

Local fire chief provides safety tips during Fire Prevention Week

By Mike Baker

The Orangeville Fire Department is reminding local residents that not every hero wears a cape as we prepare for Fire Prevention Week.

Beginning this Sunday (Oct. 6), members from the local department will work to educate the public about the many small, but important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe. Orangeville Fire Chief Ron Morden is urging families to practise their home escape plan in case of a fire.

In Canada, most fire deaths occur in the home, where people believe they are most safe. Fire services across the province respond to approximately 11,000 calls each and every year. Locally, the Orangeville department, which also services parts of Mono, Amaranth and East Garafraxa, responds to around 1,350 calls per year.

"We believe that most fires are preventable," says Chief Morden. "We know that properly installed and maintained smoke alarms in your home, and knowing what to do when they sound, will reduce the number of fire deaths."

He added, "Fire and smoke move faster than you. In a typical home fire, there's no time to figure out how to escape your home after the fire has started and the alarms are sounding."

Research shows that 30 years ago, people had around 17 minutes to safely escape a house fire. Today, Chief Morden notes you may have as little as three minutes. In general, a fire will double in size with every minute that passes. A fire will reach the point of flashover, the process when all contents in a room reach ignition temperature and emit dangerous, highly flammable gases, in around eight minutes. Chief Morden noted that chance of survival after that time for anyone trapped inside is "not very good", as a Council meeting back in 2017.

The reason people today have less time to escape a home is due to numerous reasons, largely centering around the materials used to construct newer homes and that furniture today seems to burn faster, hotter and create more toxic smoke.

"Legacy furniture was made of natural materials such as wood, wool and cotton. This type of furniture takes longer to burn and does not create toxic smoke like modern furniture does," Chief Morden stated. "Modern furniture is made from particle board, plastic and fabrics that contain blends of nylon and polyester. These materials burn faster, a lot faster."

Here are some things to consider when developing your home escape plan:

• Assess the needs of everyone in your home, determine who will assist small children and those who require assistance evacuating the home

• Ensure you have working smoke alarms on every level of your home

• Ensure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms outside every sleeping area of your home

• Identify all possible exits, both windows and doors, and make sure they open. Establish two ways out of every room, if possible.

• Everyone must know what to do if the alarm sounds. Identify a safe meeting place that is located outside, at the front of your home and call the fire service from outside the home

• Practise your escape plan at least twice a year. Have everyone participate and make changes if necessary

??If you live in an apartment building, be familiar with the evacuation procedure. If uncertain, contact the building manager or superintendent.