



FIRE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION OF BC  
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## Smoke Alarm Campaign - Message to BC Fire Chiefs

The Fire Chiefs' Association of BC Executive Board unanimously supported starting a sustainable campaign in BC to have every residence in British Columbia have a working smoke alarm, or test their existing smoke alarms to ensure they are working properly if and when they are needed. The FCABC, the Office of the Fire Commissioner, with assistance from the Surrey Fire Service and other champions, are spearheading a local, provincial and national movement in 2012 to achieve the goal of a "*working smoke alarm*" in every home. A major announcement will be made on Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> to launch the program.

Please review this video message to BC Fire Departments

***Call to Action*** – encouraging BC's fire departments to get involved  
<http://youtu.be/uay7COaohIA>

At the end of this information sheet is the public video clip:

***Where You Sleep*** – information you can share with your community members and post to your website or fire department page.

### **RIGHT NOW**

Fire Service members in BC can show true leadership in their communities by enrolling in this campaign. This may include:

- Having your community first responders check with the occupants of a response location if they have a "*working smoke alarm*" or asking the resident if they can test their smoke alarm while they are in the home
- Posting the links or video clips to your fire department website and/or your local government website
- Use the links to the videos (or the direct link at [www.fcabc.ca](http://www.fcabc.ca) to a Working Smoke Alarm website that is being set up) in your emails, letters, or community bulletins as trailers at the end of your correspondence
- Follow us on Twitter [www.twitter.com/BCFireChiefs](http://www.twitter.com/BCFireChiefs)

- Take this message to your local service clubs and/or community groups (Old Age Pensioners Group, Lions, Rotary, Kinsman, Parents Advisory Councils)
- Write an article or do an interview with local community newspapers on the importance of every home having a "working smoke alarm" or to encourage your citizens to test their smoke alarms

## **COMING SOON**

The FCABC will be setting up a website shortly that will track and recognize fire departments, communities, and citizens for enrolling in the "Working Smoke Alarm in every BC home" campaign. An email notice will be sent out when the site is up and running. In the meantime, and after the new site is active, you can access a direct link at [www.fcabc.ca](http://www.fcabc.ca) on the front page of our website.

- Sign up your fire department on the "Working Smoke Alarms in BC" website to show your community is involved in their citizen's safety to show that your fire department is a "**Champion**" of their citizen's safety
- A section may be created on this new website for citizen's to enter their names & community so your town's success rate on this campaign can be recognized
- Information will be included on this site advising fire departments of all sizes of some of the things they can do to help achieve the goal of a working smoke alarm in every home.

## **IN THE FUTURE**

- A national injury reduction forum on October 12, 2012, hosted by Surrey Fire Service in partnership with the Canadian Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. This forum will be the third in a national series, all motivated towards saving 4,000 lives annually by 2015 and to reduce injury related hospitalizations by 30%. Working smoke alarms form a key contribution to this broader life safety goal.
- When the "working smoke alarm" website is set up – fire departments can register a community event or festival where their fire department members will have a display on smoke alarms – and brochures or pamphlets will be available
- Decals may be produced that could be handed out to school children or children at community events that say "*I'm protected when I sleep*" or "*My house has a Working Smoke Alarm*" so they can put them on their residence front door or front window
- The FCABC is partnering with the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs to work with the federal government and/or Members of Parliament to create a "*National Smoke Alarm*" day

- The FCABC and the CAFC will explore the potential to leverage consumer protection legislation and working with smoke alarm manufacturers to focus on design changes for smoke alarms to address deficiencies.

## **BACKGROUND**

The initiative follows new research by the University of the Fraser Valley that revealed almost 70% of houses that caught fire in B.C. did not have a functioning smoke alarm. This research predicted that working smoke alarms could reduce annual fire deaths in B.C. by as much as 32%.

The research findings also indicated that the province's most vulnerable populations – such as children and the elderly – face the highest risk of dying in a residential fire. With this in mind, the key focus of the campaign will be on achieving long-term sustainable solutions to ensure every B.C. home has a working smoke alarm.

Research reveals a causal link between working smoke alarms and reduced fatalities from residential structure fires.

A study<sup>[1]</sup> of almost 50,000 fires in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario from October 2006 to 2011 showed:

- The death rate per 1,000 fires was 74% greater without a working smoke alarm.
- Greater risk of fatality from residential structure fires for households with at least one young child, older adult, or person with disability; rental units; and households in low-income areas, rural communities and First Nations reserves.
- Fire damage was reduced by 19% when a working smoke alarm was present.

Given that these three provinces are home to 62% of all Canadians, it was extrapolated that 69 deaths (a decrease of 32%) could be prevented each year if all Canadian homes had working smoke alarms.

Smoke alarm legislation varies from province to province. Since mid-2010, the B.C. Fire Code has required all homes, hotel and motel rooms to have a working smoke alarm (battery-operated or hard-wired). However, this is not systematically enforced on residential properties.

Smoke alarm function is another challenge. Models with removable batteries can be easily disabled during cooking, and also require the occupant to be diligent about replacing batteries at regular intervals. While this problem is addressed by hard-wired and long-life lithium battery models, their seemingly "care-free" status may result in neglected maintenance and use beyond the functioning lifespan.

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<sup>[1]</sup> *Smoke Alarms Work, But Not Forever* (January 2012) was written by Fire Chief Len Garis and Dr. Joseph Clare of the City of Surrey Fire Service for the University of the Fraser Valley School of Criminology and Criminal Justice's Centre for Public Safety and Criminal Justice Research.

A coordinated, sustained and multi-faceted approach – consisting of education, enforcement and changes to the environment – is required to ensure every dwelling in Canada has a working smoke alarm.

The Honourable Shirley Bond, Minister of Justice and Attorney General will launch this campaign with an important announcement on Thursday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at 1:30pm at Firehall #10, Surrey, BC. Participating in the launch of this important campaign will be representatives from the Office of the BC Fire Commissioner; Fire Chiefs' Association of British Columbia President Len Garis; FCABC Communications Director Fire Chief Tom DeSorcy, Hope; and Victoria Fire Chief Jeff Lambert, Chair of the British Columbia Fire & Life Safety Education Committee.

The official press release and announcement by Minister Bond will be circulated after the launch announcement is made.

### **VIDEO CLIPS**

**Call to Action :** <http://youtu.be/uay7COaohIA> - for fire departments

**Where You Sleep :** [http://youtu.be/R6hR\\_jfCyAI](http://youtu.be/R6hR_jfCyAI) - for citizens in your community



**Len W. Garis**  
**Fire Chief, City of Surrey**  
**President, FCABC**