

Fire Proofing Your Home

Chief Frank Biancucci provided the following overview and information:

Introduction to the Fire Prevention Office:

- 24-member staff
- Offices in Dundas, on the mountain, and Stoney Creek
- They carry out objective-based inspections
- They review building stock in city
- Certain inspections (e.g., high rises) are done on a regular basis
- Also carry out complaint-based inspections
- Complaints come from the public, fire fighters who have responded to a situation, political concerns, etc.
- Public education is a large part of their mandate
- Visits to churches, community groups, etc.

Fire safety is highly concerned with learned behaviour, our bad habits

- In many Asian and European cultures, having a fire is looked at as an embarrassment to the family, so fire safety is a way of life
- Not so in North America. We have lots of fire insurance, and the collective mindset is "the insurance will cover it"
- People don't think about how much more you lose in a fire, things money can't replace such as:
 - Pictures
 - Heirlooms
 - House you spent so many years working on, etc.
- The office is enforcement oriented. They prosecute if orders to comply are not followed

Top five causes of fire:

1. Arson/vandalism
2. Candles
3. Smoking
4. Cooking
5. Electrical

Arson is a leading cause, but in terms of home fire-safety, 2-5 are the most important

Candles have become an important part of the social psyche in the last 10-15 years, used for:

- therapeutic purposes
- entertainment purposes

- religious purposes

They are seeing a *lot* more candle fires. When using a candle, make sure that:

- It's in a glass container with a broad base
- Don't leave unattended
- Keep out of range of pets and children
- Keep away from an open window with drapes

Smoking

Number of fires from smoking that cause death is still very significant. Be especially careful about smoking in bed, smoking while drinking. Too often someone falls asleep while drunk and drops a cigarette.

Cooking

- Careless cooking is a big one
- Don't leave cooking food unattended
- **TIP:** If you have to leave the kitchen, take a spoon with you. This will act as a reminder
- If you experience a kitchen fire, an extinguisher generally is NOT the best way to put it out
- Instead, put a lid on the pot/pan. This deprives the fire of oxygen and will often put it right out
- Pressure from a fire extinguisher can often make things worse

Electrical

- Extension cords are a big factor in electrical fires
- People use cords that aren't big enough when plugged into a large-load device
- This causes the cord to heat up and catch fire
- Don't put cords under carpets or in baseboards
- Some fires result from poor wiring jobs, but most electrical fires are from extension cords

Fire is usually human error

Single most important device in a fire is the smoke alarm

- Replace alarm every 10 years, battery 1-2 times per year
- Photo-electric alarms are more advanced than ionization-based
- Make sure it's a ULC-rated smoke alarm
- The **best** is to get dual-technology, which contains photo-electric and ionization technology
- Either way, both types will detect fire and protect you

Fire extinguishers

- Always call 911; don't think of yourself as a fire fighter with a fire extinguisher
- Maintenance:
- Check the gauge every month
- Bang it with a rubber mallet, or shake it once per year to prevent "caking" of the material inside
- Every 6 years take it in for a full breakdown
- Every 12 years it requires a pressure test
- **Remember PASS:**
 - P: Pull pin
 - A: Aim fire extinguisher
 - S: Squeeze trigger
 - S: Sweep back and forth
- Don't just aim directly at fire. You want to go outside the fire, around the fire, to put a layer of the material down around it, preventing flame-ups

Carbon monoxide (CO) detectors

- Required if you have a gas or oil furnace, a wood-burning stove, gas-fireplace, etc.
- You need at least one in the house, doesn't matter where in the house you put it, just don't put it right near the furnace/stove/etc.
- Always get a ULC-listed detector
- They can be placed near either the floor or the ceiling

Get your furnace checked every year

- Components inside can crack, which can lead to CO leakage

Alarm and Ready Program

- This is a service for people who are financially-strapped or unable to check their smoke alarms themselves
- The Fire Inspection Office will come in for free, check alarms, replace batteries, replace the alarm itself if necessary
- 905-546-3382

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