

# Spring 2019

Mark your calendar:

**NATIONAL WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS DAY**

May 5

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS WEEK**

May 6-12

**FIRE PREVENTION WEEK**

October 7-13



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## Special points of interest:

- Only **WORKING** smoke alarms save lives—have you changed the batteries in yours?
- You **MUST** plan (and practice) how to escape from your home before fire strikes...
- **Get out and Stay out!**

# Fire & Emergency Services GRAVENHURST FIRE DEPARTMENT



## Recognizing the risk from “Wildfires”

Living and vacationing in Muskoka is a dream come true for many. But there are risks involved and it’s important for you to understand what those risks entail.

For those who live amongst stands of tall coniferous and hardwood trees, one of the risks is from the threat of “wildland” or “wildfires”.

A forest fire is one of nature’s most spectacular sights, and one that has the power to destroy unprotected homes in its path.

It’s important for everyone to realize that this risk is very real here, and for everyone to take fire prevention seriously.

Being extra conscious of every cigarette butt, every campfire that is lit, of how you landscape your property and how you dispose of debris can be critical steps in preventing a needless fire.



As your spring clean-up routine continues, be sure to empty eaves troughs of dead leaves and pine needles; keep dead vegetation away from your home, cottage and pro-

pane tanks; take dead branches etc. to the landfill rather than burning them (note that burning is prohibited by by-law during the day in ALL areas of Gravenhurst); and plan how you would react if a wildfire breaks out near your property.

“FireSmart” is a complete fire prevention program aimed at keeping the “wildland-urban interface” safe from these devastating events. Learn how to protect your family by coming to **National Wildfire Preparedness Day, May 5, location : to be announced.**

[www.firesmartcanada.ca](http://www.firesmartcanada.ca)



## Carbon Monoxide Alarms Mandatory!



You’ve heard it said that carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas that can kill! Too many lives have been lost to “the silent killer” and that’s why it’s now mandatory in Ontario for residences to have CO alarms installed if your home (or cottage) has ANY type of fuel fired appliance (wood stove, propane or natural gas fueled furnace/stove/refrigerator/hot water heater etc.) or an attached garage. Have appliances checked annually by qualified technicians, and make sure you’ve **INSTALLED** a CO alarm now! (Mobile Homes/Trailers too!)

(These inexpensive devices are available locally at Home Hardware, Canadian Tire and other fine retailers).

## Message from the Fire Chief

*“... if you have a fire in your home and you are not standing on your front lawn when the fire department arrives – chances are you will not survive the fire.”*

In February, our firefighters were called to a home in the far reaches of our community. LUCKILY a lone passer-by spotted smoke coming from the window of the home late in the afternoon one Saturday. Snow covered the ground and temperatures outside were in the – 10 degree range. Temperatures in the house were in the several hundred degree range however as an intense fire roared in the living room of the home.

Firefighters from Station 3 in Barkway were the first to arrive and began an aggressive interior search for people who may have been inside and to locate the seat of the fire.

To their surprise, they located an

unconscious woman lying on the floor of the kitchen. Naturally they quickly carried her outside, and she was taken to hospital by paramedics.

Now, this woman thankfully recovered from her physical injuries despite spending many days in the hospital. She is very LUCKY to be alive!

The very concerning thing about this fire was that investigators were unable to locate working smoke alarms inside the home.

I've written previously about the reality here in Ontario, even in places like Mississauga and Toronto, that it is very rare that firefighters arrive in time to save someone from the grips of death. In many cases, Ontar-

io firefighters are simply unable to arrive quickly enough.

In cottage country, small volunteer based fire departments simply cannot arrive in the same amount of time that our city-based counterparts can. “Saves” do happen, but they are rare.

The question I pose for your consideration today is... do you really want to rely on LUCK to save you and your loved ones?

**Please**, before you allow anyone to go to sleep tonight—CHECK AND MAKE SURE YOUR SMOKE ALARMS ARE WORKING!

We need you to take responsibility for your own safety. Call us if we can help!

## Open Fires/Fireworks/Forest Fire Danger Rating

Burning brush and having a campfire in the evening with the kids is part of our way of life here in Muskoka, but like anything, some common sense goes a long way to making these activities safe, fun and enjoyable.

Gravenhurst has a by-law that regulates open air burning and so if you consider having a fire, please check the town's website for the

regulations. Essentially, fires must be limited in size and are **only permitted in the evenings**. They must be attended at all times and you must have a means to extinguish the fire immediately available.

Sometimes, environmental conditions will require a complete ban on fires because of an increased risk of forest fires. The Muskoka Forest Fire Danger Rating system is utilized by

all fire departments. Current conditions are listed on the town's website, on prominently displayed signs in the community and can be accessed toll free by calling:

**1-877-847-1577**

The use of family fireworks are currently not regulated though the fire department **strongly discourages** their use due to the risk of grass/brush/forest fires.

## Burning Illegally? Costs for Fire Response...

Town Council has enabled a policy surrounding cost recovery for fire department responses to situations involving **violations** of the Burning Control By-law through the Fees and Charges By-Law. This cost recovery effort is separate and distinct from any enforcement action that may be initiated by the Town's By-Law Enforcement Division.

