

Published August 18th, 2010

MOFD Takes Fire Safety to Lamorinda Area Elementary Schools

By Lucy Amaral



Firefighter/paramedic Matt Nichols teaches a kindergarten class about fire safety. Photo provided by MOFD

Believing that prevention through education saves lives, the Moraga-Orinda Fire District (MOFD) visits Orinda and Moraga elementary schools every year to teach fire and life safety education to kindergarten through fifth grade students. Recently, MOFD revamped its ten-year old program to include topics such as disaster preparation and wildland interface lessons.

"The basis behind the new program is to introduce fire safety, injury prevention, disaster preparedness tips and making better choices in order to stay safe," said Kathy Leonard, fire prevention officer for MOFD.

Leonard said that the program is designed to be age-appropriate, and includes a short video, lesson plans, materials and activities for the teacher and students to use in class or to take home to their families.

With MOFD's curriculum, each grade has specific objectives and each year builds on the previous year's subject. Topics covered range from teaching the younger grades how to recognize unsafe situations, the importance of fire drills, escape plans and smoke alarms. The older grades focus on when to call 9-1-1, assembling an emergency preparedness kit, and reinforcing smart fire safety choices.

Beginning in October, Leonard and MOFD engine companies will teach the 35-40 minute sessions, taking one grade at a time. "We start with kindergarten, and once all seven schools are finished, we progress to the next grade," she said.

The superintendent of the Moraga School District, Bruce Burns, said that students learn valuable lessons, such as knowing when and how to dial 9-1-1, planning evacuation routes, how to stop, drop and roll and how to stay calm. "The fire-safety program is a highlight for our primary students as they are presented with hands-on opportunities from our local fire fighters to learn about fire prevention and what action to take in the event of a fire," he said.

MOFD Fire Chief Randy Bradley said that having a robust public education program in the elementary schools serves as the catalyst of MOFD's comprehensive fire prevention and public education programs. "I firmly believe that educating children on fire safety provides the basis for a fire safe community that is sustainable," he said.

Leonard said she is continually looking for feedback to improve the curriculum. "We are committed to providing high quality fire safety and injury prevention education to our community," said Leonard. "Our program is continually evolving so we can implement changes that are important to the teachers as well as their students."

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