



Residential Housing Accommodation

The following information will help to determine if potential accommodation make the grade when it comes to fire safety.



Smoke Alarms

It is the law in Ontario to have working smoke alarms on every storey and outside all sleeping areas. The law applies to single family, semi-detached, townhomes and apartments (including basement apartments), whether owner-occupied or rented. Rooming houses have specific regulations about smoke alarms or fire alarm systems. Make sure the landlord, administrator or superintendent identifies and explains the fire alarm and detection features in the building and unit.



Carbon Monoxide Alarms

In North Bay, all residential occupancies containing a fuel burning appliance such as natural gas, oil, propane or wood and/or having an attached garage requires a carbon monoxide alarm. For more information refer to By-Laws No. 2009-16 and 2009-193 or contact North Bay Fire & Emergency Services.



Fire Separations

Often accommodation can be found in older homes that have been converted to apartments or rooming houses. At the time of the conversion, a building permit should have been obtained to ensure that fire safety features such as proper exits and fire separations between units are provided. Ask the owner if the property complies with the *Building Code* and *Fire Code* and to explain the fire safety features.



Exits

It is important to consider how people will escape from a room or apartment in an emergency. Every room or apartment requires adequate exits that will permit unobstructed escape from the building. Make sure to ask the landlord or superintendent to identify all of the designated exits. All windows and doors should open fully and easily. Stairways and hallways must not be used for storage as this can pose serious fire safety hazards. Furniture and other obstacles can physically block exits and may fill hallways or stairways with smoke.



Fire Escape Plans

In a fire emergency, everyone must know what to do and where to go. Be prepared and ensure that there are two ways out of the unit. The alternate way out can be a window that can be safely exited in an emergency. A meeting location outside the building should be decided upon by the tenants so that in a fire emergency, everyone can be accounted for.



Security

Some property owners install bars on windows as a security measure. While this may seem appealing from a security point of view, it can prevent occupants from escaping in an emergency situation. Security bars on windows should be equipped with a quick-opening device on the inside so the bars can be removed quickly.



Electrical Safety

Many buildings offering lodging are older homes that may not have upgraded wiring. Outlets in bathrooms or within one metre of the kitchen sink should be the Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) type.

Consider the number and location of electrical outlets in the room or apartment. There should be enough outlets so that appliances such as lamps, computer equipment and stereos can be operated without the use of extension cords. If extension cords can't be avoided, use multi-outlet power bars that are approved and provide surge protection and a circuit breaker. Make sure that electrical cords of any kind are not concealed under carpets or rugs where they can be easily damaged.

Avoid overloaded circuits and octopus wiring. High energy appliances such as fridges, freezers, air conditioners and microwaves must be plugged directly into an outlet, do not use an extension cord to power these items.

See the reverse for additional fire safety information .

For more information:

North Bay Fire & Emergency Services

Tel: 705-474-0626 ext. 4806

Address: 119 Princess St. W., North Bay, Ontario

Website: <http://www.cityofnorthbay.ca/fire>



Electrical safety tips and information about common electrical hazards can be found at the Electrical Safety Authority website at: www.esainspection.net

Fire safety tips and information can be found at the Office of the Fire Marshal website at: www.ofm.gov.on.ca

Fire Safety Basics for Residential Housing Accommodation



Before turning the key to your new home, please consider the following...

Cooking

Cooking is the number one cause of home fires in Ontario. If the rental has cooking facilities, there are some basic fire safety rules they must follow to prevent cooking fires:

- A stovetop fire can start in a flash, so stay in the kitchen when something is cooking on the stove.
- Keep all combustible items a safe distance away from the stove. This includes tea towels, wooden or plastic spoons and paper towels.
- Keep a pot lid near the stove to smother flames if a fire starts in a pot.

Space Heaters

The central heating systems in older accommodation is often supplemented with space heaters. To prevent heating fires:

- Keep the space heater at least one metre away from anything that can burn, such as paper, bedding, furniture and curtains.
- Turn off the space heater before going out or going to bed.

Candles

The use of candles is becoming more and more popular, especially among young people. To prevent candle fires:

- Use tea lights or votive candles in non-combustible containers as they are generally a safer choice than tapers.
- Place the candles in a location where they can't be knocked over or come in contact with combustible items.
- Blow out all candles before leaving the room or going to bed.

Social Gatherings

While most parties are harmless fun, the consumption of alcohol combined with cooking or smoking can create a serious fire risk. To minimize the risk of fires during or after parties:

- Avoid over-crowding. The more people attending the party, the easier it is to lose control of the situation.
- Encourage guests to smoke outside. Consider putting up no smoking signs that direct guests to an outside smoking area.
- Refrain from burning candles during parties. They can easily be knocked over or ignite nearby combustibles, unnoticed.

Smoking

Fires caused by smoking can be deadly. Even if they don't smoke themselves, chances are the tenant will have friends that do. To prevent smoking fires:

- Encourage smokers to go outside.
- Keep large, deep ashtrays on hand that will reduce the risk of ashes and cigarette butts falling onto rugs or upholstery.
- Allow ashes to cool completely before disposing.

Smoke alarms

If a fire does occur, it is critical that the dwelling have working smoke alarms to alert occupants as soon as possible.

- The responsibility for smoke alarm installation and maintenance lies with the homeowner or landlord, however it is a good idea to have an additional smoke alarm in the bedroom.
- It is against the law for tenants to disable or tamper with a smoke alarm.
- If a smoke alarm activates due to steam from the shower or cooking on the stove, oven or toaster, ask the landlord to move the alarm to a different location, or to install a smoke alarm with a pause feature.

Electrical Equipment

Overloaded circuits and octopus wiring are dangerous electrical hazards that can be avoided. To prevent fires caused by electrical equipment:

- Use an approved power bar with a circuit breaker and surge protector to plug in computer and stereo equipment.
- Avoid the use of extension cords as permanent wiring.
- Make sure electrical cords are not concealed under carpets or rugs where they can be easily damaged.

Fire Escape Planning

When the smoke alarm sounds, everyone must know what to do and where to go.

Keep the following in mind:

- Know two ways out of every room, if possible. The first way out would be the door, while the alternate escape could be a window that can be exited safely. Make sure all designated escape routes are accessible and free of clutter.
- Leave the building as quickly as possible. Once outside, don't re-enter the building for any reason.
- Call 9-1-1 from outside the building using a cell phone or neighbours' phone.