



Place Nouveau Building
7th Floor
5775 Yonge Street
North York ON M2M 4J1
Telephone 416-325-3100
Facsimile: 416-325-3119

Édifice Place Nouveau
7^e étage
5775 rue Yonge
North York ON M2M 4J1
Téléphone : 416 325-3100
Télécopieur : 416 325-3119

February 12, 2014

Dear Mayor in Council:

As of January 1, 2014, Ontario became the first province to require the retrofit of automatic sprinklers in all vulnerable occupancies, which include care occupancies (e.g. group homes and supportive housing where residents need care for cognitive or physical disabilities and require assistance to evacuate), care and treatment occupancies (e.g. long-term care homes – formerly known as nursing homes, municipal homes for the aged and charitable homes) and licensed retirement homes (i.e. homes for seniors who may require assistance with daily living). I would like to clarify what this means for municipalities like yours.

Mandatory sprinklers are but one part of a comprehensive set of changes to the province's fire safety regulations. There are a number of other fire safety changes that are required, by law, in care occupancies, care and treatment occupancies and licensed retirement homes. These changes and the timelines for their completion are listed below.

Beginning January 1, 2014, the changes will be phased in as follows:

In Care Occupancies and licensed Retirement Homes (within scope of Section 9.7 of Division B of the Fire Code)

- Two months to install smoke alarms in individual sleeping rooms (**New & Deadline is March 1, 2014**);
- One year to install fire alarm monitoring and emergency lighting (**New & Deadline is January 1, 2015**);
- Two years to install self-closers and voice communication systems (**New & Deadline is January 1, 2016**);
- Five years to install automatic sprinklers (**New & Deadline is January 1, 2019**).

Refer to Section 9.7 for details, design options and exemptions.

In Care and Treatment Occupancies (within scope of Section 9.4 of Division B of the Fire Code, excluding hospitals)

- Eleven years to install sprinklers to coincide with the existing Long-Term Care Home Renewal Strategy for redevelopment (**New & Deadline is January 1, 2025**).

In Care Occupancies, Care and Treatment Occupancies and licensed Retirement Homes

- Implementation of approved fire safety plan (**Now without exception & in effect as of January 1, 2014**)
- Carry out annual fire drills representing lowest staffing level scenario as approved by local fire services (**New & in effect as of January 1, 2014**)
- Sufficient number of supervisory staff available to assist residents to evacuate in an emergency (**Now without exception & in effect as of January 1, 2014**)
- Record keeping for training of supervisory staff on their roles and responsibilities within the fire safety plan (**New & in effect as of January 1, 2014**)
- All owners and operators or delegates responsible for implementing the approved fire safety plan to complete mandatory training in the next three years (**New & Deadline is January 1, 2017**)

For Fire Services (in respect to Care Occupancies, Care and Treatment Occupancies and licensed Retirement Homes)

- Three years to complete mandatory training for all Chief Fire Officials responsible for approving facility fire safety plans (**New & Deadline is January 1, 2017**)
- Observation of annual fire drills based on approved scenario (**New & in effect as of January 1, 2014**)
- Annual fire safety inspections based on a standardized checklist (**New & in effect as of January 1, 2014**)
- Registry of Vulnerable Occupancies (**New & in effect as of January 1, 2014 – See below for details**)

The Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) is committed to providing support to municipalities through advice, assistance and hands-on training, if required. The following are a list of items to demonstrate how the OFMEM is doing this.

1. Training program/course acceptable to the Fire Marshal

To meet the requirements for this mandatory training, facility owners and operators and Chief Fire Officials must have completed a training program/course acceptable to the Fire Marshal. For supervisory staff, there is an optional course. These courses are in the final stages of development. Registrants will be able to take the courses based on their preferred method of learning; online or in-class. English and French online courses will launch in April 2014. Registration for the English in-class learning will open in May/June with fall dates for regional delivery. All courses will be delivered by Public Services Health & Safety Association (PSHSA).

