



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

Smoke Alarm Awareness Program And Installation For Seniors and Disabled Individuals

Date:	October 29, 2008
To:	Community Development and Recreation
From:	Fire Chief, Toronto Fire Services
Wards:	All Wards
Reference Number:	p:\2008\CluserB\FIR\cd0816

SUMMARY

To reach the goal of zero fire fatalities in the City of Toronto it is critical to intensify outreach efforts concerning smoke alarm use and placement. To help reach this goal in the City of Toronto this report proposes a new program Project Zero. Project Zero will be an intensive door to door program to ensure proper placement and operation of smoke alarms and additional education on home escape planning. Further, in situations where smoke alarms are not working for seniors or handicapped individuals smoke alarms will be installed by Fire Services staff during the inspection. This project would also provide an additional opportunity for residents to ask fire safety related questions of staff in an informal and friendly setting. The program launch is scheduled for the first quarter of 2009.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Fire Chief of Toronto Fire Services recommends that:

1. The Fire Chief be authorized to receive the donation of smoke alarms from Enbridge Gas Distribution at a value of \$20,000.00 purchased from the Ontario Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council.
2. The Fire Chief be authorized to hold joint education and press releases with Enbridge Gas Distribution when promoting the Project Zero program.
3. The Fire Chief report on the smoke alarms installed and public fire education Project Zero program one year after the program has been implemented.

4. A consent, release, waiver and indemnification form satisfactory to the City Solicitor to be signed by all recipients of the smoke alarms.
5. Appropriate City staff be authorized and directed to implement the recommendations in this report.

Financial Impact

Toronto Fire Services has received an in-kind \$20,000.00 donation of smoke alarms to commence the program to cover the anticipated cost of smoke alarms that could be replaced. This program will be delivered during normal working hours, is a component of inspections, and is included in Fire Services' 2009 Recommended Operating Budget.

The Acting Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

COMMENTS

Risk of Fires in Residential Dwellings

Home fires continue to account for the largest percentage of fire and fire deaths. Over a 10-year period from 1998 to 2007 there have been 196 fire fatalities in Toronto with 176 deaths in residential dwellings. It is critical to address the fact that 89.8% of fire fatalities occur in residential dwellings.

To reach the goal of no fatalities in the City of Toronto it is critical to intensify outreach efforts concerning smoke alarm use and placement. Further, in situations where smoke alarms are not working for seniors or handicapped individuals, smoke alarms will be installed by Fire Services staff during the inspection.

Community-Based Home Fire Safety Program

The goal of the community based program Project Zero is to reduce over time the number of fires, fire fatalities and injuries in the home. The program objectives are:

- To increase the fire safety awareness and knowledge of residents to reduce the incidence and impact of fire occurrences in dwellings.
- To create positive change in the behaviour of residents by increasing knowledge of fire safety practices related to installation/maintenance of smoke alarms; reduction in incidents of careless cooking and smoking; implementing a home escape plan.
- To reinforce positive behaviours already in place to ensure that they will continue in the future and share new practices such as the additional safety offered by residential fire sprinklers during renovations or building a future residential dwelling.

Delivery of Community-Based Program

The project is designed to be implemented by all Fire Prevention staff who will deliver the program in the community. Staff working in pairs will proceed door to door conducting a home inspection within the identified priority areas of the city. The inspection will primarily focus on existing smoke alarms. Residents will be made aware of the importance of installing and maintaining smoke alarms and having a home escape plan. In addition, information will include fire safety tips on safe cooking and smoking habits with distribution of related materials. This project would provide an opportunity for residents to ask fire-related questions of staff in an informal and friendly setting.

During the inspection process Fire Prevention staff will become aware of smoke alarms that are not working or missing. To withhold smoke alarms from seniors or disabled individuals would increase their risk to the exposure of potential fires. Professionally trained Fire Prevention staff will provide and/or install smoke alarms/batteries for individuals with disabilities or seniors.

Homeowners without any restrictions will:

- Be provided smoke alarm(s) and have them installed to ensure fire protection and will be given 7 days to return the equivalent smoke alarm(s) to the local Fire Prevention office.
- Be provided the option to purchase new smoke alarms to be reinstalled by themselves if they do not desire the smoke alarm(s) installed by Toronto Fire Services and return the equivalent alarm(s) to the local Fire Prevention office.

If the homeowner has no smoke alarms in the home they will be charged under the Ontario Fire Code. It is suggested that because of the requirements of the smoke alarms in Ontario there will be very few cases where a resident does not have smoke alarms. However, it is expected that some smoke alarms will not be installed in the proper location or working.

Homeowners with multiple occupants or property owners who do not meet the requirement of smoke alarms under the Ontario Fire Code will be charged or given a violation of notice to correct the situation in a specific time period. Any homeowner who flagrantly does not have any smoke alarms will be documented and could result in a potential charge under the Ontario Fire Code.

All recipients of a smoke alarm/battery will sign a consent form indicating their acceptance of the smoke alarm.

Launch of Program

“**Project Zero**” is scheduled to be launched in the first quarter of 2009 in a news conference. An inspection blitz of priority areas will be on a quarterly basis. The launch of the program will be enhanced by:

- **Project Zero** Fire Prevention Public Education staff would design a lecture series to be held at various community centres in each priority area.

- Council members could assist in advertising, securing community centres and informing constituents of available programs.
- In those areas of wide ethnic diversity, the Fire Prevention Public Education Section can help develop effective working partnerships between the Fire Services, key community leaders, organizations and businesses. This would assist in the dissemination of fire safety information to all community groups.
- Brochures and handout materials would be made available in multiple languages.
- Update website to include program information.

Advantages of Conducting Community-Based Program:

- Works directly toward our goal of zero fire deaths in Toronto.
- Superior method of providing first hand information to the public on fire safety and carrying out inspection.
- Intensifies Public Education efforts in the area of highest risk in the home.
- Targets priority areas as recognized by the City of Toronto.
- Provides for consistency of educational messages.
- Better utilization of staff in disseminating pertinent information.

CONCLUSION

The Toronto Fire Service views public fire safety education as an essential component of its fire prevention strategy. Education is a powerful tool in fighting fires and a potential life saver. Analysis of statistics has shown that most fires occur in the home and are caused by carelessness. Through implementation of Project Zero, the Toronto Fire Services remains committed to an aggressive, proactive promotion of fire safety within the community with particular emphasis on home fire safety. In addition, the image of the Toronto Fire Services can only be enhanced and we have the potential to make the largest reductions in the highest risk area with minimal expenditure. As part of Project Zero, this program is a major step toward our ultimate goal of zero fire deaths in the City of Toronto.

The report has been reviewed with Insurance and Risk Management and the City's comprehensive general liability insurance policy would extend to cover the smoke alarm inspection program operated by trained Fire Services' staff. This report has been reviewed by Legal Services.

CONTACT

Frank Lamie, Deputy Fire Chief
 Toronto Fire Services
 Phone: 338-9054, Fax: 338-9060
 E-mail: flamie@toronto.ca

SIGNATURE



William A. Stewart
 Fire Chief