Watch for Price Gouging

With thousands displaced, some are seeking the opportunity to price-gouge and take advantage of those who are desperate. California's anti-price-gouging law (Penal Code Section 396) limits rent increases to a maximum of 10% after a state of emergency is declared, whic has happened in California. This law applies to both current tenants and new leases and also restricts price hikes on essential goods and services. Violations of this law can result in penalties of up to one year in jail and/or fines of up to $10,000. Those who notice price gouging are encouraged to report it to local authorities.

Facts and Figures About the Fires

At press time, the following facts and figures are as follows:
- Over 100individuals have been arrested for looting, theft, impersonation, arson, drone usage and breaking curfew.
-Twenty-five individuals have died from the fires, eight in the Palisades and 17 in the Eaton fire.
-Approximately 38 people are still reported missing.
-Approximately 88,000 people under evacuation orders.
-Firefighting teams from nine states, Canada, Mexico and the National Guard gave been deployed to flight the fires.
-If a pet has gone missing during the evacuation period, call 213-270-8155.
-All public libraries are offering N95 masks to combat against the unhealthy air quality.

FIRE SPECIAL: How to Prepare, Recover, Give Back File Insurance Claims and More

At press time, there are still two fires currently burning including the Palisades Fire at 22% containment and the Eaton Fire at 55% containment.

Firefighters have not only had to battle extremely dry conditions, but fierce winds. After dealing with days of red flag warnings, the weather services warned of a "Particularly Dangerous Situation" wind event that occurred from Tuesday morning to Wednesday afternoon of this week. Darkened skies, erratic flames, extreme winds and flying debris have caused many residents to declare the situation as nothing short of apocalyptic.

With cooling temperatures and waning winds this weekend, firefighters aim to gain more control before Santa Ana winds return on Monday. While the causes of all these recent fires are still under investigation, talk has focused on arson, a utility spark and a previous fire that was improperly extinguished.

Seven Things to Do When Filing an Insurance Claim

By Tim Gaspar

Lost your home? Have damage from the fires? Smoke? There are certain things you should do to expedite your insurance claim.

Have Your Home Policy Information Handy: Include your policy number and phone number to file a claim. Many carriers also allow you to file the claim online.

List Damaged or Lost Items: In addition to telling the carrier what type of damage your home sustained, the insurance carrier will also ask you to make a list of personal items damaged or destroyed in the fire. This is where a video or pictures of the inside of your home come in handy. This can take some time to put together so it's better to start sooner than later. You will want to provide a description of the items and possibly an approximate replacement cost. Your insurance carrier will ask you if you have receipts and/or pictures of these items - those are generally helpful but not required.

Temporary Living Expenses: Put together a list of any expenses you incur for being out of your home including hotel stays, meals, transportation, etc.

Fire Department Report: Request a copy of the fire department's report, which can confirm the cause and scope of the wildfire.

Evacuation Notices:

(Continued to page 3)

COMMUNITY

Are You Prepared to Evacuate at a Moment's Notice?

By Ken Ross

The Kenneth Fire (note: ironically NOT named after me, thankfully) came far too close for comfort to my home. Confession: I had done absolutely nothing to prepare for a catastrophic emergency like these wildfires.

My guess is that YOU haven't done any prep either, right? So, if you were not already directly affected by these wildfires, maybe you have still done nothing to prepare, right again? Wellllll, TIMES UP!!! Get your stick out of somewhere, roll up your sleeves and get prepared.... NOW!!!

The startling reality of these unimaginable wildfires is that this can happen to anyone anywhere, at any time. So, how about starting with these few game plans? Firstly, if shocked into an immediate evacuation order, where would you go? Consider that a mass evacuation could result in abandoned cars on freeways, so should you risk taking a freeway? Literally depending on which way the wind is blowing, where would you go (if forced to move north, east, south or west)? Yes, it would be really nice if each LA City Council Member would clearly spell out all their council district's options for us. So, maybe you should place a "polite request" for action by him/her after you finish reading this article, eh? How about a phone call to your local LAUSD Supervisor requesting a list of all LAUSD schools that would be opened as an evacuation center (if/when something like this happens again)? I can not think of any organization better equipped than LAUSD to handle masses of evacuated residents in a disaster, can you? It would also be nice if each possible evacuation site had ham radio capabilities just in case cell phone towers go down. Do all disaster preparedness handbooks suggest that necessity? I have no clue.

