

FOR ALL HOMEOWNERS AND TENANTS AT YORK REGION CONDOMINIUM CORPORATION 204 – 88 RAINBOW DRIVE



IMPORTANT NOTICE From your Board of Directors

This is an **important** notice being sent out to all homeowners and their tenants. This is in light of the recent news stories relating to a slew of household fires that have occurred over the past couple of months. The most recent of which were the two Brampton fires that occurred in the same townhouse complex; one of which took the innocent lives of three young boys. The Brampton Fire Marshall continues to investigate both fires and has yet to determine the cause. Given the age of the building, which is similar to ours, there is a possibility the fires may be related to electrical issues. Or they may be related to something entirely different such as candles, stoves, fireplaces, electric heaters, etc.

Building fires tend to spike in the winter, in large part because of seasonal heating, such as fireplaces, space heaters, and furnaces. In fact, space heaters cause more than 1,000 home fires every year. Add cooking fires (the leading cause of home fires, which peaks around the holidays), candle fires, and indoor smoking as people hesitate to brave the cold weather outside, and it's easy to see why house fires increase during the winter months. To help prevent a devastating fire in your own home, now is a great time to check the smoke detectors and follow these safety guidelines.

Test Your Smoke Detectors Almost three out of five home fire deaths occurred in buildings without smoke alarms, according to data from the National Fire Protection Association. How many smoke alarms you need will depend on the size of your home, but at minimum, you want an alarm on every floor of your home, and one outside of the sleeping area.

Each alarm is different, so check the manual for any specific testing instructions, but in general, pressing down the "test" button for a few seconds should emit the loud, familiar siren. If the alarm fails to go off, or if you haven't changed the batteries in six months, replace them now with brand-new batteries. Once installed, test the alarm once more to make sure it works.

Check your alarm's manual, but most smoke detectors only have a lifespan of eight to 10 years. Once you reach that point, replace the detector even if it seems to be working.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors Carbon monoxide doesn't damage your home like a fire does, but it's still seriously dangerous. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas released from burning carbon materials like fuel. Burning wood, natural gas, coal, gasoline, and heating oil can all release CO into your home. When you cook on your gas stove or use your fireplace improperly, you increase the risk of fire and carbon monoxide poisoning in your home. Consider getting a dual sensor carbon monoxide and smoke detector that senses heat, smoke, and CO. This will cut down installation time and costs and can potentially save your life.

Aluminum Wiring Our homes were built in 1973 and at that time, the electrical wiring used was aluminum. If your home's electrical system has not been updated, it is always wise to be proactive. Call a **licensed electrical technician** when faced with **any** of these issues:

- If power outlets or faceplates are unusually warm and release strange odours
- Flickering lights
- Unexpected static on your tv or radio
- Smoke or sparks near your switches

How to Maintain Residential Aluminum Wiring?

It is important to keep your aluminum wiring in good condition. Ensure that they are regularly inspected by licensed electrical technicians.

Here is how aluminum wiring in naturally works:

- It heats up and expands when the current flows
- It cools down and contracts when not in use
- This continuous process can lead to gaps forming in the wiring. This can later get exposed to air and increase the chances of catching fire.

Make sure your wiring is working properly by keeping an eye on:

- Unusually warm switches
- Bad odours
- Sparks

During repairs on your aluminum wiring in Ontario, ask the electrician to provide a certificate for insurance purposes.

Light Candles Safely Keep candles away from things that can catch fire. This includes curtains, lamp shades, bookshelves, and papers. Even if the candle is in a glass or metal container, it should be set on a ceramic plate or another fireproof holder, rather than placed directly on furniture. Most importantly, never leave a burning candle unattended and don't fall asleep with a candle burning. Also, trimming candle wicks to 1/4-inch can help prevent a house fire, reduce smoke, and even help your expensive scented candles last longer. If you must use candles, the safest are battery operated candles. It's a win-win-win.

Prevent Cooking Fires Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and fire injuries, but a few safety measures can help avoid a disaster. Always stay in the kitchen whenever you're frying, grilling, boiling, or broiling food. Avoid cooking or baking when you're really exhausted and likely to fall asleep. Take a look around your kitchen and move anything flammable—cookbooks, dishtowels, potholders—away from the stovetop.

