



## Media Release

# Province sees spike in fire fatalities since start of 2020

## Fire Chief Urges Residents to Keep Fire Safety Top of Mind

May 5, 2020 – Since January 1, fire fatalities across Ontario increased by 65% compared to the same time last year, with 17 Ontarians dying in fires in March alone. Town of Midland and Town of Penetanguishene Fire Chief Paul Ryan wants to remind everyone how important it is to keep fire safety top of mind.

"I urge you to be vigilant in preventing fires in your home, especially now with so many people at home practicing physical distancing because of COVID-19," said Fire Chief Paul Ryan. "It's just as important that you test your smoke alarms and practice your home fire escape plan."

Between January 1 and May 4, 2019, there were 31 fire fatalities in Ontario. Over that same period this year, there have been 51 fire fatalities.

"Only you can make sure these types of tragedies do not happen in our communities," continued Fire Chief Paul Ryan. "You need to do everything you can to prevent a fire in your home."

There are simple things that you can do to prevent a fire from happening in your home and ensure that everyone knows what to do if a fire starts.

### How to protect yourself and your loved ones

#### Reduce fire risks in your home:

- Always stay in the kitchen when you are cooking. Unattended cooking is a leading cause of home fires.
- Keep a close eye on anyone drinking alcohol and attempting to cook or smoke.
- Encourage smokers to smoke outside the home and outside the garage. Thoroughly extinguish all smoking materials in water or sand.
- Always blow out candles before leaving the room.
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets. Extension cords should be used only as a temporary connection. Avoid running electrical cords under rugs, which can damage the cords and cause a fire.
- Ensure items that can burn are at least one metre away from space heaters.
- Do not attempt to sterilize or decontaminate face masks for re-use by heating them in a microwave oven. Various fabric or metal components can overheat or create sparks and cause a fire if heated in a microwave.



**Make sure your alarms work:**

- Test smoke alarms monthly by pressing the test button. Only working smoke alarms can give you the early warning you need to safely escape a fire in your home.

**Practice your home fire escape plan:**

- Ensure everyone knows two ways out of each room, if possible.
- All exits must be unobstructed and easy to use.
- Determine who will be responsible for helping young children, older adults and anyone who needs assistance to escape.
- Choose a meeting place outside, such as a tree or a lamp post, where everyone can be accounted for.
- Call the fire department from outside the home, from a cell phone or a neighbour's home.
- Once out, stay out. Never re-enter a burning building.
- If you live in an apartment or high-rise building talk to the building superintendent to learn about the emergency procedures outlined in the building's fire safety plan.

For more information, please contact:

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