By the way, what if cell phone towers do go down and your family is separated when disaster strikes? Everyone in the family should know the pre-planned destination (with alternatives if those options are unavailable). That does actually mean calling for a family meeting to hash this all out (with a little brainstorming added, so you can show off). At such a meeting, it would help greatly if someone thought of things like putting double collars on each of your pets. If a collar breaks and you have a dog (or even a collared cat in cat carrier?) on a leash and it breaks, you need a re-attachment instantly, not later after the pet has bolted.

Next, are all your essential documents, "sufficient" cash at hand (note: you might not be able to get to an ATM or bank easily), priceless jewelry and keepsakes hidden away in a tote bag for rapid evacuation? Hopefully, you already camera-phone-copied all your irreplaceable family photos and sent them to "the cloud"...if not, get hoppin'.

And, if G_d forbid, you did get burned out, has a close friend or relative agreed to board you for "a while"?

And it might be too late, but are you eligible for fire and other disaster-type insurance? If you aren't sure, wouldn't it be a good idea to give your insurance agent a call today, eh?

Any of us who haven't lost our homes, hopefully are going to immediately donate clothing, food and/or other essentials to local non-profit donation centers. We may have been lucky this time, but hopefully if we need such assistance in the future, karma will work in our favor. So, PLEEEAAASSSEEE do something to help our heart-broken neighbors who are in desperate need of our assistance now.

Lastly, if enough people write in with brilliant creative evacuation plan ideas (beyond those in online disaster handbooks, which we all should read), I might even write a follow-up to this. I am in no way an expert on the topic. Remember, I was as ill-prepared as you were. However, if this article just helps even a single family avoid a worsened catastrophe, then this was the most useful article I ever wrote.

Be thoughtful, be democratic, be of ken.

Ken Ross is a Northridge resident, a former dentist and Associate Professor of Dentistry at UCLA. He sits on the Northridge East Neighborhood Council, where he has been both Second Vice President and First Vice President. He can be reached at kenrossnenc@yahoo.com.

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People in the News

Every week in this column we honor those who have earned accolades, awards or significant achievements. This week without question we have to honor the brave men and women of the city and county fire departments who are on the front line of the multiple fires traumatizing Los Angeles.

Much has been made of donations to your local fire department. There are conflicting reports about what they need - many stations have received more food and water than they can store. But they still need our help! Each station can certainly use cash donations to help replenish or buy equipment and supplies not provided by the city or county.

If you wish to support our local firefighters, consider dropping a check or gift card to your local market by one of the following stations.

Station #70 9861 Reseda Blvd. Northridge
Station #103 18143 Parthenia St. Northridge
Station #8 11351 Tampa Avenue Porter Ranch
Station #107 20225 Devonshire St. Chatsworth
Station #18 12050 Balboa Blvd. Granada Hills
Station #87 10124 Balboa Blvd. Granada Hills
Station #72 6811 DeSoto Street, Canoga Park

PHOTO: WILLIAM CAPLENOR

Bryan Hand of Hand Brewed Brewery in Chatsworth

Jumping in to Lend a Helping Hand

The community of Chatsworth rallied to help fire victims as Brandon Palmer of 818 Night Market and Bryan Hand of Hand Brewed Brewery hosted at donation drive this week at the brewery.

Almost 300 volunteers unloaded 200 truck loads of water, baby food, diapers, new and used clohting, Companies such as Young LA donated 15 boxes of brand new womens sweatshirts, multiple people took in cash collections and people did Costco runs bringing $500 to $2,000 worth of goods at a time.

Chatsworth Kiwanis and members of the North Valley Chamber were also on hand to help direct traffic, unload and organize the donations.

Donations were delivered to "It's Bigger Than Us" on Crenshaw Blvd., Pups Without Borders, the Santa Anita Racetrack, Pasadena City College and Pasadena Convention Center.

Hand told North Valley News, "I was simply gobsmacked and proud of all the work put in by our community. . It was a sight to behold and I was so positively overwhelmed at the outpouring of good deeds and a strong community spirit."

How to File an Insurance Claim

(Continued from page 1)

Get official documentation that confirms you were in an evacuation zone.

Notes of Conversations: Document every interaction with your insurance company, including the names of representatives, dates, and summaries of what was discussed.

