Safety Zone Article – *by Harun Simbirdi*
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Practice Safety Precautions During July 4th Festivities

While usually a day of parades, barbecues, professional fireworks shows and parties, the Fourth of July is also one of the most dangerous days of the year. Statistics show that more than 7,000 people each year get treated for Fourth of July related accidents. Follow these simple rules and safety tips and you'll be sure to fully enjoy this holiday:

1. Fireworks are illegal in Contra Costa County. However, if you are planning on using fireworks where they are legal, it's important to remember they are dangerous and present a risk of fire or bodily injury. Read all instructions properly and do not use near wooded or dry areas. Have a bucket of water and hose available to put out sparks or flames. Never point fireworks at people and don't allow children to play with fireworks or firecrackers. Avoid wearing loose clothes when using fireworks. Only light outdoors and don't try to re-light "duds."

2. Don't drink and drive. Always have a designated driver and don't let your friends drive drunk. Be extra cautious on the road on holidays because even if you are not drinking, other people can be. Drivers can also become distracted by fireworks and other excitement in the area.

3. Be careful while barbecuing. Make sure all coals are completely out and the gas turned off before leaving the barbecue unattended. Be aware and careful of children playing around the barbecue area.

4. Store food properly to avoid food poisoning. Be careful of leaving food out – especially in the heat. Make sure to serve foods at the proper temperature.

5. Last but not least, remember your pets. It's best to keep them indoors at home and make sure your home is secured. Keep them in a quiet room if possible and remove any items that your pet could destroy. Do not take your pet to fireworks displays. Even if pets are left outside in a secured area, they will likely become frightened, escape and get lost. Make sure your pets are wearing identification tags. If you know a pet will get distressed by loud noises, see your veterinarian for ideas on helping your pet through the holiday. If you find a lost/wandering pet, take it to the local animal shelter so it will have a better chance of being reunited with its owner.

Harun Simbirdi is a member of the City of Clayton Citizen Corp Council (C-5), part of the CERT Team, and a resident of Clayton. He can be reached at simbirdi@yahoo.com or call 570-1324.