

Township of
Langley



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NEWS RELEASE

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TRAGEDIES A REMINDER OF THE IMPORTANCE OF SMOKE ALARMS

Fires have claimed a number of lives in the Lower Mainland over the past year, most recently in East Vancouver. In the wake of these losses, the Township of Langley Fire Department is urging residents to protect themselves and their families by making a small investment of time and money that could save lives.

“The impact of these tragedies is being felt by many people,” said Township Public Life Safety Educator Krista Barton. “While the reality of the danger that fire can pose is fresh in everyone’s minds, we ask them to take action and prevent such losses from happening to their loved ones and others by ensuring smoke alarms are installed and working properly in their homes.”

“People tend to think, ‘It won’t happen to me’,” Barton said. “However, people lose their lives needlessly to fire every year because working smoking alarms were not installed, batteries have been removed, or the alarm is over ten years old.”

“Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in a home fire in half. They provide an early warning of a fire and extra time to escape safely,” Barton said. “But they can’t do their job if we haven’t done ours. Install smoke alarms inside every bedroom, outside each sleeping area, and on every level of the home, including the basement, and make sure to test all of them every month.”

As well, firefighters recommend installing Carbon Monoxide (CO) alarms to protect against the colourless, odourless gas. Batteries in CO and smoke alarms should be replaced every year and the alarms themselves replaced every ten years.

To help keep alarms functioning properly, the Township of Langley Fire Department offers the following tips:

Smoke Alarms:

- Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home so when one sounds, they all sound. Make sure you can hear the sound of the smoke alarm.

- Smoke alarms can be battery operated in homes constructed before March 31, 1979. Homes constructed after March 1979 require smoke alarms to be permanently wired into the electrical system and interconnected. Smoke alarms can be interconnected electrically by a qualified electrician.
- There are two types of smoke alarms: ionization smoke alarms are more responsive to flaming fires and photoelectric smoke alarms are more responsive to smoldering fires.
- Choose a smoke alarm that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Install smoke alarms away from the kitchen to prevent nuisance alarms. They should be at least three meters (10 feet) from a cooking appliance.
- Make sure everyone in the home understands the sound of the smoke alarm and knows how to respond.
- Follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions to keep smoke alarms functioning properly. The instructions are included in the package or can be found on the internet.
- To find out how old a smoke alarm is, look at the date of manufacture on the back of the alarm. The alarm should be replaced 10 years from that date.
- Those who live in rental housing must also have working smoke alarms. Landlords and apartment managers are responsible for installing alarms and testing them to ensure they are in working order prior to tenant occupancy. The landlord is also required to keep smoke alarms in working condition.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms:

- Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas you cannot see, taste, or smell. It is often called "the invisible killer." It is created when fossil fuels such as kerosene, gasoline, coal, natural gas, propane, methane, or wood do not burn completely.
- CO poisoning can result from malfunctioning or improperly vented furnaces or other heating appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers, or cars left running in a garage.
- Exposure to CO can be fatal. Signs of carbon monoxide include headaches, nausea, and drowsiness.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.
- If the CO alarm sounds, get fresh air. Move outdoors, by an open window, or near an open door. Call the fire department from a fresh air location and stay there until help arrives.
- Test your CO alarm at least once a month by pressing the reset or test button. The alarm will sound four quick beeps followed by five seconds of silence.
- Replace the batteries annually and replace CO alarms every seven to 10 years.
- Know the difference between the sound of the carbon monoxide alarm and the smoke alarm and the low battery signal sounds for each.

For more information, visit tol.ca/firesafety.