Organizing Your Claim: Create a folder or digital file to store all relevant documents, receipts, and communication logs. Being organized and thorough will not only expedite the process but also reduce stress during an already difficult time.

One more quick note. You WILL get a call from a public adjuster wanting to represent you in the claim. Don't sign any kind of contract with anyone for at least a few days. Public adjusters can be helpful and provide value in large and complicated claims but they take a percentage of the claim dollars so depending on your carrier and complexity (or lack thereof) of your claim you might not need a public adjuster.

Tim Gaspar is the founder and CEO of Gaspar Insurance and a candidate for LA City Council 2026. You can reach him at tim@timgaspar.com

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VIEWPOINT

English Channel

By Rodger Sterling

English Channel offers the best of the late editor Rodger Sterling's columns that ran continuously in the local papers since 1968.

• Tim McGinnis writes English Channel wondering, "If a book about failures doesn't sell, is it a success?"

• If you're worried about running out of supplies - especially toilet paper - buy matzo! It lasts for years and years and basically plugs up your system, so you need less TP!

• So true. A sage told us, "10% of the people make things happen, 80% of the people watch and 10% have no clue what's happening."

• Did you hear about the butcher who backed up into his meat grinder and got a little behind in his work?

• My coffee drinking buddy Mary Kathleen says that being over the hill is much better than being under it!

• Didja' hear about the thief who stole a calendar and got 12 months?

• Michelle Goldwater wants to know why this doesn't happen more often... I was in the express lane at the store quietly fuming. Completely ignoring the sign, the woman ahead of me had slipped into the check-out line pushing a cart piled high with groceries. Imagine my delight when the cashier beckoned the woman to come forward looked into the cart and asked sweetly, 'So which six items would you like to buy?'

• After dinner, a lot of families suffer from dish-temper.

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PHONE 818.313.9545 FAX 818.302.1417
Email: ValleyNewsGroup@gmail.com
22025 Ventura Blvd. #303 Woodland Hills CA 91364
www.valleynewsgroup.com Facebook.com/valleynewsgroupwoodlandhills

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Word on the Street

----------From Kathleen Sterling

It takes a tragedy to turn a city into a small village.

L.A. is facing fires on all sides; it looks apocalyptic, and there is a long, hard road ahead.

But I am inspired by how we have sprung into action.

So many businesses have stepped up to help.

Paul and David at Cavaretta's Deli, 22025 Sherman Way, are always the first to offer food and comfort. Airbnb is offering a free week to evacuees. L.A. Fitness, Planet Fitness and Crunch Fitness are offering free showers and WiFi. A garage door company offered to come out and open doors if power is off.

Brian Hand of Handbrewed Brewery stepped up as a donation center (see page 3). Granada Hills Chamber was collecting items for those affected. Shepherd Church is accepting cash donations on their website. 100% goes to fire victims.

As always during a crisis, the amazing team at the Pierce Equestrian Center is sequestering large animals for their owners.

On my own front, my family and friends jumped in to load up my car as I left the canyon when the fire came over the ridge.

All over Facebook you see people offering their homes, their offices, their help.

What can you do? The large relief organizations are always boots on the ground. But this is a chance for neighbor to help neighbor.

El Camino High School is an evacuation center. Call them to find out what they need for people who've lost everything: sheets, towels, water, food.

If you can, get gift cards for friends or neighbors who have lost a home. Target and Starbucks could be lifesavers!

Donate old towels and blankets to an animal shelter.

Bring gift cards for a local grocery store to your local fire station as they have received enough food and snacks as of presstime. The firefighters are the true heroes here.

Pray for those who have been affected. It's devastating to watch, and even more devastating to live through.

And please, please, slow down and watch the road! Traffic signals are out all over L.A. I've seen cars just barrel through a dead light. We don't need more tragedy heaped upon tragedy.

Please be safe out there. Be alert. Unfortunately with all the good being done, there are miscreants looting and reportedly starting some of these fires.

I've written before about how we pull together in a crisis to help each other - and how nice it would be if it happened all the time.

Realistically it won't. But let's take this opportunity to do what we can. Because our neighbors need help. And the way these fires are spreading - one in West Hills just erupted as I'm writing this - who knows if you might be the next one who needs a hand up.

