

Think you're prepared? Think again

One of the more important items in your emergency cache is a trusty flashlight. Earthquakes or other disasters can come without warning and could bring total darkness.

At 8:05 p.m. on Oct. 30, 2007, we had a 5.6 earthquake in San Jose. I'm a "wannabe" geologist and within five minutes of the quake, I received several text messages from friends. Even though we didn't experience any effects from the quake, I decided to put our preparedness to the test and round up my nine flashlights. I wanted to ensure they were working properly. After all, you never know what Mother Earth or PG&E has in store for us.

This seemingly simple chore turned into a nearly 45-minute treasure hunt. You see, in our humble abode, we have three kids under the age of 9 – not to mention an old yellow Lab who is like a fourth child. I discovered my kids were fascinated with sitting in dark closets playing with flashlights and giving our 3-year-old son and dog the occasional guided tour through a dark house.

Between the flashlights that the kids ditched under the couch and the others they left



**HARUN SIMBIRDI
SAFETY ZONE**

for dead without turning off the light, I miraculously managed to find all nine.

Flabbergasted by the unplanned treasure hunt, I lined up the flashlights to begin some basic testing. It turned out only two worked; the others required a crash course in electrical engineering to troubleshoot the simple instruments.

Did you ever realize how quickly expensive batteries begin to leak and corrode? I began to wonder: How much money did I spend on these quality batteries?

Fortunately, I knew where the paper towels and knives were to scrape and wipe up the mess. All of this – and I thought I was prepared.

In between all of my colorful metaphors, I managed to chuckle and may have even began to crack a smile. But it wasn't over. We needed four D, four C and four AA batteries. You guessed it, we had no D or AA batteries.

What's the lesson in all of this? Honestly, I was humbled and thanked the lucky stars this hadn't been a real emergency. Moreover, it made me realize that just as you know where your paper towels are, you should be able to find flashlights and replacement batteries. If an emergency like a quake were to hit, there would be no warning.

Oh, as for the adventurous kids in the house, you should consider supporting their career ambitions to become tour guides by giving them small flashlights they call their own. Keep your stash of flashlights in a place that is easily accessible only by adults. Check your flashlights twice per year – on daylight savings time changes or some other memorable dates.

For more helpful hints and links to disaster preparedness Websites, visit www.claytoncert.com. For more information about joining the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), call Lynn Christ at 673-7350.

Claus, from page A2

a My Littlest Petshop diary. Jack, 4 years old, attends KinderCare. He received Star Wars figurines which he has been telling his parents about for months.

Santa said he has many ways of finding the perfect gifts for each child including "wave thoughts," telling children, "When you think of what you want, your thoughts go out and out like waves until they come to me at the North Pole." Santa said he is trying to keep up with technology by accepting e-mail. Christmas wishes sent via the U.S. Post Office still get to the North Pole as well.

Of course a visit to Santa for a photo gives you a short personal interview with the man himself, plus a candy cane. Hundreds of families from Clayton and surrounding areas visited with Santa after the Skow children's private breakfast.

Parents Sara and Eric Skow, owners of the Royal Rooster, won their special meeting at the Mt. Diablo Elementary PFC Spring Auction. Nana Jean Alamillo of Lafayette joined her grandchildren for the incredible event; it was her first personal interview with the holiday couple as well.

The siblings were very excited with anticipation of meeting the Clauses. Emma wore a sleeveless red dress with velour top and satin A-line with a rhinestone buckle detail at the

empire waist. Jack sported a long-sleeve white polo with black stripes nicely juxtaposing his black-and-white checkered Vans. Upon arrival Jack got a little nervous and ducked behind his mother. Crystal Claus warmly welcomed the family and they soon sat down to enjoy chocolates, cookies, juice and a host of mouthwatering pastries.

Mrs. Claus made herself available to the Skow family and throughout the morning to answer any questions. "Santa is in charge of taking gift requests, he covers all things to do with toys," said Mrs. Claus. "I answer any questions about the reindeer or the North Pole."

Emma learned that just like her, Santa's favorite food is spaghetti and meatballs. He prefers the winding around the fork method. "It turns his beard red," said Mrs. Claus, "but it washes out."

Sydney Alcock and Lisa York co-chaired the Mrs. Claus event for the CBCA this year. Several Clayton sixth graders and a CVHS freshman boy acted as Elves to serve breakfast, arrange details and give free Polaroid family photographs throughout the day.

"I gave the Elves at the North Pole the day off," said Santa. "They can relax or dance around, do whatever they want to gear up for the busy season ahead. There are a lot of children this year... a population boom."

Police, from page A3

Yonge was selected for the Volunteer of the Year by his peers. He has been a VIPS (Volunteer In Police Service) volunteer since the program's inception last year.

Yonge is best known in the community for his work with the Neighborhood Watch program, making five presentations to over 160 residents this past year. He serves as president of Clayton's Citizen Corps Council and represents Clayton on the county's CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) council. He also mans the city's Emergency Command Center at special events like the Oktoberfest.

McLaughlin joined the department as an active Police Explorer about a year ago, and was recently promoted to the rank of Sergeant of Police Explorers.

"Matt quickly established himself as a valuable member of the department's Explorer program," said Chief Lawrence. "He is a 'can do' volunteer employee and will make a fine police officer if he so chooses."

The chief specifically recognized McLaughlin's responsibility for maintaining the department's parade vehicle, a '71 Plymouth Satellite, and for setting up the classroom for the department's CERT classes.

Boyd, from page A3

into the army. Betty was still a student at Occidental College about to begin her work as a teacher. Howard remembers proposing to her after they had been to the theater in Los Angeles. Betty still wears the engagement ring he gave her that night. They were married at home on December 1, 1942 and spent their honeymoon at the Pasadena Hotel before Howard was shipped off for training. With a twinkle in his eye, Howard claims he asked Betty to marry him because single soldiers only made

\$21, married men in the army earned \$35 a month.

As a war bride, Betty taught elementary school until her hero arrived home two years to the day later to help her set up house. Together they raised four children and have two grandchildren and five great grandchildren. It's no secret to anyone who knows the Boyds that each has a wonderful sense of humor. That and love have been the foundation of their 65 year long marriage. The Boyds live at Diamond Terrace.

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