

City to Test Notification System

The City of Westlake Hills uses a mass notification system that allows us to send a recorded message to all residents and businesses within a matter of minutes. It will be used to contact residents in the event of an emergency such as a wildfire or to pass along other useful information regarding city services and events. The system is a critical part of the City's emergency response system.

Often called a "reverse-911" system, the technology allows the City to quickly notify the community about severe weather, utility outages, missing persons, gas leaks or wild fires. The system's secure database can store up to three phone numbers and two e-mail addresses for each address on the list, notifying them with a voice message, email and text message if desired.

The City will be conducting a test of the mass notification system on June 14. We urge everyone to visit

the City's website at www.westlakehills.org to update your contact information prior to that date. Just click on the "Mass Notification System" link on the left side of the page and follow the instructions.

Then, if you do not receive the test call on June 14, please let us know so that we can investigate the problem.

Residents who use call blocking systems should add (512) 327-3628 to their list of approved phone numbers in order to allow the mass notification call to get through.

Your contact information will remain confidential and will only be accessible by the City and the company providing the service. Your information will not be shared with any other parties.

To update your contact information in the system, click on the "Mass Notification System" button on the City's website or call Mark Littrell at (512) 327-3628.



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THE CITY OF WEST LAKE HILLS
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Mayor Pro Tem, Place 2:
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The City of West Lake Hills
 911 Westlake Drive
 West Lake Hills, Texas 78746

SPECIAL EDITION
WILDFIRE SAFETY



City Council considers options for wildfire prevention

Fire safety is a hot topic as we head into the dry summer months. The recent wildfires as far away as West Texas and as close as the Oak Hill area of Austin remind us that West Lake Hills is a high fire risk community. One carelessly tossed cigarette butt could send large swaths of our city up in flames.

The West Lake Hills City Council has recently held several public hearings on the issue to solicit input from citizens and wildfire experts alike. During the course of the discussions about fire safety, attention has been focused on a true conundrum. We all love the rural, heavily wooded look and feel of West Lake Hills, but those woods are often filled with dead brush and leaves, dense understory that serves as a ladder fuel for wildfires and highly combustible species that can accelerate a fire's advance through heavy vegetation. In a wildfire event, the woods can represent a significant threat to both life and property.

Our City Code already allows residents to establish a fire safety buffer zone around their home to help protect it. The fire safety buffer zone can be cleared of cedar trees up to 12 inches in diameter with a free

permit from the City. This will help reduce the amount of fuel available to a wildfire in close proximity to your home, lessening the chance that a wildfire will destroy your house. Contact Christy Shull at 327-3628 to learn more about this program.

At the heart of the wildfire discussion is the ongoing debate about cedar trees. Cedars are highly



A recent wildfire in the Oak Hill area of southwest Austin destroyed eight homes, damaged ten others, and devastated nearly 100 acres. Photos courtesy of YNN.com and Kenny Richter.



everything from railroad ties to fence posts. Smaller, fast-growing cedar saplings filled the void left after the bigger trees were gone and today entire hillsides are covered with cedars that are choking out many of the other, less combustible species such as live oaks, redbuds and mountain laurels.

Some residents would like to see the City Council loosen the restrictions on removing cedar trees to help combat the fire risk. Others believe that the cedar tree plays an

important role in helping to maintain the rural look and feel of our community and should be governed by the same tree removal rules as all other species.

Although they are native to this part of Texas, many of the larger cedars were cleared from our part of the county decades ago to make

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City Tree Rules remain in effect while City Council considers options

hearing on Wednesday, June 22 at 7:00 p.m. at West Lake Hills City Hall (911 Westlake Drive). If you can't join us at the meeting, email your comments to Mayor Claunch (mayor@westlake-hills.org) or fax them to (512)327-1863.

Meanwhile, all of the City's existing policies and rules remain in effect, including the requirement that all dead trees and brush piles must be cleared and removed from all properties. A free permit is required to remove any tree, including cedars. A free permit is also required to prune multiple live trees, to remove understory vegetation, and to remove diseased, dying or dead trees.