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Applying for Federal Disaster Assistance

By Congressman Brad Sherman

If you qualify for $43,600 of housing assistance, you may also qualify for additional temporary rental assistance from FEMA. The amount of assistance is based on prevailing rental value in your community, and the number of people in your household.

If you qualify for the full $43,600 in FEMA housing aid, you will probably qualify for an additional $10,000 in aid from the California State Supplemental Grant Program. This aid can be used on rental expenses, housing repairs or rebuild, replacement of personal property, medical expenses, etc. Importantly, there is no separate application to obtain this state assistance. Individuals who receive the maximum in FEMA housing assistance will automatically receive state assistance. For more information on the California State Supplemental Grant Program, visit cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/disaster-services-branch/disaster-grant-assistance.

The "Other Needs" (car, medical, etc.) FEMA grant of up to $43,600 is in addition to the initial FEMA housing assistance, which also has a separate maximum of $43,600.

If you submit the application for assistance with FEMA and you have insurance, you may receive a message that your assistance was "not approved." This is a glitch in the FEMA website. If you have insurance that does not fully cover all of your costs (under-insured), you are still eligible for FEMA assistance. You will need to provide additional information to show that your insurance will not cover all of your costs. I am pushing FEMA to correct the glitch, and to reduce the paperwork and delay for those who are under-insured. The $43,600 in housing assistance is the maximum set by current law for disaster victims. I will be advocating for new special laws to provide additional assistance to Los Angeles area fire victims.

I realize that the cost to rebuild some homes can exceed $1 million, and that many fire victims do not have adequate insurance.

Federal Assistance to Fire Victims

This assistance is designed to help cover costs not covered by insurance.

Grant Assistance to a Household:

FEMA Individual Assistance – Special Needs Assistance Grants: $770 one-time payment to afford immediate needs like food, water, hygiene, and transportation.

FEMA Individual Assistance – For Housing: The maximum amount a homeowner can receive through the FEMA Individual Assistance grant program for home repair and replacement, and for temporary housing, is up to $43,600.

FEMA Individual Assistance – For Other Needs: Another $43,600 is available in the form of a grant from FEMA to cover medical expenses, damage to a vehicle, household items/property, funeral expenses, moving/storage, and childcare expenses, etc.

To apply for FEMA Assistance visit disasterassistance.com..

Small Business Administration Loans for Homeowners and Renters:

SBA loans can cover up to $100,000 of personal property loss (i.e. furniture, clothing, automobiles) and up to $500,000 of a homeowner's real property loss (i.e. home repair). Second homes and vacation homes are not eligible. Loans are for up to 30 years; first payment and interest accrual deferred for the first 12 months. The maximum interest rate is 4%.

Small Business Administration Loans for a Business:

SBA Physical Damage Loans: Loans up to $2 million for businesses and nonprofits for uninsured physical damage and losses. Loans are for up to 30 years; first payment and interest accrual deferred for the first 12 months. The maximum interest rate is 4% unless credit can be obtained elsewhere. If credit could be obtained elsewhere, then the interest rate is 8%.

SBA Economic Injury Disaster Loans: Loans up to $2 million for businesses and nonprofits with economic injury (such as lost sales) as the result of the disaster. Only available when the Small Business Administration determines a recipient is unable to obtain credit elsewhere. Loans are for up to 30 years; first payment and interest accrual deferred for the first 12 months. The maximum interest rate is 4%.

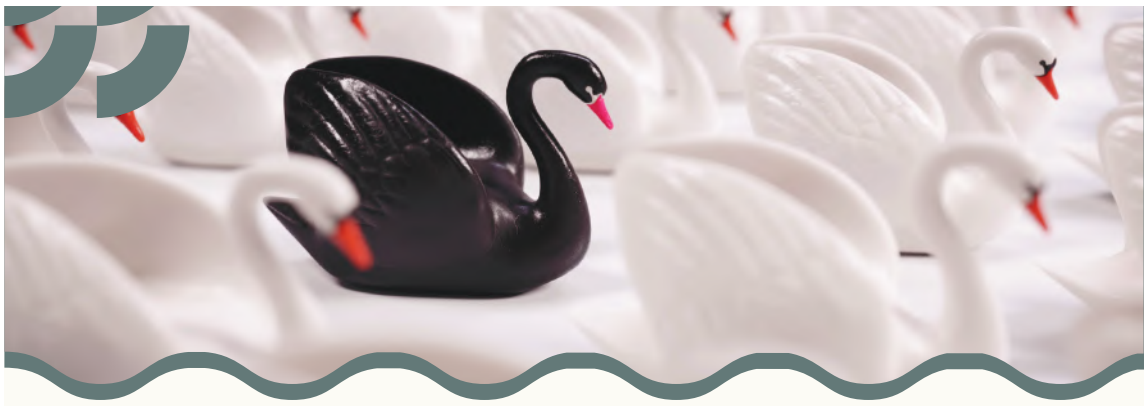
The combined loan amount across both SBA programs may not exceed $2 million.

