

This message is in response to a number of readers who shared my journey into and through the experience of discovering and getting termite damage repaired and then having my home tented for fumigation. You asked for a page listing all the termite preparation suggestions to be placed on our website as a resource for when YOU need your home tented. The attached page will be on the United Neighbors Website (a sub-site of cmprepared.com) under Safety and Preparedness.

There Were Hidden Blessings in This Experience

Despite fifty years of mulching and fertilizing since we moved here in 1964, most of the flower beds next to the house had settled or filled with roots. This was an opportunity to rework and feed the soil and make sure the ground level drained away from the house structure. My trustworthy new gardener, Mark, assured me it would look better than before and as I let go of the past, it did look better.

And a Very Visible Blessing

The ongoing help of my neighbors enables me to continue living in a beloved neighborhood that is my practical family. During the tenting, my belongings were at the homes of five different neighbors. Neighbors come when I ask for help, which happened a lot during this project.

Some of you have special neighborhoods like ours. In a large disaster or small emergency, your neighbors will be the difference. You will be safer and it will be easier if you know and can work with each other.

We encourage everyone to exchange contact information with all your neighbors and keep the contact information current. Being able to work with as many neighbors as possible is worth the effort.

We have included the whole paper below as well as attaching it, to be sure everyone can read it.

Termite Tenting/Fumigation: Things to Know About Before You Do It

It is said repeatedly, "If you live in Southern California, you probably have termites. You should plan on tenting your building about every ten years." Termite inspections are free and are of value to help you find small infected areas before they become large problems. Learn at least a little about what termite damage can look like. Choose a company that is well licensed and of a good reputation, but then check on the inspectors and be sure they do their job.

Any termite damage repairs should be done before tenting, so the tenting can be sure to catch any termites hiding in the new wood fresh from the lumber yard.

Sulfuryl Fluoride Fumigation Gas Used Now not the Same as Methyl Bromide used 10 Years Ago

If you hear of someone who had foam rubber articles damaged by fumigation, that experience was probably from a number of years ago and the damage described was because of the Methyl Bromide gas used before they had Sulfuryl Fluoride. Sulfuryl Fluoride is a great improvement over the Methyl Bromide used until 10 or 15 years ago. Now the only items you want to protect or remove are items you ingest or inject in your bodies.

To quote one of the instruction booklets: "Food, feed, drugs (including tobacco products), and medicinals, including those items in refrigerators and freezers, which are not in plastic, glass, or metal bottles, cans or jars

with the original manufacturer's air-tight seal intact need to be removed from the fumigation site or double bagged in nylon (Nylofume) bags."

The booklet also says: "The following should be opened prior to fumigation: operable internal doors, internal openings to attics and sub-areas, storage chests, cabinets, drawers, closets, and appliances such as washers, dryers and ovens."

As you prepare for tenting, open potential pockets as much as possible. The following are potential pockets that should be left open or at least partially open:

- All plastic tubs and containers (think Tupperware or bigger storage) – unstack and set lids so they will not close.
- Zippered plastic bags holding blankets or keeping moths out of hanging clothes in closets – unzip the zippers.
- Clothes protected by plastic bags from the cleaners – gather the plastic bags up around the shoulders of the garments.
- Mattresses in plastic protective covers – unzip or loosen if possible.
- If you have a real air mattress with bladders filled with air, deflate the bladders during the fumigation.
- Open drawers an inch or two, not so much that the chest of drawers will tip over.
- Cedar chests – prop open the lid so the chest won't close.
- Refrigerators and freezers can become pockets – open them when you return enough to be sure they are aired out. Anything in them must be double bagged using the special bags.
- Anything you consider air-tight can become a pocket, so be sure to air it out.
- If you are an artist with plastic carrying cases protecting your artwork, the cases must be propped open.
- Pay attention to toys and musical instruments. Drums are perfect pockets and should be removed from the house.
- If you have the special Arm & Hammer package of baking soda in your refrigerator or freezer as a deodorizer, it must be removed or specially bagged even though you don't plan to eat it. If you have some in an easy-open sealed container by the stove top to use in case of fire, it must be removed as well.
- Open bottled water intended for use in a steam iron must also be removed.
- Remove throw pillows and removable cushions to minimize any slower off-gassing from between upholstery pieces.
- The hollow heads of CPR manikins are made of solid plastic with the neck and mouth the only openings. The neck is usually attached to a torso and the mouth can be obscured by the removable plastic lungs. Students blow directly into these plastic lungs as part of their training. Even the slightest possibility some Sulfural Fluoride gas might remain in the manikin head is an unnecessary liability. Anyone who has CPR manikins should not leave them or their replacement lungs in any building while it is being tented with Sulfural Fluoride.

