

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Richmond Hill Fire & Emergency Services are asking for your help. In recent weeks we have seen some devastating fires across the GTA, and the Ontario Fire Marshal has announced that Ontario saw 133 fire deaths in 2022 – our worst year in decades! Each one of the people lost were someone's family, friend, and part of a community.

We are urging all parents, guardians and caregivers to regularly review the principles of fire safety with all children in your care and implement the basics of Fire Prevention, Detection and Home Escape Planning within your home. Please discuss the following educational safety messages with children and all members of your household. We all play an important role in keeping our communities fire safe.

**PREVENTION** | Everyone has a responsibility to protect their family and home from fire. Prevention is always the best course of action.

- Practice safety in the kitchen by never leaving the kitchen while cooking. Unattended cooking is a leading cause of home fires. If a fire occurs on a stovetop pan or pot, safely slide a lid or baking tray over the fire to smother it.
- When charging electronic devices, charge them on non-combustible surfaces, rather than surfaces such as beds or under bed sheets.
- Candles should ideally be battery operated but if using traditional candles, they must only be lit by an adult. The candle should be in a container that doesn't tip easily; once lit, they must be kept away from anything that can burn and remember to blow them out before anyone leaves the room.
- Space heaters and other heating equipment should be plugged directly into a wall, placed away from combustible items, and never left unattended.

**DETECTION** | Only working smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms give you early notification and the time you and your family need to safely escape a fire. Demonstrate and discuss the importance of knowing the sound of smoke and CO alarms to all members of your household.

- A working smoke alarm must be located on every storey of the home and a CO alarm in close proximity to all sleeping areas in the home. Ideally, every bedroom should be equipped with a smoke alarm and all smoke alarms should be interconnected.
- Test these life saving devices monthly and replace by the date that is shown on the side or back of the alarm (usually 8-10 years from the date of manufacture for smoke alarms and 7-10 years for CO alarms). If you have a fire emergency in your home, a working alarm will give you the time your family and pets need to get out safely.

**ESCAPE** | Fire and smoke move faster than you. There's no time to figure out how to escape your home AFTER a fire starts. Practice a home fire escape plan BEFORE there's a fire so you can get out safely.

- Discuss and prepare a home escape plan with all members of your household.
- Choose a predetermined meeting place outside in front of your home and educate all family members that once they are outside, they stay outside - never go back inside for anything.
- Practice your plan twice a year by doing home fire drills. We encourage you to practice by sounding a smoke alarm with your pets nearby, gathering all members of your household who may need assistance to evacuate.
- In case of a fire emergency in an apartment/condo building, it is important to remember to sound the building's fire alarm system if it is equipped to alert other occupants and call 911.
- If unable to evacuate your home, gather your family in a room with a large window, close and seal the door behind you, call 911 and provide your address and location. All scenarios should be discussed and practiced ahead of time.

For additional information and contact details, please visit [RichmondHill.ca/Fire](http://RichmondHill.ca/Fire). We are happy to answer any questions you or your dependents may have. You can also scan the QR code below if you would like to access activities and interactive games from our friend Sparky the Fire Dog!

Thank you for being fire safe and reviewing these important fire safety messages with the children in your care. Please take the time now to sit with all members of your family and make fire safety a priority within your home.

Yours in Fire Safety,



Shanyn Godward  
Public Education Officer  
Richmond Hill Fire & Emergency Services