To apply for SBA Assstance visit https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/disaster-assistance/california-wildfires.

Congressman Brad Sherman represents California's 32nd Congressional District, which includes the city of Malibu and the Los Angeles neighborhoods of Pacific Palisades, Beverly Glen, Bel Air, Studio City, Sherman Oaks, Woodland Hills, West Hills, Canoga Park, Winnetka, Reseda, Tarzana, Encino, Chatsworth, Northridge, Brentwood, North Hills, as well as the south side of Granada Hills.

Honoring a Piece of Chatsworth History

On Sunday, January 26, at 10 am, St. Mary the Virgin Anglican parish at The Pioneer Church (L.A. Cultural Monument #14) celebrates the January days in 1965 when it was saved from demolition. Join them in honoring a significant piece of Chatsworth's history. The church is located at 22601 Lassen St., Chatsworth, in Oakwood Memorial Park at the top of the hill in The Pioneer Church All are welcome! For more information, contact them at 818-389-0423.



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VALLEY ENTERTAINMENT

New Show "Stomps" Into Soraya

The unforgettable and amazing experience of *Stomp* is coming to the Soraya.

The troupe of S*tomp* uses everything except conventional percussion instruments to fill the stage with magnificent rhythms. You'll hear music made with matchboxes, wooden poles, brooms, garbage cans, Zippo lighters, hubcaps and more.

The percussion group originated in Brighton, England, using the body and ordinary objects to create a physical theatre performance using rhythms, acrobatics and pantomime.

Stomp will take the stage at the Soraya on Saturday, January 18 at 3 pm and 8 pm, and Sunday, January 19, at 3 pm.

The Soraya is located on the campus of CSUN at 18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge. For tickets visit thesoraya.org or call (818) 677-3000.

Nominations Open for 11th Annual Inspirational Women Awards

The United Chambers of Commerce is proud to announce their 11th Annual Inspirational Women of the San Fernando Valley Awards will be held on May 8, 2025 (venue TBD).

The event will recognize women who have inspired, achieved and made the San Fernando Valley a better place. Honorees will be selected from a wide array of industries, including, but not limited to, business, social services, health care and medicine, education, community advocacy, arts, government and non-profit, among others.

The selection committee will be looking for women who have made a profound impact in the San Fernando Valley and nominations are now open. All nominations, including self- nominations, must be submitted by March 3 at form.jotform. com/243647414108051.

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Grammy winning, Tony-nominated and West End star Eva Noblezada.

Jazz at Naz Kicks Off February 1

Pacific Jazz Orchestra will open The Soraya's "Jazz at Naz" season on February 1. The festival will be headlined by Grammy Award-winning and two-time Tony nominated Broadway and West End star, Eva Noblezada. The

Pacific Jazz Orchestra is LA's resident 40-piece ensemble for jazz and beyond, presenting an annual concert season, each with different guest artists, featuring music of a diverse range of styles, genres, and backgrounds.

Following her riveting performances in London's revivals of *Miss Saigon* and *Les Misérables*, Noblezada dazzled Broadway as Eurydice in the original production of the mega-hit *Hadestown*, and is currently wowing audiences as Daisy Buchanan in the new Broadway musical adaptation of *The Great Gatsby*.

They will take the stage at The Soraya at 8 pm. Tickets are available at thesoraya.org. The theatre is located on the campus of CSUN at 18111 Nordoff Street in Northridge.

The Reel History of the Valley

By Martin M. Cooper

The Studios Give Back

With the fires ravaging our region, tens of thousands of Angelenos evacuating their homes, and the Herculean efforts of firefighters and public safety personnel working tirelessly on our behalf, it seems inappropriate to write a normal column about the story of motion pictures in the San Fernando Valley.

