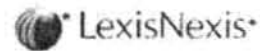


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Put smoke alarms on every floor or prepare to pay

John Burman, The Hamilton Spectator

Smoke alarms on every floor can buy the occupants of a house about 40 seconds more to escape a potentially fatal fire.

As temperatures quickly reach levels no one can survive, 40 seconds can be a very long time. That's why on March 1, 2006, Ontario will require every house and rental property in Ontario to have a working smoke detector on each level and outside sleeping areas.

The law will cover single family, semi-detached and townhouses whether owner-occupied or rented.

Homeowners who do not have working alarms on each level and outside all sleeping areas face fines of \$235 on conviction.

Landlords who fail to comply with the code smoke alarm requirements are liable for a penalty of up to \$25,000 on conviction.

Provincial and municipal fire officials want to get the message home to residents before the law comes into effect.

They kicked off a media campaign called Working Smoke Alarms: It's the Law at Hamilton's central firehall yesterday

Hamilton Fire Chief Jim Kay said smoke detectors most likely saved the lives of an Ancaster family early yesterday morning.

They awoke to find smoke in the house and fire safety officer Bob Simpson said the alarms gave the couple and their two children time to escape a blaze which destroyed their home.

Kay said there have been 18 fire deaths in Hamilton in the past five years and there were no working smoke detectors in half of those fires.

Ontario Fire Marshal Bernard Moyle said the amendment to the Ontario Fire Code was announced by Community Safety and Correctional Services Minister Monte Kwinter yesterday.

Moyle said over 90 per cent of all Ontario residential fires are preventable. There were 609 fatal fires in Ontario from 1995 to 2004. There were smoke alarms working in 35 per cent of these, no smoke alarms at 21 per cent of these, and non-working smoke alarms in another 25 per cent.

Moyle said a smoke alarm operation could not be determined in 19 per cent of these fires.

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Photo: Ontario Fire Marshal Bernard Moyle urges fire alarm use.