

## **Fire Safety Information Session November 23, 2016**

Here are the top 10 takeaways from the information session with Dave Montone of the Ottawa Fire Service.

1. In Ontario, from 2001-2005, the **number one cause of residential fires was cooking** (1439 fires). Heating systems are second (817), then electrical (591), smoking (499), candles (279) and finally matches/lighters (125).

2. If you are cooking you should **always have the pot/pan lid handy to put out any grease fires** by smothering the fire. If that pan doesn't have a lid, have a cookie sheet handy. The baking soda we learned to use in home-ec class will work, as long as you have enough. So will a fire extinguisher but slapping on a pot lid is quicker and less messy.

3. To reduce electrical fires, use **power bars instead of 3 or 6 plug outlet extenders**. The power bar has a breaker that will trip before the draw is high enough to trigger an electrical fire.

4. **Don't store combustibles under your electrical panel**. If there is a fire, that will add fuel to it. (Note to self, move the cardboard case of drinks.)

5. **Nothing should be in the hallways**, no boots, mats, stroller, walker/wheelchair. Two reasons: firstly, they can be in the way of people escaping; secondly, they create fuel for a fire to spread.

6. The building is Type 1 Construction which means, roughly, the only thing flammable is the contents of units (and the halls). Which means, **even if there is a fire in another unit, as long as you have fresh air to breathe, you should be safe** because fire fighters will extinguish the fire before the flames can get to you. The automatic door closures on doors help stop the spread of fire. Make sure yours is working and check the stairwell doors when you walk by.

7. He recommends you have a fire extinguisher and points out every floor has at least one. Know where they are and how to use them. **He has offered to come back and train us to use a fire extinguisher** using a simulator.

8. Ideally, **leave if there is an alarm unless you smell smoke or your door feels hot**. For those with permanent mobility issues, **ask the office to put you on the list of people remaining inside their units due to mobility issues**. This list is part of the fire safety plan for each building, a copy of which is in the office and another on file with the fire department. If **you are temporarily unable to do stairs, remain in your unit**. If you smell smoke, put

down a wet cloth along your door, call 911 and let them know which unit you are in, and go out on the balcony if it is safe to do so. Try to make yourself visible.

**9. Don't exit your apartment or go through any door without checking for fire behind it.** Check with the back of your hand so you won't burn your hand and be unable to use it to help save yourself other ways.

**10. Be responsible for your own fire safety. Explore the fire exits of the building.** At the very least go to the second floor and **practice walking down and out each stairwell.** Look for the exit signs. In some stairwells these take you to places you don't normally go in the building and it will seem unfamiliar. The signs are also very high on the wall, not at eye level, so it is easy to miss them and if there is smoke they'd be even less visible. It is important to **practice the exit route when there is no smoke or worry.** If there is more than one of you in the apartment, have a meeting point outside the building in case the fire happens while one person is out of the apartment. That way you can meet up quickly.

The landlord is responsible for testing smoke alarms annually and changing the batteries at least one a year. Smoke alarms have a 10 year life-span and must be replaced when that is up.

Removing the battery from your smoke alarm is subject to a \$360 fine if you are caught. If you have a problem with it going off all the time while cooking, consult with management about moving the alarm. Don't take the battery out.

*What about those false alarms?*

One third of responses by Ottawa Fire Services are to false alarms. It costs us money, through our taxes, each time they come.

It is in the interest of both the landlord and us to stop the false alarms since we pay the property taxes (and if fines were levied, we'd pay for those in our rent). Report anyone who you know to have activated the system maliciously. This is a criminal offense with up to 2 years in jail as punishment.