Perhaps a better use of newsprint this month is to share a positive story of the relationship between the major studios and the San Fernando Valley's social service agencies.

According to Valley Nonprofit Resources, there are more than 4,000 nonprofit organizations in the San Fernando Valley. Many of them look to – and find support from – the Valley's motion picture industry.

When it comes to the relationship between the San Fernando Valley's film community and its nonprofit organizations, Marianne Haver Hill is an acknowledged expert. She is Executive Director of the Community Foundation of the Valleys. Previously, she oversaw implementation of the Countywide Strategic Plan for Economic Development for the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation and before that, was President and CEO of MEND (Meet Each Need with Dignity), a poverty relief agency.

Marianne Haver Hill, Executive Director, Community Foundation of the Valleys

There is a long-time symbiotic relationship between the Valley's motion picture studios and the companies that provide services to them with the region's nonprofit organizations. As neighbors as well as major employers in this region, the studios have marshalled their employees to volunteer and otherwise support nonprofit agencies in a variety of capacities.

Haver Hill believes that there is a particular benefit in having film company executives serving on nonprofit boards of directors. Industry executives often contribute motion-picture-related items for the agency's fundraising events or activities; bring their particular expertise to the organization's board deliberations; and understand that part of their board commitment is to make an annual personal financial contribution to the agency.

Disney donated $1 million to the Boys & Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley for the youth services organization's new building.

The studios have additionally been helpful by sending out groups of employees to work at nonprofit events such as holiday parties or galas. For several years, Universal Studios' Discover a Star Foundation organized a large Christmas in Spring event with MEND in Pacoima. According to Haver Hill, "Typically, MEND and several transitional living facilities collectively referred several hundred unhoused individuals and families to participate in this wonderful event. Christmas in Spring included a catered lunch, crafts, games, visits with Santa, gifts to take home, and more," she recalls. "It was such a delight to see not only the smiles on the faces of the event recipients, but also to see the joy the employees had in providing such a wonderful experience for all who came."

Sometimes, the studios will make a major contribution to a local nonprofit…particularly if it is in the city where they are located. In September 2018, Disney donated $1 million to the Boys & Girls Club of Burbank and Greater East Valley, while in March 2022, Warner Bros. donated $500,000…both for a new building for the youth services organization.

Other ways in which local motion picture companies have supported nonprofits have been to conduct food, toy, clothing or blanket drives; to donate cash to support the nonprofits' work; to offer internships for young people interested in pursuing a career in motion pictures; and to provide their facilities for fundraising events. In addition to the studios, many film-related companies have a "day," when groups of employees will engage in volunteer work at nonprofits, such as painting, cleaning, and when appropriate, interact with the agency's clients.

In addition, several of these larger companies provide grants or event sponsorships. The studios' financial contributions have strengthened the credibility and reputation of the recipient agencies, which in turn allows the agencies to leverage these donations to pursue other monetary gifts.

Haver Hill concludes: "Studio senior executives understand the importance of engaging their employees and utilizing their resources to partner with local San Fernando Valley charitable organizations; these businesses not only foster positive corporate cultures internally, but also promote the flourishing of our region."

What's in it for the film studios and related companies? A lot.

Since a large percentage of their employees live in the Valley, and since many are unionized, a positive relationship with their families is an important factor in negotiations. When studios or other film-related companies need support or testimony before various city or state committees or commissions regarding zoning, filming, or other matters requiring government approval, nonprofit executives often step up to testify what a great corporate citizen the film company is. Several Valley-based film-related businesses put a list of the nonprofits they've supported during the year on their holiday greetings cards.

According to Valley Nonprofit Resources, there are more than 4,000 nonprofit organizations in the San Fernando Valley. Many of them look to, and find support from, the Valley's motion picture industry.

The partnership between the motion picture industry, both organizations and individuals, with the Valley's nonprofit organizations, is one of the sinews that makes the San Fernando Valley as strong as it is…and will help us recover from the current disaster.

Martin Cooper, President of Cooper Communications, supervised public relations for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences for 10 years; held executive positions with Disney and Universal Studios; and served as Chairman of the Board of the UCLA Film & Television Archive. He is a Fernando Award Honoree and Past Chairman of VICA. An award-winning author, he has written four books, two of them on the San Fernando Valley. He is currently researching his next book, the history of motion pictures in the Valley.

