

# Ontario Fire Code Changes - Part 1

**F**ire departments throughout Canada are becoming more and more advanced with state of the art equipment to combat fires. In addition, they are providing their firefighters with superior training to suppress fires and assist with the evacuation of the occupants. When fire emergencies arise, we come to know these great men and women who have arrived at the workplace and home to help us. With countless firefighter acknowledgements for saving lives each and every day in our country, the Fire Officials still remain mystified as to why more attention isn't paid to fire prevention by their citizens. This has lead to fire departments becoming more aggressive with their fire safety campaigns and promoting such events as "fire prevention week" within their communities. Fire departments and firefighters around the country spend time in their communities working with individuals in schools, companies and hosting various special fund raiser events to bring the message of fire safety to the forefront. This message has always been how to increase chances of survival in the event that a fire strikes at home or in the workplace, creating a fire safety plan and practicing it.

Although the nation celebrates fire prevention during one lone week in October, promoting fire safety and prevention must be front and centre in the community at large fifty-two weeks of the year. Most fires result from human error and careless acts that could have been prevented. Our workplaces are also filled with many potential sources of fire that may cost someone their life if they are not aware of the immediate fire hazards. Recent figures still indicate that the majority of home and workplace fires could have been prevented. Simply put, fuel, ignition and careless acts are the key components to any situation that causes a fire. Removing any of these three variables will inhibit the initial outbreak of fire and thus prevent it. Implementing fire prevention alone, without considering other factors, will not prove either suitable or sufficient response to building fires as these are mostly directed to events before the fire emergency actually starts or for the first few minutes afterwards.

Fire safety planning is a key component of every fire safety program. The primary goals and objectives are to increase occupant awareness of fire safety and to promote building compliance pertaining to fire safety regulations. Building operators are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their buildings comply with the Ontario Fire Code. This includes the development and implementation of a Fire Safety Plan that has been approved by the Chief Fire Official. Of equal importance, the Fire Safety Plan helps to enhance the level of fire safety awareness among occupants in the building and fire safety procedures, which is vital for their survival in the event of fire. In addition, the building operator must perform the maintenance requirements of the fire protection equipment within the building as outlined in the Fire Safety Plan. This will also incorporate the designated supervisory staff to react appropriately in the event of a fire emergency. The lack of a Fire Safety Plan or failure to implement the provi-

sions of an approved Fire Safety Plan is considered a serious violation of the Ontario Fire Code. Therefore, the building operator or designate must determine if the Fire Safety Plan is being implemented properly and whether their on-site maintenance coordinators understand their role and responsibilities for fire safety and significantly reducing losses. An intensive inspection by the building operator of an entire building still is necessary as spot checks reveal whether the building's fire safety features are being maintained adequately in implementing all aspects of the Fire Safety Plan for the building.

One of the main components to be implemented within a Fire Safety Plan is the appointment and organization of designated supervisory staff and alternates who are required to be trained to respond to a fire emergency in a predetermined manner. Supervisory Staff are those occupants of a building who have some delegated responsibility for the fire safety of other occupants under the Fire Safety Plan.

The duties and responsibilities the supervisory staff must be outlined in the Fire Safety Plan must be qualified and willing to take on the added duties and responsibilities. Person(s) designated as supervisory staff do not necessarily have to be from management or be a supervisor from the company; however will need authority consistent with their assigned duties. It is therefore essential that supervisory staff understand their responsibilities and are trained to respond to a fire emergency in a prompt, positive and intelligent manner.

Depending upon various factors, the Fire Safety Plan may only involve the designation of one or two emergency response supervisory staff. Their role would be providing entry and master keys to the fire fighters on their arrival in addition provide them with relevant information about the quantities and nature of materials stored or processed on site. Equally important to provided them with a copy of the Fire Safety Plan and related drawings. In larger operations, a more structured emergency response by designated supervisory staff may be required including fire wardens who are trained to coordinate the evacuation of specific areas, others who provide fire fighters access and assistance and/or employees trained in the "proper" use of fire extinguishers and equipped to confine and extinguish a fire.

In order for the emergency response portion of the Fire Safety Plan to be effectively implemented, all employees must understand the important role they play in promoting fire safety in the workplace. Everyone must adhere to the workplace fire safety practices and procedures. Orientation training for all employees should include fire safety instructions on what to do upon discovery of fire, what to do upon hearing an alarm of fire and how to prevent or minimize fire hazards in the workplace.

Supervisory staff must be instructed in the fire emergency procedures that are described in the Fire Safety Plan before they are given any responsibility for fire safety. A copy of the fire

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