2. Registry of Vulnerable Occupancies

The other piece to this comprehensive set of changes is the development of an OFMEM administered Registry of Vulnerable Occupancies. As part of this, the new regulatory requirements mandate fire departments to enter specific information about vulnerable occupancies in their municipality into the Registry after they have completed a site visit. The benefit of gathering this information in one place is that it will enable fire departments to track fire drills and inspections of vulnerable occupancies within their boundaries. Recently the OFMEM initiated a one-week online pilot program for municipal fire departments to test the usability of the online application that will host the Registry. Once feedback is received and incorporated, the online application will be available for use by all municipal fire departments. Distribution of passwords to individual fire departments allowing access to local records will follow shortly.

3. Training with Municipal Fire Departments

Beginning in February, OFMEM Field Services staff will be attending some municipalities to speak about the new requirements with the local fire services. In exchange, the local fire service has made arrangements for OFMEM staff to visit care occupancies and care and treatment occupancies in the municipality with the local fire service to conduct inspections, witness fire drills and review the occupancy's fire safety plan among other items. Field staff will be able to use this hands-on experience to support advice and assistance they provide to other municipalities.

Why are there two different phase-in times for sprinklers?

I want to clarify this. Most private and government funded group homes and supportive housing captured under the new rules will have up to five years to install sprinklers. Licensed long-term care homes, such as nursing homes, will have an 11-year phase-in period to be completed by 2025.

This difference in phase-in periods is because older long-term care homes are part of a long-term redevelopment plan to bring the buildings up to more current standards. I must emphasize that these long-term care homes are already subject to a stricter set of fire safety requirements than those required in care occupancies and licensed retirement homes. In addition to the minimum staffing requirements to carry out evacuations in a fire emergency, physical barriers to fire (such as walls with a certain fire endurance), fire alarms, fire exits and emergency lighting, these long-term care homes are also required to have enhanced fire alarm monitoring and detection, and zone separations (pre-determined areas where residents are assisted to as part of a phased evacuation). The requirement for sprinklers builds on these existing strict requirements.

The mandatory sprinkler retrofit requirements have been included as part of a redevelopment plan for these long-term care homes. If not, construction costs could be duplicated by installing sprinklers in homes already scheduled to be redeveloped.

The new regulation allows five years in some cases, and 11 years in others, to meet the new sprinkler requirements, however, it does not necessarily mean that it will take that long to get all of these homes sprinklered. In fact, I am informed that at least 70 per cent of long-term care homes, and 60 per cent of retirement homes, are already sprinklered, and that others plan to proactively sprinkler well ahead of the compliance deadlines.

Committed to Working Together

This new strategy will help reduce impacts of fire on occupants and property through a multi-pronged approach of enhanced inspections, enhanced training and fire safety retrofits. It will also help the fire service be better able to pre-plan so that they will be better prepared to respond to a fire in one of these occupancies. Their role is a crucial part of this integrated strategy.

It remains the responsibility of facility owners and operators in all municipalities to ensure their buildings are in full compliance with the changes to Ontario's fire safety regulations. As listed above, mandatory sprinklers are but one part of these regulations.

My Office will continue to support municipalities, local fire services, facility owners and operators by providing advice and assistance, hands-on training and ongoing communication about upcoming deadlines to ensure all care occupancies, care and treatment occupancies and licensed retirement homes are in compliance with the new rules. To learn more about the work

that has been accomplished to date, visit the OFMEM website portal for [Care Occupancies, Care and Treatment Occupancies and Retirement Homes](#) or contact my Office at (416) 325-3100. To speak with us in person, join us at the ROMA/OGRA Conference on February 25. You are welcome to join us in the Wellington Room at the Strathcona Hotel, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. or drop by our exhibit in the Tudor Room on the Mezzanine Level of the Royal York Hotel. We would be happy to answer any of your questions about these requirements and any other initiatives being undertaken by the OFMEM.

We all have a role to play in keeping seniors and vulnerable Ontarians fire safe.

Sincerely,



Tadeusz (Ted) Wieclawek
Ontario Fire Marshal and Chief of Emergency Management

CC: All Ontario Fire Chiefs
CC: Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs
CC: Association of Municipalities of Ontario
CC: Fire Fighter's Association of Ontario
CC: Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association
CC: Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association