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What Not to Say to Someone Who's Lost Everything

By Dete Meserve

In 2018, my house burned, and my family and I were displaced for 20 months while we rebuilt. The outpouring of support was amazing. Here are a few thoughts to share about what not to say when someone has endured that kind of loss:

1) Don't offer something specific (e.g. I have some extra jackets, would you like them?) because then you put the person in the position of having to say no to you when they are already overwhelmed. Offering broad support is so much easier: I'm here. Whatever you need. Anytime.

2) Don't offer support that requires them to be somewhere at a specific time. They are living each day as it comes and while your offer to bring dinner at 7 pm on Thursday is generous, they don't know where they'll be at 7 pm or whether they'll be interested in dinner.

3) Don't ask them for the specifics. "What did you lose?" is the worst question you can ask.

4) Don't ask to see pictures of their burnt down home and don't visit their burnt property unless you're specifically invited. This is extremely painful - like looking at a dead carcass of your memories.

5) The worst question

Don't ask them for the specifics. "What did you lose?" is the worst question you can ask.

and comments are those that somehow imply they could've done more. For example, don't casually mention, "my friends in Altadena hosed down their house and their house was spared." Or: "My friends just cleared the brush from their house last year so their house is fine."

6) Don't tell them about other people who have it worse. Their pain is their own. Your compassion comes from listening, not telling.

7) Don't "look on the positive" with them. Don't say "at least you're all safe. That's more important than things." That implies they don't already know that. Believe me, they do!

8) Don't add to their grief. When I told one friend my house had burned, she broke down sobbing and I had to console her for 20 minutes. This is not the time to have them console you over your grief in their loss.

9) Don't tell them that this loss is the universe/God telling them something. If this is your belief, hold it to yourself.

No one going through this wants to hear someone else

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REAL ESTATE

Wildfire Preparedness: Protecting What Matters Most with a Household Binder

By Mercy Alpert

As wildfires ravage California, they leave behind a heartbreaking trail of destruction - homes reduced to ashes, families displaced, and cherished belongings lost forever. While we can't control nature's wrath, we can take steps to protect what matters most.

One crucial yet often overlooked step is creating a Household Binder - a portable collection of your most vital documents. In an emergency, having this binder ready can save time, reduce stress, and help you begin the recovery process.

What is a Household Binder?

A Household Binder is a centralized, organized collection of essential documents you can grab at a moment's notice. It ensures that your most important information is with you, even if everything else is left behind.

What it Should Contain

Personal Identification – Passports, birth certificates, Social Security cards, driver's licenses.

- Insurance Policies – Home, auto, health, and life insurance.

- Property Documents – Deeds, titles, or lease agreements.

-Financial Information – Bank account details, credit cards, and emergency cash.

- Health Records – Insurance cards, prescriptions, and medical histories.

- Children's Documents – School records, immunization forms, and custody papers.

- Pet Records – Vaccination certificates and microchip details.

- Emergency Contacts – A list of key numbers for family, doctors, and service providers.

How to Prepare Your Binder

Use a durable, waterproof, fire-resistant case.

Label and organize documents with clear tabs.

Regularly update the binder to ensure it's current.

Store it in an easily accessible location.

Why This Matters

When evacuation orders come, there's often no time to think—only to act. A Household Binder ensures you have what you need to navigate the aftermath of a disaster, from insurance claims to medical care and beyond.

As a Mobile Notary Public, I understand the vital role these documents play in recovery and rebuilding. I encourage everyone to take this simple but powerful step toward safeguarding their future.

Mercy Alpert of Have Mercy Mobile Notary Services offers assistance in the Calabasas, San Fernando Valley, and Malibu areas to help you put your Household Binder together. You can reach her at (818) 388-6961 or email: mercy@notarymobile4u.com to set an appointment.

What Not to Say

(Continued from page 8)

interpret what the universe/God is telling them or that there is a lesson you think they need to learn.

10) The natural tendency is to try to learn from what happened by asking detailed questions that will keep you safe in the future. Don't do that. Don't ask if they evacuated on time or their smoke alarms went off or if they hosed down their house.

Simply tell them you are grateful they are safe. You are there for them, whatever they need. And let them tell you their story when they're ready.

The most wonderful thing someone did for me - something I'll never forget - is to bring me a cup of tea and stand quietly with me.