Essentially, the Fees and Charges By-law authorizes the Fire Department to recover costs through the issuance of an invoice to **the property owner** after its attendance at a fire where it can be shown that this occurred because of someone's

choice to disobey the law. **In the case of a cottage rental, the owner will receive the invoice even though they may not be present** - so please educate your renters.

As authorized by Council, invoices issued will reflect a cost of \$477.00 per hour per truck (the standard rate in Ontario), plus the costs of *attending* firefighter wages. Because the department utilizes volunteer firefighters for response purposes, the cost of wages varies from day-to-day, and from incident-to-incident.

Please note that the fire department does not respond to “simple” open air burning complaints where there is no threat to public safety – these are referred to By-law enforcement staff for investigation as their resources allow—**please call 705-687-3412, extension 241** to report burning offences where there is no emergency.

Occasionally, firefighters *do* discover by-law infractions upon being sent to reports of grass fires, trees on fire or other similar circumstances. The cost recovery process is followed with these instances as well.



## Protecting what you value most...

Did you know that smoke alarms that are more than 10 years old need to be replaced? And Carbon Monoxide alarms also have limited life spans (check yours for an expiry date).

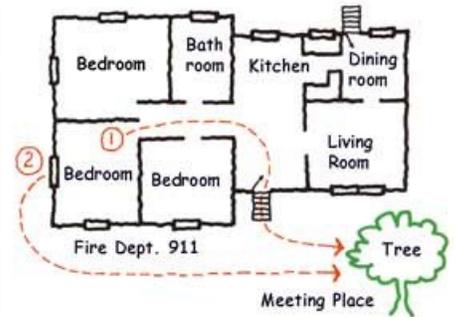
Ontario law requires that working smoke alarms be present on all levels in all homes—and that includes seasonal residences like cottages and trailers. Carbon Monoxide alarms are now mandatory for homes and cottages in Ontario as well when fuel fired appliances are present or there is an attached garage!

But knowing what to do when that alarms sounds at 3 am is just as important as having a working alarm. In a fire, you may have **less than a minute** to get out of your home and so you need to talk with your family **NOW** about home escape planning. Talk with your children about primary and secondary escape routes, the importance of getting out quickly and having a safe meeting place outside. Decide how and who will call 9-1-1 and if there's a need to temporarily shelter at a neighbours.

Do a home and cottage safety

audit and remove any hazards you find. Invest in a good fire extinguisher and know how to use it! Call us if you need help with any of these.

Don't put these things off to tomorrow or next week... do it now, and protect what you value most!



## HELP WANTED! > “Answer the Call” <

That's the tag line for our recruiting initiative which is underway as of NOW. We're always looking to bolster our ranks of volunteer/part-time firefighters and the need is especially acute here during the traditional work day.

If you are between the ages of 18 and 60, are in good physical condition, enjoy learning new skills and being part of a high performing team, becoming a part-time firefighter

could be right for you.

Homemakers, truck drivers, electricians, gentlemen farmers... all have made great Gravenhurst firefighters in the past... now its your turn!

We offer:

- Excellent training and transferrable skills
- All personal protective clothing and uniforms

- Competitive wages
- Full WSIB coverage and supplemental insurance benefits
- Friendships that can last a lifetime
- Fun, excitement and a sense of self-satisfaction from helping others in their time of need.

Interested? Call us or go to our website and download an application.

## The First 72 hours...

The Town of Gravenhurst maintains a “Community Emergency Management Team” whose mandate is to maintain the town’s official emergency plan and conduct activities that are regulated by provincial legislation.

Current trends in preparedness planning suggest that every family be prepared for severe weather events

such as floods, tornadoes and other emergencies by preparing a family survival kit. Preparing your family to be self-sufficient for up to 72 hours is important.

You can make it a fun activity too for all family members. Go to [www.getprepared.ca](http://www.getprepared.ca) for more information on how to prepare

YOUR emergency kit and other helpful information.



**Plan, Prepare, Be Aware!**

**Fire & Emergency Services  
GRAVENHURST FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Mailing Address:  
190-1 Harvie Street  
Gravenhurst, ON  
PIPIS9  
Phone: 705-687-3414  
Fax: 705-687-5725  
E-mail: [fire@gravenhurst.ca](mailto:fire@gravenhurst.ca)

[www.gravenhurst.ca](http://www.gravenhurst.ca)



**GRAVENHURST**  
GATEWAY TO MUSKOKA

**FALSE AND NUISANCE FIRE ALARMS**

Fees invoiced effective January 1, 2018

The response to false and nuisance fire alarms expose our firefighters to unnecessary risks and increases fire department operating costs for all ratepayers. In most cases these unnecessary alarms are preventable. Many are the result of improper installation or maintenance—issues that are the responsibility of property owners.

Where the fire department is called to respond to a fire alarm and no actual emergency exists, a fee for service will be applied for repeated false alarms.

In most cases, a written caution on the first occasion of a false alarm response will be issued, however upon a second false alarm response in a calendar year, an invoice will be issued and directed to the **property owner** representing partial cost recovery for the response.

Normally, at least two fire trucks are dispatched to fire alarm activations, and so these will be invoiced at the rate of **\$477.00 per hour per truck, plus the costs of attending fire personnel (plus HST)**.

For more information, please see:  
[www.gravenhurst.ca](http://www.gravenhurst.ca)

**Keep your home or cottage fire safe... be FireSmart**