Stop Smoking Fires Smoking indoors is one of the leading causes of fire deaths. When smoking (even if it's outdoors), be sure to extinguish cigarettes completely.

Avoid Space Heater and Fireplace Fires Make sure anything flammable, whether fabrics, wooden furniture, or papers, are at least three feet away from your fireplace, space heater, or stove. Turn off heaters and make sure fireplace embers are extinguished before leaving the room. If you must use a space heater, place it on a level, non-flammable surface, like ceramic tile, not on a rug or carpet. When shopping for space heaters, look for ones with tip-over protection, which will automatically shut off if they're knocked over.

Cleaning out your fireplace regularly can also help avoid a house fire and prevent excessive smoke. It's a good idea to get your chimney inspected once per year; an expert can advise if cleaning or any repairs are necessary.

Clean Your Dryer Vent The frequency of dryer vent fires also peaks in the winter. People tend to wear more clothing during the winter, increasing the amount of lint pulled through the lint screen and into the dryer. More clothing and frequent clothing changes, especially if you have small children in the home, also means you're doing laundry more often. Lint is highly flammable, and when it builds up in hot enough temperatures, it can spark a fire. It is suggested that you have your dryer vent cleaned and inspected annually.

If a dryer vent is blocked with snow and ice, the heat and lint produced by a dryer will have nowhere to escape. During the winter and after each snowstorm, check where the dryer vents to the outside, typically either at the side of the house or through the roof, and make sure it's not blocked with snow or ice. You should see the vent operating and the flaps opening when the dryer is pushing out warm air.

Cut The Clutter Clutter in your home is one way that fires can start spontaneously and can spread excessively. Maintaining a clutter-free home not only reduces the risk but makes life manageable.

Know the drill Good habits can prevent fires, but you should still have a plan in case of an emergency. Talk to your family about what to do if a fire starts while you are home. Establish escape routes from every room. Check all your windows and screens in your home to ensure accessibility in the event of an emergency.

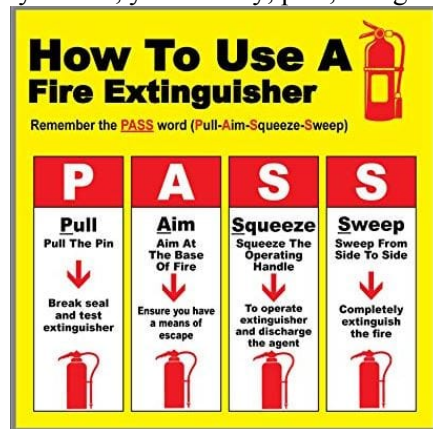
Depending on the fire, it may be hard to see and breathe, so try to get out as quickly and safely as possible without touching too many surfaces to avoid burns.

Put your escape plan to work. Practice and time your family twice a year to make sure they know the plan. Choose two meeting places away from your house in case of separation. Show everyone in your home where to find the gas and power shut offs. When possible, make sure children know where to reach you and more importantly, make sure children know their address and phone number.

Teach kids to **STOP, DROP, and ROLL** and how to **call 911 in an emergency**.

Keep equipment like fire escape ladders (in upstairs bedrooms) and fire extinguishers ready if you ever need them. Do not pour water directly over a fire.

Fires such as the Brampton fires are costly to the homeowners not only from a financial perspective but also from a human life perspective. Be responsible for yourself, your family, pets, and guest but also for your neighbours.





HOME FIRE SAFETY

Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors



Place at least 1 detector and fire extinguisher on each floor



Test and charge detector batteries every 6 months



Have an emergency fire escape plan for your family



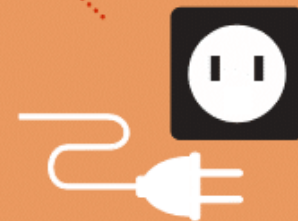
Inspect fire extinguishers monthly for pressurization and replace if needed



Check dryer vents and clean out lint filter after each use



Double check all appliances are switched off after use



Maintain electrical cords and unplug devices when they are not in use

