



## Fire Safety for Physically Challenged Individuals

**Now that I'm in, how do I get out?** The most important step is to invest a few hours to pre-plan for a fire emergency.

Knowing what to do in case of fire may save your life! Talk to family, friends, neighbours, and building supervisory staff about your special needs in an emergency.

Nelson Fire Rescue Services can also help you develop a plan that you can practice with those that live and work with you.

### How can I protect myself?

Depending on your physical limitations, here are some things that you can do to protect yourself from fire. In some cases, you may be able to do some of these things yourself. In other cases, you may need someone to help you.

- **Install smoke alarms** Ask the superintendent of your building, a friend or relative, to install at least one smoke alarm on each level of your home, especially adjacent to bedrooms, to provide early warning of fire. Make sure your alarms are tested monthly and ensure the batteries are changed at least once a year.
- **Remember 9-1-1** In case of fire, always attempt to get out, then call 9-1-1 and give your street address. If you can't get out, call 9-1-1: Even if Nelson Fire Rescue Services has been called or already arrived, tell them exactly where you are in the building. Don't panic. Stay calm.
- **If possible, live near ground level** If you live in a multi-story home, sleep on the first floor and keep a telephone by your bed. If you live in an apartment, consider living on the ground floor. Living closer to the ground and to an exit will make for evacuating easier. Also, consider having doorways widened and ramps constructed.
- **Plan and practice your escape** Know two ways out of every room, especially bedrooms. If one exit is a window, make sure that it opens easily. If you live in an apartment building and you are able to use stairs, map out as many routes as possible. Never take elevators to escape fire. Elevators may become trapped between floors or they may take you directly to the fire!

### When fire strikes, what must I do?

- **Get out and stay out** If you leave the building, leave as quickly and safely as possible. Never go back in. Never return for personal possessions. They are not worth your life. Call 9-1-1 from outside
- **Crawl low under smoke** If you can, crawl low while you exit and keep your head down. Hot toxic gases rise. The cleanest, coolest air is near the floor.

- **Keep doors closed** A closed door will help slow the spread of fire, smoke and heat. If you hear a smoke alarm, smell smoke or suspect fire, feel the door. If the door feels cool, open it just a crack to check for smoke. If there is none, leave by your planned escape route. If the door feels hot when you touch it, don't open it. Don't panic. Escape out the window or use your alternate exit.
- **If you can't leave your room or apartment** Stay calm. Seal cracks around doors and vents as best as you can, using wet towels if possible. Open a window and stay low by it to breathe fresh air. If there's a phone in the room, call 9-1-1, tell them you are trapped and exactly where you are in the building. Shout for help or use a whistle and signal your position by waving a bright cloth, towel, sheet or flashlight.
- **Stop, drop and roll** If your clothes catch fire, stop where you are. Drop gently to the ground. Roll over-and-over to put the flames out. Depending on your physical limitations, you may need someone's help to smother the fire. Don't try to put the flames out with your hands.

### **What are some of the ways that I can help prevent a fire?**

#### **☑ Be alert to careless smoking**

- Use large, deep ashtrays. Don't empty ashes into the garbage. Place contents in a metal container or toilet. Check upholstered furniture for dropped or hidden cigarette butts.
- Never smoke when you are in bed, feeling drowsy or while on medication.

#### **Be kitchen alert**

- Never leave cooking unattended on your stove.
- Avoid loose sleeves while cooking; loose clothing easily catches fire.
- Keep pot handles turned toward the back of your stove. In case of a grease or pan fire, smother flames with a close-fitting pot lid or a larger pan.

#### **Check your appliances**

- Examine cords and plugs to your stove, oven, toaster, coffee maker and other cooking devices for signs of cracking or fraying.
- Look for signs of overheating.
- Check for a recognized testing laboratory label to show that the unit has been safely designed.

#### **Use space heaters carefully**

- Purchase CSA- or ULC-approved heaters only.
- Always keep a 90 cm (3 feet) clearance on all sides of the heater.
- Be careful not to come in contact with the heater. Many space heaters can easily ignite clothing, other textiles and paper.
- Unplug them when not in use.

#### **Cool a burn**

- Immediately apply cool running water under to a burn for 5 to 10 minutes to reduce pain and avoid the risk of more skin damage. Don't use butter or salve since they only trap heat and cause more skin damage. Seek immediate medical attention if blisters appear or skin is charred.

**Remember**

- Install and maintain smoke alarms in your home.
- Develop an escape plan and practice fire drills regularly.
- Check your home and eliminate fire hazards. **and ...**
- When purchasing electrical appliances and fixtures, look for the Canadian Standards Association seal of approval. This is your assurance that products have been tested for shock and fire hazards.
- When purchasing smoke alarms, look for the Underwriters' Laboratories of Canada label. This is your assurance that the smoke alarms have been tested and will perform satisfactorily provided that they are used and/or installed in accordance with the listing specifications.

**In case of fire or an emergency, call 9-1-1.**

*Adapted from City of Toronto Fire Services. Copyright City of Toronto.*