

Enjoy Another Canadian Winter

by

Andrew W. Wong, MBA, CFIFireE, CFEL, CFII
President, The Institution of Fire Engineers Canada Branch

I love winter in Canada, particularly in the Greater Toronto Area. The DJs at the radio stations and anchors of TV channels keep reminding us to take it easy under the weather conditions, drive carefully and with patience, and also keep giving us hope for a couple of bright sunny warmer days ahead. Where else on earth would you get such caring messages on a daily basis? So, as your fire safety professional friend, I am going to jump on the band-wagon and give you guys a few caring messages so that we all will enjoy a safe and happy Holiday season.

You know what? You literally don't have to do a whole lot of things to be safe from fire during the winter months. All it takes is to religiously obey the following simple rules:

On the prevention side of fire and life safety

- Rule No. 1 Do not store any new or used paint cans and thinners close to gas fired water heater and furnace.
- Rule No. 2 Make sure you switch off the pilot lights on the gas fired water heater and furnace before you paint your basement floor with oil-based concrete sealant. Alternatively, use water-based concrete sealant.
- Rule No. 3 Do not keep combustibles around the cooking range. Keep children away from cooking activities. Do not leave your cooking unattended by adult.
- Rule No. 4 Keep matches, lighters, candles etc. away from children. Watch what they are playing with from time to time. No hazardous experiments at home.
- Rule No. 5 For indoor hot-pot parties, use electric cooker instead of gas-fired cooker.
- Rule No. 6 Before leaving the house, ensuring all open-flames are extinguished (particularly candles in kid's room), cooking range and other non-essential electrical/electronic devices are switched off or unplugged where necessary. This applies to battery chargers for toys in particular.
- Rule No. 7 Use humidifier to reduce the incident of static discharge.
- Rule No. 8 Always keep an eye on plumbing work around the house where the use of soldering equipment is required – typically for repair work.

On the reaction side of fire and life safety

- Rule No. 9 Always have an evacuation plan and emergency kit for the family and practice it together.
- Rule No. 10 Test your smoke and carbon monoxide alarm monthly and get use to the sound.
- Rule No. 11 If you have small children at home, practice fire drill occasionally when they are asleep, using the smoke alarm to wake them up. You will be amazed by their lack of reaction to emergency situations.
- Rule No. 12 Have a ULC listed portable fire extinguisher and learn how to use it.

That's all folks for this issue. Till we meet again, have a safe and happy Canadian winter.