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## **FATAL FIRE INVESTIGATION CONFIRMS THE NEED FOR EARLY DETECTION**

### **NEWS**

August 13, 2014

The investigation by Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) into the March 2013 fire at 72 Howard Avenue in Sharon underscores the need for families to have working smoke alarms combined with home escape plans so they have the best chance to survive a fire in their home. In addition early detection allows for prompt notification to fire departments for them to respond. Four family members tragically perished in this fire.

There were a number of factors that played a role in this fire's tragic outcome including:

1. The clothes dryer was not installed or maintained as per dryer manufacturer's instructions;
2. There was no smoke alarm on the main floor, delaying the discovery of the fire by the occupants;
3. Given the lack of a smoke alarm on the main floor, there was a delay in the subsequent notification to the fire department;
4. By the time the second floor smoke alarm activated, fire conditions were such, that escape down the central staircase was no longer possible, trapping the family in the master bedroom;
5. At the time of arrival by emergency services, the fire conditions were such, that survival of the occupants and rescue by the firefighters was untenable.

Collectively, these factors highlight the need for Ontario families to have a better understanding of the value of smoke alarms, the need to develop and practise home escape plans that accommodate those with cognitive or physical limitations, and that by doing so, they will ensure that first responders have the best chance of conducting a rescue, and performing suppression activities.

The OFMEM worked with the Office of the Chief Coroner, York Regional Police Service and the Town of East Gwillimbury Emergency Services on this investigation.

### **QUOTES**

"Working smoke alarms and a customized home fire escape plan, that meets the needs of any vulnerable occupants, are your best chance of surviving a fire. Early detection and timely notification of the fire department is also critical in the event that both rescue and suppression activities need to be conducted."

- *Tadeusz (Ted) Wieclawek, Ontario Fire Marshal and Chief, Emergency Management*

## LEARN MORE

- Install [smoke alarms](#) on every storey and outside all sleeping areas of your home. It's the law!
- Develop a [home fire escape plan](#) with your household that takes into account the unique configuration of your home.
- Identify who will help young children, older adults or anyone else that, due to cognitive or physical limitations, may require assistance to escape.
- If a fire occurs in your home and you are unable to escape, close the doors of the room you are in to prevent the spread of fire and smoke.
- If trapped or unable to escape, call 9-1-1 and tell the dispatcher where you are.
- The OFMEM's Integrated [Risk Management web tool](#) helps municipalities to build optimum fire protection services.
- Learn more at [www.ontario.ca/firemarshal](http://www.ontario.ca/firemarshal).

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