
News Release

Communiqué

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIRE MARSHAL BACKS SMOKE ALARMS AS PART OF HOME FIRE SAFETY PROGRAM

TORONTO, Ontario, January 5, 2000 -- Ontario Fire Marshal Bernard Moyle urges all Ontario residents to continue to use and maintain their smoke alarms. The Ontario Fire Code requires that all homes have working smoke alarms.

"According to the National Fire Protection Association, homes with working smoke alarms have a 40-50 per cent lower fire death rate," Mr. Moyle said. "Furthermore, based on years of statistical and anecdotal evidence collected by my office, there is no question in my mind that smoke alarms save lives."

A segment of the CTV television program W5 on January 4 suggested that most smoke alarms currently in use in Canada and the United States are ineffective.

Mr. Moyle pointed out that there are two types of household smoke alarms in common use: ionization and photoelectric. Both technologies are tested to the same standard, and both will detect all types of fires that commonly occur in the home. However, photoelectric alarms are more sensitive to smoldering fires, while ionization alarms may respond slightly faster to

flaming fires. Since no one can predict the type of fire that will occur, it is difficult to recommend which is best. Fire safety can be enhanced by installing both types.

Testing of smoke alarms is carried out regularly by accredited agencies such as Underwriters Laboratories of Canada (ULC). "Clearly, it is the responsibility of the manufacturers, as well as the testing and certifying agencies such as ULC, to address questions about this public safety issue in a timely manner," Mr. Moyle said.

Despite a number of recent tragedies, in 1999 Ontario recorded its lowest fire death rate ever. This reassuring fact continues a 20-year trend that has seen the fire death rate in this province decrease by more than 60 per cent. The Office of the Fire Marshal attributes this decrease to enhanced building and fire codes, greater public awareness and, perhaps most importantly, the use of home smoke alarms.

The Ontario fire service recommends that residences have at least one smoke alarm on every level and outside all sleeping areas. Smoke alarms should be maintained following the manufacturer's instructions and tested regularly to ensure that they are working. For maximum protection, install a smoke alarm in every room.

However, the Fire Marshal cautions that working smoke alarms alone are not enough to protect a home from fire. "The best defence against fire is not to have one in the first place. Careless cooking and smoking continues to be the leading causes of home fires, so take extra care when engaged in these activities," Mr. Moyle said.

"Fire and smoke travel very quickly, often with tragic consequences," he added.

"Therefore, you must also develop a home escape plan and practice it with your family. If a fire does occur, working smoke alarms and a well-rehearsed escape plan can significantly increase your chances of survival."

For more information
contact:

Bev
Gilbert

Janice
Johnstone