



Title: Be Fire Smart – Get to Know Your Buildings

Sub heading: Follow these simple tips to reduce the risk of fires, and keep your tenants and buildings safe.

Fire losses continue to be an issue under the BCNPHA/Marsh Insurance Program for both severity and frequency. The continued effort of BCNPHA Members working with Marsh Risk Consulting has improved the fire hazards for individual risks, which is improving the profile of fire risk to the property underwriters.

One of the most important elements of fire prevention is awareness of the buildings that you occupy. This sounds like a ridiculous statement, but if your organization cannot answer the following questions, it is time to “become aware.”

General housekeeping improvements

The most common deficiency in all types of buildings is the accumulation of stored items over time. Regular clean-ups of these storage areas reduce the potential for fire. Old and unnecessary items should be discarded rather than stored.

Where are the water and natural gas shut-off valves located? Label the applicable doors with signs that read “Water Shut Off” and “Gas Shut Off” so that their locations are clear to everyone.

Who has access to the sprinkler/mechanical/electrical rooms? Can they be accessed 24 hours a day? Are they free of stored items?

If maintenance staff are not on site 24 hours a day, these room keys should be able to be retrieved quickly by someone on site. Frequent monitoring of these areas should be conducted to make sure that the area is not used for storage.

Where are the fire extinguishers? Have they been tested in the past 12 months? Are EXIT signs/lights present and functioning?

As part of your documented monthly self-inspection, extinguishers should be checked to ensure they are in place and that the indicator arrow is in the green section. An inventory of the extinguishers (noting their location) can be a valuable tool when it comes time for the annual inspections to ensure no extinguishers are missed.

How often are the clothes dryer vents and kitchen vents cleaned?

Kitchen vent systems are generally cleaned on a regular basis but dryer vents are overlooked. We have found it is good practice to have all vents cleaned on the same schedule as the buildup of lint can represent a major fire risk.

Are the smoke alarms part of the alarm system or non-hardwired domestic battery powered type? If they are the battery powered have they been disabled?

Smoke detection is typically the first warning of a potential fire. Because smoke alarms can be accidentally triggered by cooking residents may disable in-suite detectors. Battery-powered smoke alarms will lose charge over time, and need to be replaced. The importance of having a functioning smoke detector should be explained to all residents.

As part of Marsh’s commitment to you, we are working on tools to assist you and make you familiar with the risks involved with the day-to-day operations of your buildings and to help keep your tenants and structures safe.