



# The Effects of Hoarding on Fire Safety

Office of the Fire Marshal

# Effects of Hoarding

-Hoarding can often take place where we least expect it, with family, friends and neighbours often being unaware.

-Each year fire officials in Nova Scotia are called to attend locations where hoarding is taking place.



Note: all of the photos in this presentation are from actual cases.

# Effects of Hoarding

Sometimes they have an opportunity to address the concerns before fire strikes.

Sometimes they do not and the results can be fatal!



# Overview

- Fire and life safety concerns;
- Notification of appropriate fire officials;
- Powers under the Fire Safety Act;
- Actions and outcomes.

# Fire Safety Concerns

- Increased structural load;
- Increased fire load;
- Obstruction of means of egress;
- Effects on heating and cooking appliances;
- Effects on the electrical system.

# Structural Load

- Most residential occupancies are designed to accept a “live” load of not more than 50 lbs. / sq.ft.
- An above average amount of storage can stress floors and walls to a potential collapse.
- This is particularly the case when the storage includes books and papers.
- During fire conditions, this hazard is increased with the weight of water and firefighters.



# Fire Loading

-The volume of combustibles can often greatly exceed the expected fire load usually found in residential environments.

-As the usual orientation is loose and disorganized, the material is often situated to allow for a high amount of surface area allowing for fast moving, hot fire conditions.

-Occasionally flammable or combustible liquids are present.



# Means of Egress

- Floor areas that become covered with storage often do not provide adequate paths of travel to exits.
- During fire conditions, visibility can be diminished. This situation combined with obstructions throughout the space can easily hamper evacuation for occupants.



# Heating and Cooking Appliances

- Storage can cover heating outlets or elements, causing overheating and potential ignition of the combustibles.
- Storage located on top of cooking appliances can easily ignite if the appliance is accidentally turned on.
- Combustible storage located on or adjacent to heating appliances is a serious fire risk.



# Electrical hazards

- Electrical devices can get covered so as to be damaged or unable to cool off.
- Power cords can become damaged, frayed or overheat due to improper storage on them.
- Excessive combustibles located around or near outlets, fixtures or devices presents an immediate fuel source in the event of a failure.



# Notification

- If there is a fire safety hazard or risk;
- Contact a fire official;
- Municipal Fire Inspector,
- Deputy Fire Marshal,
- Local Assistant (Fire Chief)

# Powers under the FSA

- Entry and Inspection
- Orders to take Action
- Orders to Vacate
- Right of Appeal

# Entry

- Right of Entry at a reasonable time
- Dwelling unit limitations, require consent of owner (tenant)
- Can obtain a Warrant for Entry without notice to owner if;
- Reasonable grounds, denied or obstructed.

# Inspection

- Identify and explain purpose of visit;
- Take whatever equipment needed;
- Take anyone necessary to assist;
- Close or prohibit entry until completed;
- Examine, collect, operate, photograph, reasonable inquiries;
- Offense to fail to comply, give false statements, obstruct or interfere.

# Order to Take Action

- May direct the owner to:
- Remedy a condition;
- Carry out repairs;
- Remove any material posing a risk;
- Discontinue an activity or practice;
- Provide confirmation or information;
- Require an electrical inspection.

# Order to Vacate

- If there is a significant risk that a fire will occur or;
- A likelihood that a person will be killed or injured if a fire does occur,
- With the approval of the Fire Marshal, order the property vacated.

# Order to Vacate

- Cause the land to be close immediately or at a later time;
- Cause persons to be removed;
- Order that the premises remain closed and vacated until corrective actions are completed.

# Appeal Process

- Affected persons can appeal to the Fire Marshal or UARB within 15 days in writing;
- An Order to Take Action;
- An Order to Vacate that is not immediate.
- Immediate OTV's cannot be appealed. (OTV's require the Fire Marshal's approval.)

# Outcomes

- In many cases involving hoarding, an Order to Vacate is required in order to address the immediate risk.
- Fire Officials working in conjunction with other public support groups make every effort to address any immediate needs until corrections can be undertaken.

# Outcomes

- Hoarding not only puts occupants at risk from fire, but places first responders at risk as well.
- Although fire officials have the “tools” to address the immediate risk, a softer, more understanding approach would be preferred.

# Questions?

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