



Office of the
Fire Commissioner



Balancing Fire Prevention and Response

Fire-risk Reduction Initiatives and the Fire Safety Act

2023 Union of BC Municipalities Convention

September 18 • 2023

Outline

- **Annual Report—2022**
- **Office of the Fire Commissioner Initiatives—2023**
 - Training standards
 - Fire services equipment and training
 - Smoke alarm social marketing campaign and Community Fire-Risk Reduction Dashboard
 - Live-fire training
 - Volunteer fire services survey
- ***Fire Safety Act—Update***
- **Key messages**



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OFC Annual Report—2022

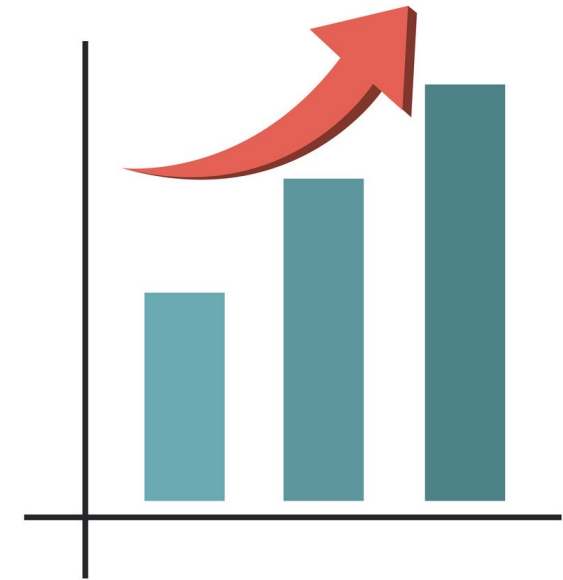
Statistics and trends—2022

BC fire-related deaths

- 86 fire-related deaths—46% increase from 2021
- Between 2018 and 2022—207% increase

National trend

- Consistent with concerning provincial trends



Statistics and trends—2022 cont.

Location

- Most fire-related deaths were in the home

Causes

- Smoker's materials and open flames (655 fires, 36 injuries, and 6 deaths)
- Cooking equipment (599 fires, 33 injuries, and 3 deaths)

Prevention

- Working smoke alarms—a working smoke alarm was present in only 45% of residential structure fires
- Public education efforts, particularly for youth and older adults



Description	2021	2022
Number of Fires	9166 ▪ Total financial loss of \$754,682,744	9087 ▪ Total financial loss of \$477,661,464
Outdoor Fires	4384	4631
Structure Fires	3504	3287
Vehicle Fires	1251	1364
Person Fires	23	43
Injuries	180 ▪ 69% in Structure Fires	212 ▪ 76% in Structure Fires
Deaths	59 ▪ 61% in Structure Fires	86 ▪ 60% in Structure Fires
Top Sources of Ignition in Structure Fires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cooking Equipment ▪ Smoker's Materials and Open Flames 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cooking Equipment ▪ Smoker's Materials and Open Flames
Structure Fires in the Kitchen	24%	24%
Structure Fires in the Bedroom	13%	17%
Smoke Alarm Activated	42%	42%
Smoke Alarm Not Activated	10%	9%
No Smoke Alarm Installed	11%	10%



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OFC Initiatives—2023

Training standards—**history and status**

- 2022 UBCM Convention—presentation
- September 2022—training materials released
- Fall 2022—webinars
- Winter 2022—funding
- January 2023—curriculum released
- Spring 2023—additional webinars
- Next steps

Fire services training and equipment—**funding**

- CEPF—volunteer and composite fire departments equipment and training stream
- Supports the 110+ volunteer and composite fire departments
- Local governments, First Nations, improvement districts and legally incorporated society-run fire departments are eligible
- Purchase of new and/or replacement equipment for training
- October 20, 2023 application deadline

Smoke alarm campaign

Why?

- Fire-related injuries and deaths have been increasing
- Most fires happen in the home
- Top causes of injury and death:
 - smoker's materials
 - cooking equipment
- Children and older adults 65+ are at highest risk
- This risk can be reduced by installing working smoke alarms

FireSafe—*Ignite awareness, extinguish fires*

2023

- **4-week social marketing campaign in fall 2023**
 - raise awareness, transform attitudes, ultimately change behavior
 - mixed-media, social marketing approach to reach all British Columbians (radio, television, social media, buses, etc.)

