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Fire safety in changing weather

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During the past few months there have been several fires in the North Hastings area affecting businesses, vehicles and homes. Due to the increase of fire-related incidents, Bancroft This Week talked with the Town of Bancroft's new deputy fire chief and fire prevention officer Matt Musclow, about what North Hastings residents can do to reduce the risk of fires.

Q: It is said that chimney fires are the number one cause of winter fires. Is this true and what do you suggest to prevent it?

A: Chimney fires are a leading cause of winter/heat-related fires. The best way to prevent a chimney fire is to regularly clean your chimney or hire a local company that does chimney cleaning to perform the work, for example, Willard chimney cleaning can help you if you are in the Vancouver area. Regular winter maintenance by licensed service providers is the best way to prevent heat appliance related fires. Our recent winters have had wide ranges in temperatures that see us go from -30 to four degrees and this can be hard on chimneys. As it warms up residents will damper the woodstove down and when you are not running your wood stove hot that is when creosote can begin to build.

Q: Do you know what the number one cause of fires in the Bancroft area maybe?

A: Looking at our previous five years the most common causes of residential structure fires in the Bancroft area would be cooking, heating appliance and chimney, electrical, and careless smoking.

Q: What do people need to do in case of a fire?

A: Preparation for a fire is the best step a resident can take. Being prepared, having working smoke alarms (if you don't, you should contact a local electrician, like https://saltle.com/electrician-texas-service-areas/manchaca-electrical-services/, to come and install some) and a practised home escape plan are the tools required to survive a fire. In the event that a fire does occur in your home or any location, you should remain calm, exit the building and call 911 from a safe location. Provide the 911 call taker with as much information as possible such as the address of the fire, possible location of the fire in the building, and most importantly are all occupants accounted for? Never re-enter a building after safely exiting for anything. It will be difficult to resist the urge to try and salvage your belongings and valuables, but nothing is worth more than a life.

Q: What tools should people have in case of emergency? Fire extinguisher and fire alarm are the top two well known but what other things should people know about or do?

A: As significant weather events and patterns are becoming more common, it is important residents prepare themselves to be able to be self-sufficient for a minimum 72 hours. A basic emergency kit should include the following items, two litres of water per person per day, including small bottles, food that won't spoil, such as canned food, energy bars and dried food (replace once a year), a manual can opener, wind-up or battery-powered flashlight and extra batteries, a wind-up or battery-powered radio with extra batteries, a first aid kit, extra keys for your car and house, cash, travellers' cheques and change, important family documents such as identification, insurance and bank records and a copy of an emergency plan along with contact information. For more emergency preparedness tips visit www.ontario.ca/beprepared.

Q: The Bancroft fire department does fire inspections of houses and businesses. Tell me about that program, what it is called and how can people contact you if they want an inspection?

A: Fire inspections are outlined by Ontario Fire Marshals directives and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. We have locations throughout Bancroft who are part of our annual inspection program which includes local businesses, apartments, public occupancies and schools. The Ontario Fire Code outlines fire safety requirements for various occupancy types and most, if not all, code requirements were created as a result of a fire which resulted in injury or loss of life.

The fire code is enforced through a number of options, which range from inspection orders to charges and fines. As an owner of any location it is your duty to ensure you are in compliance with the Ontario Fire Code. Education is a critical component to helping ensure homeowners are educated about smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm types, placement, installation, maintenance, and

home escape planning. This includes getting a home inspector such as those from Careful Home Inspections for Home inspection San Marcos, TX and other areas, so that all home installations are maintained, for more home safety. In addition, they must also keep informed of the fire code requirements and the consequences for non-compliance. Through our inspection program all efforts will be made to seek voluntary compliance. That said, there will always be those who do not comply with the regulations, and the fire department must be prepared to enforce them. It is however important to recognize that the individual circumstances of each case must be taken into consideration, and that the fire department will exercise discretion and flexibility in their approach.
To arrange an inspection or if anyone has any questions contact your local fire department via their non-emergency number.
Q: What should families with children know about fire risks and teaching their children?
A: Families with children will know and understand how curious kids can be. They want to learn and experience things and sometimes this can lead them into harm's way. Always remember to keep matches and lighters in a safe place out of reach of children. Never leave children unattended. Before leaving a room always extinguish any candles. Never leave cooking unattended with or without children present. If you have a wood stove in your home establish barriers so the children know not to get too close.
Q: Do you have any maintenance tips, things that people can check on to ensure their house is fire safe?
A: Ensure you have working smoke alarms installed on each floor and outside all sleeping areas. This includes changing the batteries frequently. A good rule of thumb is "change you clocks, change your batteries." When the time changes, change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and test them.
Ensure you have carbon monoxide detectors installed outside sleeping areas in your home if you have any fuel burning type of heat such as wood, propane, or oil heat. If you have an attached garage as part of your home, a carbon monoxide detector is also required.

Have a home escape plan that you practice with all members of your family. Minimize the use of extension cords in the home and always look where you cook! Never leave cooking unattended. For more tips and information visit www.bancroftfire.ca.
Q: I see many of our local volunteer firefighters have green lights on their vehicles. Tell me what that means?
A: The flashing green light on a firefighter's personal vehicle indicates he or she is responding to an emergency of some type, however it offers them no special exceptions under the Highway Traffic Act. It is a courtesy if someone chooses to pull over and allow the firefighter to pass.