Dete Meserve is an award-winning creator and film and television producer as well as a best-selling novelist. Her latest novel, The Memory Collectors - about four people who get to spend an hour in their pasts -will be published May 20, 2025. Under the banner of her production company Silver Creek Falls Entertainment, she's currently Executive Producer/Showrunner of Weather Hunters in collaboration with Al Roker Entertainment.

REAL ESTATE

Shielding Dementia Patients from Distressing News

By Ronda Wilkin

If you're like me, during times of crisis, you might find yourself glued to the news 24/7. However, for individuals with dementia, watching distressing news can be overwhelming and hard to process. Many people with dementia struggle to make sense of the present, which can lead to confusion, behaviors, or even hallucinations.

I vividly remember an incident from October 2018, when I was the administrator of a memory care community in the Palm Desert area. At the time, the devastating Northern California fires had scorched nearly 250,000 acres. That morning, our residents were engaged in a craft project that included some red glitter. An innocent staff member, responding to a resident's request, turned on the news. Everything seemed fine - until it wasn't.

A few hours later, one resident became visibly upset, pointing at a speck of red glitter and shouting, "We're on fire!" Her fear quickly spread, unsettling others. Despite the fire being over 300 miles away, our residents couldn't process the distance or context.

Similarly, I've witnessed residents exhibit distressing behaviors during news coverage of events like the George Floyd trial, imagining harm coming to them personally. While I am good at redirection, as was my team, it is often harder for families who need to learn these techniques.

Graphic and disturbing news images can confuse individuals with dementia, creating unnecessary anxiety and stress. To promote their well-being, I always recommend limiting exposure to negative news and opting for positive, uplifting programs instead. Who doesn't love old movies or re-runs of *I Love Lucy*?

If you'd like assistance with redirection techniques or other dementia-related challenges, feel free to reach out to me at ronda@dementiapartner.com or visit www.dementiapartner.com.

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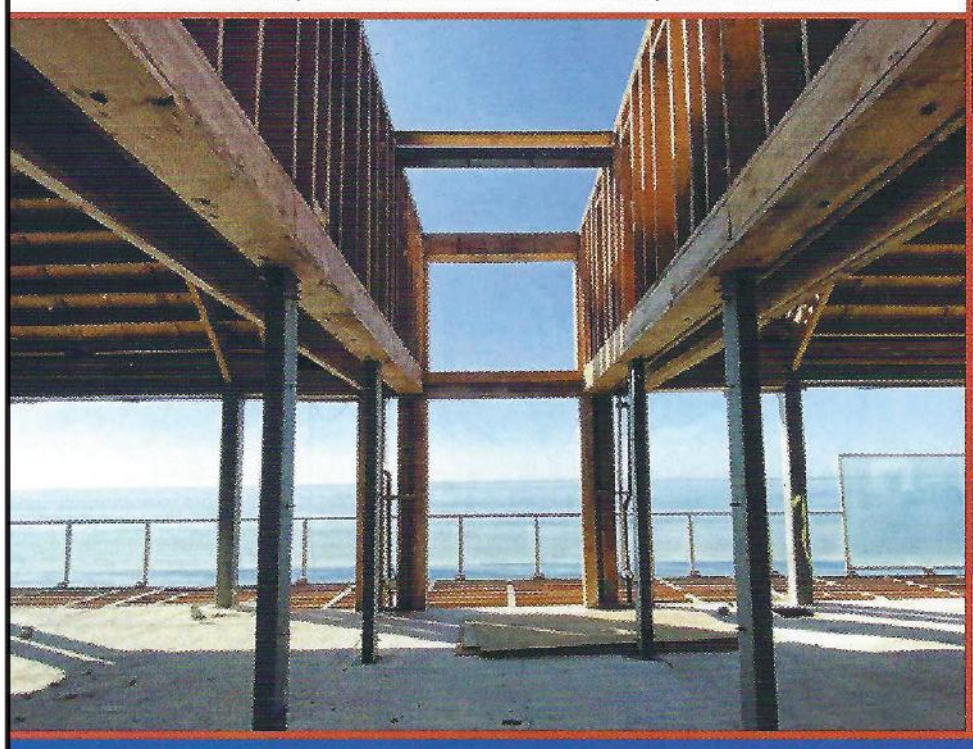

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