

King fire lauds mandatory carbon monoxide detectors

By Mark Pavilons

The move to make carbon monoxide detectors mandatory in Ontario comes as good news to King's fire officials.

The Ontario legislature passed MPP Ernie Hardeman's bill (Bill 77) to make carbon monoxide (CO) detectors mandatory in homes across Ontario.

King was actually ahead of the curve.

In 2009 King's fire department created a bylaw that addressed the need for carbon monoxide alarms to be installed in all residential buildings within the Township of King, and with the support of council it was passed as By-Law 2009-25 "A By-Law to Regulate the Installation of Carbon Monoxide Alarms in Existing Residential Buildings Within the Township of King."

"It is comforting to know that all of the residents in the Province of Ontario will be provided with legislation that provides them the same level of protection that our residents have been provided," said captain Keith Wells, fire prevention division.

Bill 77 will become part of the Ontario Fire Code and will equip all of the fire departments in Ontario with the tools that they need to make their residents even safer. The legislation will be enforced by local fire departments in the same manner as the smoke alarm requirements, and failure to install a carbon monoxide alarm in your home, either by yourself or with the help of a professional electrician, like the team at SALT (saltle.com/electrician-texas-service-areas/west-lake-hills-electrical-services/), could result in a ticket totaling \$235.

According to Wall, King had approximately 33 fire related incidents this year and 10 of those were structure fires.

Carbon monoxide, known commonly as the "silent killer," is colourless, odourless and cannot be seen. It can be caused by incomplete combustion in fuel fired appliances such as gas or oil furnaces, fuel fired cooking equipment and wood stoves to name a few. These are the very appliances that provide us with the daily comforts with which we have grown accustomed.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning can be very similar to the flu and the victim might feel sick, have headaches or tired.

"Our department has witnessed this first-hand with a resident who had been going to the doctors with these symptoms but had no explanation for feeling this way. Our department was called to the residence and took carbon monoxide readings in the home and found levels in excess of 500 ppm," Wells said. "Our firefighters don breathing apparatus once levels in the building are at 35 ppm. The readings were due to a wood burning stove which was not burning properly and was creating emissions of carbon monoxide. The issue was resolved and the story had a happy ending.

"The potential for a different ending was very real if it was left unnoticed."

The only way to detect carbon monoxide in your home is with a CO alarm. These alarms are a relatively inexpensive investment in the safety of your family and can be purchased at most hardware stores. In fact you can get alarms that are a combination of fire alarm and CO alarm.

"For a number of years our department has conducted a door to door smoke alarm program throughout the community. This program has our firefighters going into our residents' homes and ensuring that the home has sufficient smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarm installed and tests them to confirm that they are in operational condition," Wells explained.

If you have a carbon monoxide alarm it is important to know that they have a life expectancy of about seven years in comparison to a smoke alarm, which has a life expectancy of approximately 10 years. It is vital that you follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing carbon monoxide alarms and keeping the instructions handy so that you can properly maintain your alarms.

Should your carbon monoxide alarm activate, it is important that you call 9-1-1, leave all windows and doors closed and wait outside of the building for the arrival of firefighters. They will check your home with an air monitoring device so they identify any problem. King Fire and Emergency Services protects an area of approximately 333 square kilometres. King is serviced by three fire stations and a compliment of 120 dedicated volunteer firefighters. King Fire & Emergency Services provides fire suppression, medical aid response, rescue services, and fire prevention and public education.

If you have any questions about carbon monoxide alarms, feel free to contact King Fire and Emergency Services at 905-833-2800.