A permit is not required for

common household gardening or ground care such as mowing, removing dead branches, pruning a single live tree, or to remove piles of dead brush or leaves.

Pruning multiple trees does require a free permit to ensure that only appropriate pruning is performed.

The Texas Forest Service recommends that live oak trees only be pruned from July through January because that is the time when insects that spread the oak wilt disease are less active. You can find more information at www.texasoakwilt.org.

For more information about the City's tree policy contact our certified arborist, Christy Shull at (512) 327-3628.



Wildfire Safety Tips

- Remove leaves and dead branches from gutters and roofs to reduce the risk of an airborne ember catching your roof on fire.
- Remove all dead wood from your property with a free City permit. This includes brush piles, standing dead trees, and dead limbs in live trees.
- Take advantage of the fire safety buffer zone (described elsewhere in the newsletter) that allows for a free City permit for limited cedar removal around your home.
- Do not throw cigarettes or other smoking materials on the ground. In addition to being a fire hazard, it is littering.
- Remember that the use (and even possession) of fireworks is prohibited in West Lake Hills.
- Have a plan for you and your family to evacuate your home in case of fire.
- Test your smoke detectors and install new batteries.
- Burning trash is prohibited in West Lake Hills. Do not burn trash or do anything that could spark or ignite a fire in your yard.
- Keep grass around your home mowed and watered.
- Do not park your car over tall grass, and when pulling a trailer, make sure that the safety chains do not drag on the ground and create sparks.

City Offers Free Brush Collection Options

In addition to twice per week garbage service and weekly single stream recycling, the City's free solid waste collection service includes two ways to dispose of yard waste including tree limbs, grass clippings, leaves, etc.

Monthly yard waste pickup. To take advantage of this service, keep in mind the following: Tree limbs must be bundled, and the bundles must be no longer than 4 feet long, weigh no more than 35 pounds, and placed curbside. Leaves and grass clippings must be in paper, lawn bags. No more than 35 paper, lawn bags and 3 cubic yards of bundled limbs will be picked up each month at any one

residence. Call TDS at (512) 421-1340 to get on the schedule for this month or to get more information.

Haul it yourself. You can take your own yard waste to the TDS landfill located at 3016 FM 1327 in Creedmoor south of Austin. Residents can dispose of up to 3 cubic yards (approximately one standard pick-up load) of yard waste once each year. To use this service, pick up a coupon at City Hall. When you get to the landfill, you will be required to give your coupon to the attendant and to show your driver's license.

Take advantage of these great services and help us reduce the risk of wildfire in West Lake Hills!

Fourth of July Parade to include *ONE RUN*

The City's 6th Annual Fourth of July Parade is just around the corner, so get your Uncle Sam costume out of the closet, shake out that red, white and blue wig and decorate those bicycles!

The parade starts at 9:00 a.m. on July 4th in the parking lot of parade sponsor Treaty Oak Bank and proceeds down Westlake Drive to Rocky River Road, then to Reveille Road and back to the bank parking lot where we'll have food and entertainment for the whole family.

Everyone and everything is welcome in the parade – vintage cars, trucks and trailers, floats, bikes, scooters and pets. The Westlake Fire Department and the West Lake



Hills Police Department will lead the parade again this year. Local eatery Texas Honey Ham Company will have breakfast tacos, Randall's will provide cold bottled water and Amy's Ice Cream will serve up dessert.

We're excited to add a new dimension to this year's event: a

one-mile fun run along the parade course that starts at 8:30 a.m. Runners will receive a t-shirt for their \$20 entry fee and proceeds will benefit local charity Mobile Loaves and Fishes. For more information and to register for the run, visit www.westlakehills.org.

Don't feel like running or walking in the parade? Then bring your lawn chair and pick a spot along the parade route to cheer on the crowd.

Special thanks to all of our sponsors, to event organizer, Judy French, and One Run logo designer, Sarah French.

Come celebrate our nation's birthday with your friends and neighbors!

The 2010 Fourth of July Parade was a huge success. This year, organizers are adding a 1-mile Fun Run to the event. Don't miss it! 2010 event photos courtesy of Ed Allen, The Westlake Picayune and Robert Wood.