FireSafe—cont.

2024

- 4-week social marketing campaign in spring 2024
- Engage with Indigenous communities, senior officials, and fire departments
- Check smoke alarm status and provide fire safety education

Community Fire-risk Reduction Dashboard

- Geospatial pilot project
- Partnership between the OFC and Statistics Canada
- Visually represents spatial patterns of population fire-risk
- Identifies linkages between risk factors and fire incidence rates—areas in communities at greatest risk

Why?

- To identify neighbourhoods for fire prevention programs, e.g., is informing the smoke alarm campaign

Live-fire training

- Support local governments and First Nations fire departments by providing access to regional joint live-fire training
- Fund building of permanent Class B live fire training sites in rural areas across the province
- August 9, 2023—call for proposals
- September 28—application deadline

Why?

- Many communities do not have access to training for fire services that are within a cost-effective travel distance of training facilities

Volunteer fire services survey

- Survey—June 30 to July 31, 2023
- 586 responses
- Questions focused on emergency operations, training, recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters
- Volunteer or composite fire department chiefs, or local government representatives responsible for volunteer or composite fire departments, and volunteer firefighters
- Two main issues—recruitment, retention

Why?

- Insight into operational status and capabilities of volunteer and composite fire departments

Volunteer fire services survey—responses

Region/# of Submissions	Submission Percentage
Northeast/90	15.40%
Northwest/42	7.20%
Central/126	21.50%
Southeast/108	18.40%
Southwest/73	12.50%
Vancouver Island Coastal/147	25.10%

Volunteer fire services survey—next steps

Identify issues

- Understand provincial versus regional challenges and successes
- Identify solvable problems
- Connect with fire services partners to prioritize issues

Report (analysis and recommendations)—TBC

Compare data

- Share survey results with the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs (national data)



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Fire Safety Act—Update

Fire Safety Act—single standard of fire safety

- **2015**—decision to replace the *Fire Services Act* with the *Fire Safety Act* (FSA)
- **2016**—FSA receives royal assent; not brought into force
- **2018 to 2022**—single standard of fire safety introduced; addition of risk-based compliance monitoring to regional district responsibilities
- **2022 to 2023**—Single Standard of Fire Safety Working Group formed to explore options for bringing the FSA into force
- **2023 (summer)**—updated direction to bring the FSA into force as enacted in 2016, i.e., no amendment to require risk-based compliance monitoring of public buildings in regional districts

Fire Safety Act—rationale

- *Fire Safety Act* (FSA) is the modernized replacement for the *Fire Services Act*
- Features include:
 - implementation of risk-based compliance monitoring system(s) to identify higher-risk buildings in municipalities
 - administrative penalty system to incentivize owner compliance
 - more efficient enforcement of the fire legislation and codes
- FSA provides needed enforcement tools to ensure owner/occupier compliance with fire codes and fire safety legislation

Fire Safety Act—key objectives

Take enforcement out of the court system and into an administrative enforcement model by:

- clarifying who may issue corrective orders, when they may be issued, and for what they may be issued
- developing an administrative monetary penalty scheme
- creating an internal administrative review (appeal) process for orders and for monetary penalties.
- allowing local governments and the Province to take immediate and effective action for owners who refuse to comply with the legislation

Clarify the role and responsibilities of the OFC related to building inspections and fire investigations by eliminating the local assistant to the fire commissioner (LAFC) system

Clarify the role and responsibilities of local governments related to primary delivery of fire prevention services

Fire Safety Act—main points

- General support for a single standard of fire safety
- Main issue:
 - Expertise, capacity, funding needed for regional districts to meet the requirement to designate inspectors and investigators

Fire Safety Act—next steps

- OFC will continue to work with the FSA Fire Chiefs' Association of BC Working Group on the operational documents required to implement the FSA
- OFC, UBCM, regional districts, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs will continue to collaborate and explore options for addressing outstanding concerns in order to bring the FSA into force
- Options will address the expertise, capacity and funding issues raised by regional districts
- Immediate next step is to “ground truth” the number of inspectable properties in a regional district and assess the resource requirements

Key messages

- Prevention is our primary focus
- Partnerships and collaboration are fundamental to our work
- The OFC is committed to continuous improvement
- Communication is key



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Questions?

OFC@gov.bc.ca