



bulkley valley - lakes district airshed management society

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Homes with non-EPA certified wood-stoves are at risk of house fires. A bylaw enforcing removal of all non-EPA certified wood stoves is in effect in Houston, Smithers, and Burns Lake.

Bulkley Valley & Lakes District, British Columbia – Upgrading and cleaning your woodstove are important steps in fire prevention according to a local Fire Chief, the British Columbia Office of the Fire Commissioner, and the Insurance Bureau of Canada. Local governments have passed bylaws to regulate the removal of older wood stoves and are providing rebate incentives to assist with the cost of upgrading to cleaner and safer new models.

Problem

The Office of Fire Commissioner reported over \$13 million dollars in property loss due to woodstove fires in British Columbia since 2004. Ken Thomson, Houston Fire Chief warns residents that old style stoves create more creosote and often have dirty connector pipes. “Creosote” [kree-uh-soht]– is the tar-like buildup of carbon materials in chimneys and is highly flammable. If owners load up the stove and let it smolder they will be producing smoke and creosote but little heat. Later, when the damper is fully opened, the extra oxygen makes it very hot and creates the potential for a roaring chimney, roof, or house fire. A sign of an old stove is a noticeably smoky chimney with an unpleasant odour.

Prevention

Three ways to prevent woodstove chimney fires are: using proper burning techniques, following manufacturer's regular maintenance recommendations, and by exchanging old stoves for Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved stoves that re-burn smoke and

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can prevent creosote build-up. *"I don't recall ever going to a chimney fire that was involved with an EPA approved stove."* Says Thomson, *"Ultimately, I recommend that everyone get an EPA approved stove. From what information we have it looks like it is causing less chimney fires."*

The Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) advises clients to properly install a safe woodstove before expecting to get home insurance. *"Wood stoves are a common source of fires and carbon-monoxide poisoning, particularly if they are not properly installed and maintained,"* states the IBC's website. Maintaining a stove includes inspecting and cleaning the flue pipes and chimney, and replacing worn out sections if necessary. Burning small hot fires with a bright flame that doesn't smoulder will reduce the amount of creosote and therefore the risk of chimney fire.

Bylaw

In the BVL D Community Action Plan for Clean Air adopted June 2004, a five year target was set for removing non-emission certified appliances. As a result of this, the District of Houston became the first community in Canada to set a mandatory removal date of December 31, 2010.

In addition, after January 1, 2007, all non-emission certified appliances must be replaced or removed prior to the transfer or sale of a property within the Town of Smithers. While enforcement of regulations has been relaxed to date, renewed efforts to reduce neighbourhood smoke will include beefing up bylaw compliance.

Exchange Program

To help residents comply with targets and bylaws, a Woodstove Exchange program has been established to provide cash rebates and assistance in selecting an energy efficient and clean burning replacement heating system. Rebates can amount to \$1200 (Smithers), \$825 (Telkwa) and \$1000 (Houston). During the months of March and April, in-store discounts are also available. March and April are the best months to act rebates if you want to maximize your savings.

For more information about the exchange program contact:

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