



Mesa Park Neighborhood Association Meeting

February 27th 7:00pm

That time of the year again for our quarterly Mesa Park Neighborhood Association Meeting. Invitation was extended and accepted by Austin City Council member, Brewster McCracken. We also extended invitations to Mark Strama, Texas House of Representatives and Austin's Acting Chief of Police Cathy Ellison. Please come join your neighbors for our 13th Annual Police Appreciation Event. Once again, we thank members of Austin Police Department for helping to keep our neighborhood safe. We will have cookies and punch, so mark your calendars and bring your families. See you there!

Quarries Update

Hyde Park Baptist coordinating committees regarding the HPBC Quarries was held on January 9th. Here are some points that may be of interest to Mesa Park residents:

- Vandalism in the Quarries. There have been some instances of vandalism in the area including recent lights being turned on the athletic fields at night. Please report any suspected vandalism to HPBC and any emergencies to 911.
- High School. Plans are still in the works for construction of the school, but HPBC is still in the funding stage and no start date for construction has been set. More to come.
- Quarries Lake. A Univ. of Texas research project is underway for underwater mapping which is where the tent and equipment came from.
- Quarry Use. HPBC still welcomes neighbors' use of their park. However, an annual registration may be enacted for emergency/liability reasons for folks wishing to walk or otherwise use the area. Also, the city's dog leash laws are in effect in the Quarries and surrounding areas.

Unseen Fire Hazard

by: Your neighbor, Carolyn Meyer

What was that smell? It seemed like a cross between burning wire and plastic. It didn't take long to determine that it was coming from my dishwasher. After turning it off I called the repairman. "I see what your problem is" he declared. "You have aluminum wiring". He explained that loose connections develop between the appliances' wiring and the home aluminum wiring and this can cause sparking. The burned wire and plastic he removed from the dishwasher connection made me realize how close we had come to disaster. He advised that I call an electrician to access the problem.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission staff and other government officials, homes built between 1965 and 1973 may contain aluminum wiring. My home was built in the Mesa Park subdivision in 1974. Unfortunately, sale of the old style wire, switches and outlets on dealers shelves continued after 1972. Homes wired with aluminum wire manufactured before 1972 are 55 times more likely to have one or more connections reach "Fire Hazard Conditions" than a home with copper wires.

Some signs of electrical problems:

- Warm-to-the-touch face plates on outlets or switches
- Flickering lights
- Circuits that don't work
- The smell of burning plastic at outlets or switches

I have had all of these signs in my home since buying my home in 1983. Unfortunately, not all failing aluminum wired connections provide easily detected warning signs. Aluminum wiring has been reported to fail without any prior indications or problems. If you have noticed any of the trouble signs above, have a qualified electrician determine whether the problem is caused by deteriorating connections to aluminum wiring. **DO NOT TRY TO DO IT YOURSELF.** You could be electrocuted or you could make the connections worse by disturbing them.

Since it may be expensive and impractical to rewire aluminum wired homes, the Commission staff recommends a repair method which permits the continued use of exist-

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ing old aluminum wire. The Commission identified only one acceptable method of repairing every existing aluminum wire outlet and circuit in an occupied and furnished home. That repair is known as the crimp connector repair, also known as COPALUM. Two other repair methods are often recommended by electricians, "Pigtailing" and the use of CO/ALR devices. While these repair methods are less expensive than COPALUM crimp connectors, neither of these repairs are considered acceptable by the Commission staff.

Considering the price of home replacement and the possible loss of life in the event of a fire, it was not a hard decision for me to make. I have had all of my outlets, circuits, permanently-wired appliances, and ceiling mounted light fixtures repaired with the COPALUM system. Fox Electric did the work, and I was pleasantly surprised how smooth the whole repair went. They worked around my schedule, allowing time to move furniture away from outlets and they have a trained COPALUM electrician doing the work. I feel completely confident with the results and would not hesitate to recommend them to anyone.

There are 600 homes in the Mesa Park Neighborhood Association. What is the percentage of homes with Aluminum wiring? Do you have wiring problems in your house? What if we were to establish an MPNA Coalition in order to go to an electrician and obtain better pricing to repair these kind of problems? We could negotiate lower prices based on the quantity of houses requiring repairs. Bears thought.

Thank you so much for the informative articles. The MPNA board greatly appreciates the time of sharing this information with the neighborhood!

Volunteer Wish List

MPNA Quarterly meeting signs –

There are six signs that are starting to look kinda worn and need the writing re-done with bright colored spray paint. The signs need to be put up at six assigned corners two days before the quarterly meetings, and then gathered when the meeting is over.

Thank you for all your contributions to our MPNA fund, no matter what the amount. It is greatly appreciated to keep us going and enables us to award prizes!!

Preventing Oak Wilt

by: Susan McVicker

Oak Wilt is one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States. In Central Texas, we must constantly be on the lookout for Oak Wilt disease and must take precautionary steps each year to prevent its spread.

Facts about oak wilt disease

1. Oak Wilt is a disease caused by a fungus (*Ceratocystis fagacearum*) that clogs the water conducting vessels of the infected tree, causing the tree to wilt and die.

