



Welcome to Your New Fire Alarm System

Life Safety Upgrade

In 2009, the City responded to the concern related to fires in older wood-frame residential buildings by reviewing the fire and life safety in more than 400 multi-unit wood frame residential buildings located in the City of North Vancouver. In February 2011, City Council endorsed the recommendation to upgrade the fire alarm systems in 325 buildings as a cost-effective means of detecting a fire, alerting building residents and providing a signal to the Fire Department.

Please be advised that the fire alarm system within the building you currently reside in has now been upgraded and the purpose of this handout is to introduce you to how the fire alarm system operates.

Fire Alarm System

In addition to the features that your old fire alarm provided, such as manual pull stations and bells in the hallways, your new fire alarm system includes automatic smoke and heat detectors that will activate the fire alarm system immediately if smoke or fire is detected. It is also designed to ensure that the fire alarm can be heard in all parts of the building, including bedrooms. Another important upgrade is that your new fire alarm immediately provides a signal to the fire department through a 24hr monitoring station. These new features are designed to provide an earlier warning to residents and timely notification to firefighters so that residents can evacuate safely and fire losses can be minimized.

Pull Stations



Pull stations are typically located at the exit doors from each floor level and when activated will sound the bells and send a signal to the Fire Department through the monitoring station.



Smoke Detectors



Smoke detectors are part of the fire alarm system and are typically installed in common hallways and at the top of the exit stairs. When smoke is detected, the smoke detector will activate the fire alarm system, sound the bells and send a signal to the Fire Department through the monitoring station.

***TIP** – If you burn something in your kitchen, do not open the door into the corridor. This will vent the smoke into the hallway and may activate the building’s fire alarm system. Open some windows to vent the smoke to the exterior.*

Heat Detectors



Heat detectors are part of the fire alarm system and are installed in each dwelling unit as well as other locations throughout the building such as storage, mechanical and electrical rooms. In suite heat detectors provide early warning to all building residents when a fire is detected and the occupant of that unit is not home or unable to respond. When the temperature within the heat detector reaches a pre-determined temperature, the heat detector will activate the fire alarm system, sound the bells and send a signal to the Fire Department through the monitoring station.

***TIP** – The heat required to activate a heat detector is typically 135 degrees F. This is well above any normal activity that may occur within a suite and accidental activation is unlikely.*

Audibility



In many of these older buildings, the audibility of the fire alarm may not have been compliant with current standards which require that the audibility inside each bedroom with the door closed be a minimum of 75 decibels.

In most cases bells will be used in common areas while buzzers will be used in the suite and/or bedroom to reach the required sound level which will assist in notifying occupants that the fire alarm system has been activated.

Some in-suite buzzers are supplied with a silence button that allows an individual to silence their own buzzer for a period of 10 minutes, at which time if the fire alarm system has not been acknowledged, the in-suite buzzer will re-activate.

***TIP** - Other fire alarm systems are designed to automatically silence the in-suite buzzers after a few minutes. Common area bells will still be ringing, if you hear them, you must still evacuate the building.*

Monitoring

The fire alarm system in your building is required to be connected to a monitoring station that will automatically advise the North Vancouver City Fire Department upon activation of the fire alarm system. This will ensure that the Fire Department is notified promptly of a potential emergency in your building.

***TIP** - Once you have exited the building safely, it is still a good idea to call 911 to make sure that the Fire Department received the signal and is on its way. This will also provide you with the opportunity to give additional information that will be relayed to responding firefighters*

Smoke Alarms



Smoke alarms are NOT part of the fire alarm system, and are local alarms only. The smoke alarm's job is to detect small fires and advise occupants of the potential of a fire. If the occupants are home, action can be taken to either extinguish the fire or notify the other residents by pulling a pull station. If occupants are not home and there is a fire, the fire grows until the heat detector is activated at which time the fire alarm system will sound.

***TIP** – Smoke alarms save lives, and are required by the code to be left in place, tested monthly and maintained. Please remember to push the test button every month, vacuum the smoke alarm several times a year and if battery operated, change the batteries at least once a year.*

***TIP** – If you are having nuisance alarms as a result of cooking or steam from showers etc. you may want to investigate the type of smoke alarm you have and the location it is installed.*

Fire Safety Planning



As part of the Life Safety Upgrade, the building is required to produce an updated Fire Safety Plan. A well designed fire safety plan coupled with training by supervisory staff will help to ensure the following:

- Assist fire fighters with the layout and hazards associated with a building;
- Increase the speed of evacuation of occupants during a fire; and
- Indicate if there are any special requirements to assist occupants in evacuating.

An important aspect of the Fire Safety Plan is the 'Instructions to Occupants' that are typically posted by the elevator. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these in order that you may understand what actions to take if there were a fire in your building.