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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Leafy trees overhanging City streets pose safety issue

MURPHY (April 24, 2013) Murphy homeowners living in one of the many neighborhoods marked with clean, well-manicured lawns and streets lined with leafy, mature trees dressed in their spring blossoms should keep the City's code in mind lest they run afoul of Chapter 28, Article VI, Section 28-159, according to Code Compliance Supervisor David Gensler.

"That particular section deals with both aesthetic and safety issues. It says, in part, that the minimum clearance of any portion of a tree overhanging a public street right-of-way cannot be lower than 14 feet. There's a very good reason for that regulation and one need go no further than the fire department to see why," he said.

Tree branches that hang lower than 14 feet on a City street pose a danger to high clearance vehicles, especially emergency vehicles such as firefighting equipment. Branches and other debris that may be inadvertently imbedded in the ladder or water hose nozzle of a rushing fire truck may cause damage to the equipment and may even endanger the lives of firefighters who must use that equipment in the exercise of their duties.

"And, of course, if a fire engine is damaged, not only is it an expense to the City, but the immediate capabilities of the equipment are diminished, putting the community at risk," added Gensler.

Code Compliance personnel are constantly on the lookout for violations of this section of the code, but it's more likely that firefighters on a call or an orientation ride will notice the offensive branches. Communication between the two departments will then trigger an on-site review by Code Compliance.

"Before that happens and, of course, to avoid a citation, residents who live on streets with overhanging foliage should either make an effort to check for compliance or should contact a tree maintenance company to ensure there is no obstruction below the 14-foot limit," he said.

The section dealing with this issue reads:

It shall be the duty of any person or persons owning or occupying real property bordering on any street to prune trees next to the street in such manner that they will not obstruct or shade the streetlights, obstruct the passage of pedestrians on sidewalks, obstruct vision of traffic signs, or obstruct the view from any street or alley intersection. The minimum clearance of any portion of a tree overhanging public street right-of-way shall be 14 feet, and overhanging a public sidewalk shall be eight feet.

Failure to maintain any landscape area in compliance with this section is considered a violation of this division and may be subject to penalties.

The full text of the entire Municipal Code for the City of Murphy can be found at www.murphytx.org under "Code of Ordinance" on the left side of the home page.

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Cutline: A Murphy fire engine barely misses some overhanging tree limbs.

ABOUT MURPHY -- Murphy is a fast-growing community located in Collin County. The population is approximately 18,020, generally characterized as highly educated with a median household income above the state average. With more than 70 percent of the land developed, the community is dominated by single-family residences. Determined to maintain a country living ambiance, city planners strive to preserve that feel while still exhibiting an aggressive economic development stance. The centrally-located municipal complex includes four buildings that house Fire, Police, City Administration and Public Works. Money Magazine has dubbed Murphy as the 27th Best Place to Live in America for small cities.