Did You Know The Crew Tent/Fumigating Your Home Needs Dirt?

When the tenting crew sets the tent, they need to seal the bottom edge so the gas does not leak out. When the bottom edge line of the tent shifts from sidewalk to flower bed, it is usually a stair step change in elevation which needs to be changed to a graded ramp area. When the bottom edge line is on top of gravel or stones it

needs to be changed or covered with dirt that can be dampened to a very wet state making a solid, nonporous surface and preventing all possible gas leakage.

It is helpful to walk around the outside of your home with someone who knows what the tenting company will need to do. You will want to remove all plants that would be under the tent area. Remember the gas meter must be OUTSIDE the tent as you look at what plants might be damaged in the tenting process.

The square plastic “flats” used in nurseries are perfect trays for too-close-to-the- house plants you must remove. The strongest, longest zip ties can be looped around tree limbs and arbor 2 x 4s and used as temporary places for hanging pots you may have under the eaves of the house.

Book a Hotel or Residence Inn Room and Do This Before You Move Back Home

The current tenting practice requires residents to live elsewhere for two days and nights and then allows them to return the third afternoon after the tenting company has ventilated the home and taken air samples at floor level that indicate the gas is sufficiently dissipated.

The termite company manager suggests turning on the house heating system after the gas company has turned the gas back on. Turning the heat on will help clear any gas from the ducts and warming the air will also help the gas disappear. The gas can collect in enclosed pockets like closets, so the tenting company is supposed to open all the interior doors between rooms as well as closets to help the air circulate.

If you have sectionals, move the pieces apart after the tenting to help them air out.

If pets like to hide under the bed and behind furniture, make sure those areas are fully aired out.

If you have the rugs and living area upholstery steam cleaned before you come home, it will help remove any slower off-gassing.

If You Take Pets to a Hotel

If you take pets to a hotel, consider bringing their beds, a flashlight (for looking at them under the bed), a familiar blanket or comforter, extra zip lock plastic bags, your kitchen scissors, their food and water dishes as well as their favorite food. Take the number of a nearby emergency vet hospital. Watch them to be sure they eat and drink enough. Take catnip for cats to help them de-stress. Use pheromone spray on their kennels and then around the room where they will stay, so things will smell familiar to them but not be smelly to everyone else. If pets decide to live under the head of the bed in the hotel, pull the bed a foot away from the wall, so you can get to the pets if you need to do so.

Take all toys and scratching posts, especially anything that is chewed on. If you don't take these things to where you are staying, at least remove them from the house so nothing pets might chew on is exposed to the gas.

The Corporate Manager of the Termite division of the company I worked with sent this paper to their technical director, who called to tell me he agreed with everything I have written except the need to keep pets out an extra day after the fumigation treatment. When his own house was fumigated, he took his dog back in three days after the fumigation and had no problems.

I would be remiss if I did not share this anecdotal evidence with you and let you come to your own conclusions. If those who had the experiences below had been told and followed the extra precautions described above, they might not have had any problems with their pets. We will never know.

My cautionary thought about staying away longer because of pets came from the experience of my next door neighbors who had their home tented for termites just before I did. They returned late the third afternoon as they were cleared to do so. They have a smaller dog, probably about 20 pounds of wiggle and bark. The dog lost its voice and had diarrhea for several days after they returned. Dog owner John suggested we three stay away another day if it is at all possible.

Then a friend told me about her neighbors who bought their home three years ago. Their house needed to be tented during escrow. When they moved in, they brought their pet rabbit into the house. The rabbit immediately developed a skin irritation and died in three days.

UNITED NEIGHBORS

“Neighbors Helping Neighbors”

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