

When spring cleaning, think fire safety

By Kristena Schutt-Moore

With weather warming and thoughts turning to spring, community members start making plans for spring cleaning and fun days in the sun. However there are some things that the local fire department would like the public to keep in mind while making their plans.

From 2009 to 2018 the Ontario Fire Marshals Office collected data on the number of fires there were in Ontario, where they were and what started them. There were 113,111 fires across Ontario during those years. Of that 47 per cent happened in occupied residential buildings, 27 per cent occurred in vehicles, and 13 per cent occurred on structures/properties not classified by the Ontario Building code ? this includes many non structure property types ? land, outdoor storage, and some structures ranging from barns to weather stations. These numbers are believed to not have changed much in the past few years.

Within the residential percentage there were several ways a fire was started, including 18 per cent by cooking, nine per cent by electrical distribution equipment and wiring, eight by heating or cooling products, eight per cent miscellaneous which includes fires started by natural causes and chemical reactions, seven by cigarettes, four per cent by appliances, four per cent other electrical or mechanical appliances or miss use, four per cent by exposure fires, meaning the fire was started at an other location and spread, four per cent by other open flame tools excluding matches and lighters, two per cent by lighting appliances excluding candles, two per cent by candles, one per cent by matches or lighters excluding arson fires, one per cent by processing equipment; and 19 per cent was reported as undetermined.

Here are some fire safety tips the Bancroft fire department would like North Hastings Residents to keep in mind.

Inside the home: ? Check and test your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. ? Check for overloaded or damaged extension cords. ? Check and clean filters above stove. ? Prepare for storm related outages. Make sure your flashlights and portable radios have batteries and that other supplies such as bottled water are stocked and available. ? Practice exit drills with your family so everyone knows what to do in case of an emergency. ? Properly store household chemicals and never mix cleaning agents. ? Recycle: get rid of old newspapers, magazines and junk mail. These items tend to pile up and can contribute to the severity and spread of fire. ? Windows should be checked to ensure they open and close properly, in case they are needed as an exit. ? Always keep stairs and landings clear for safe evacuation in event of an emergency.

Outside and around the yard: ? Make sure your address numbers are up and visible from the street. ? Clean up yard debris. Cut back dead limbs and grasses. ? Maintain a clear 'fire zone' of 10 feet around structures. Clean up leaves and debris and consider using stone or non-combustible mulches. ? Get your barbecue grill cleaned and serviced. Check all propane tanks and lines for leaks and damage. ? View the Technical Standards and Safety Authority videos on barbecue safety such as: ? Taking your propane tank for a ride? Light it right? Make a clean start - test it!? Your barbecue needs your full attention? Never barbecue in an enclosed space

In the garage or shed: ? Clean up and properly store paints, pool and yard chemicals? Check fuel containers for leaks and make sure they are properly stored. ? Have all power equipment cleaned, serviced and ready for use. ? Let power equipment sit for approximately 30 minutes before placing it inside. With warmer weather also comes the concern of chimney fires. This is often caused by built up creosote from fires being turned down to a slow burn and only used occasionally. Ensuring that creosote is cleaned out before a fire is lighted will help ensure the safety of both inside wood stoves and outside wood furnaces.