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2. There is NO cure for Oak Wilt disease, so prevention is our main weapon to fight it.

3. Most types of Oak Trees in Central Texas are affected by Oak Wilt, including Live Oaks and members of the Red Oak group, which includes Spanish, Blackjack, Pin, Shumard, and Water Oaks. Post Oaks seem to be somewhat resistant to the disease.

4. Oak Wilt can spread in two ways: 1) underground, from an infected tree to a healthy tree through connected root systems (affects live oaks primarily); and 2) above ground, by the sap beetle, which carries the fungus from an infected tree to fresh wounds on a healthy tree.

5. Members of the Red Oak group are particularly susceptible to Oak Wilt and play a large role in spreading the disease. In the late fall and early spring, infected Red Oak trees contain special structures just beneath the bark called fungal mats. The fungal mats are covered with spores that can be carried by sap beetles to infect new trees. Peak time for sap beetle infections is Feb.-May. Red Oaks seldom survive oak wilt and often die within 3-4 weeks following the initial appearance of symptoms.

6. Fungal mats can also form on firewood from diseased Spanish or Blackjack Oak trees while the firewood is in storage. Infected firewood should be carefully burned.

Information taken from: 1) Balcones Civic Association Oak Wilt Guide, 5th Edition, May 2003; and 2) a USDA Forest Service bulletin of Dec. 2001 entitled "How to Identify and Manage Oak Wilt in Texas".

Preventing the spread of oak wilt disease

1. When to Cut/Prune Oak Trees: The general recommendation is January or August. The best time is the coldest month of winter and the hottest month of the summer. The sap beetle is not as active in extremely hot or cold weather.

2. DO NOT cut/prune oaks during mild weather. These are the most active times for the sap-feeding beetle.

3. Use only clean/disinfected tools for pruning oak trees. Disinfect tools with Lysol spray, or a 20% bleach/80% water solution. Dry each tool thoroughly before using.

4. Immediately after pruning, paint all wounds with a standard asphalt-based wound dressing before proceeding to the next branch or limb. It only takes one wound contact by a contami-

nated sap beetle to introduce oak wilt into our oaks, so paint all pruning cuts, regardless of the size. Don't accept the "experts" response that painting is not necessary or that they have a "clear coating" over the wounds that you cannot see.

5. Be observant. Watch for wounds or storm damage and take immediate action to prune and seal the wounds. Alert your neighbors to the problems of oak wilt. Give a new neighbor a copy of this guide.

6. Do not let unqualified people prune your trees during the months when the sap beetles are most active. Disinfected tools and wound dressing **MUST** be used during these periods of the year, and should be used at all times.

7. Keep the grass away from, and the Ivy, Off Your Trees. Keeping the grass away from the base of your trees is the only way to absolutely avoid lawn mower, or edger, cuts around the base of your trees. Such cuts not only increase your oaks vulnerability to the oak wilt fungus, they expose all your trees to the entry of bugs and other diseases. Also, ivy growing on the trunks of your trees, over the long term, will damage and weaken your oaks as well as your other trees.

8. Purchase or harvest **ONLY** uninfected firewood. The easiest way to do this is to not purchase or harvest, oak firewood. Favor instead, firewood harvested from elm, pecan mesquite or ash trees.

9. Limit the amount of firewood stored at home, stack firewood away from oak trees, and cover with clear plastic, tucking in and covering all edges with soil. Do not use black or colored plastic to cover firewood, as any sap beetles accidentally brought in with the firewood can identify holes in the dark plastic and escape from.

10. Burn all firewood by March 1st of each year to prevent your wood from becoming a possible source of infection. The sap beetle begins to be active in mid-late Feb.

Additional Resources:

- City of Austin Oak Wilt web page: www.ci.austin.tx.us/oak-wilt/faqs.htm
- <http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/oakwilt/default.htm>
- Travis County Agriculture Extension Service Office – ph#512-854-9600 (ask for Oak wilt information)
- Texas Forest Service – 512-407-9728

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Announcements:

Neighborhood walks if any ladies are interested in walking near Schroeter Park either in the mornings from 5:30 to 6:30 or in the evenings from 6-7 or 8-9, I would like to start a group walk. Call Tobi Ditmore @ 512-413-4353 .

February 13, 2007, 7PM - Austin Police Department North Substation - 12425 Lamplight Village Ave. Please consider attending these Commander Forum meetings. They are a great way to meet and interact with the police officers and support staff who service our part of town.

Mesa Park Playgroup if there is a neighborhood playgroup or you would like to start one, please contact julie@digitalcitydesigns.com.

Saturday, April 21st - Neighborhood Garage Sale. More details to come!

Please check out our webpage for calendar and upcoming events.
<http://www.main.org/mpna>

Do you have an announcement to share or neighborhood news?

Is there something you would like your neighbors to know?

Please send your news or announcements to claudia.mpna@gmail.com and we will publish them in the next issue of the Mesa Park Messenger.

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Reminder: The MPNA is not a HOA (Homeowner's Association). If you have a complaint or need to report a violation, please contact the appropriate city official for assistance. Thank you!

Mailing address:

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