



NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Community Risk Reduction Division

1593 Four Mile Creek Road, PO Box 100, Virgil, ON L0S 1T0

Phone: 905-468-3266

Fax: 905-468-1722

Dear Short-Term Rental Owner or Operator

As the owner/operator of a Short-Term Rental (STR), it is not only important that you consider the safety of your guests, but it is also your legal responsibility as required by the Ontario Fire Code, O. Reg 213/07, as amended. Whether you rent out a room, a suite, or an entire home, you are considered a landlord, and with that title comes a great deal of responsibility described within the Ontario Fire Code and Short-Term Rental Bylaw 2025-032, as amended.

We, at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire and Emergency Services, have taken the opportunity to produce a comprehensive document outlining all of the requirements identified within the Ontario Fire Code and the Town's Short-Term Rental Bylaw 2025-032, to better assist owners and operators with understanding these requirements.

When guests enter your property excited to enjoy their vacation or spend time in the area, fire safety is likely one of the last things on their minds. Many guests expect the property they are renting is safe and that the owner has done their due diligence to ensure this. By reviewing this document, understanding its contents and applying the requirements laid out within it, you as the landlord will help ensure that your property is not only fire safe but, more importantly, that your guests are safe. The requirements identified within this guide will also assist in protecting you as an owner or operator in an emergency.

The Short-Term Rental Bylaw 2025-032 includes provisions for the Fire Department to inspect STR properties on a two-year basis. The need for the midpoint inspection during an STR license period became apparent during our renewal inspections in 2019 and 2020, where multiple infractions to the fire code were continually being discovered. We believe this midpoint inspection will support the safety of your guests.

Should you have any questions regarding the attached information, please do not hesitate to contact us within the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire and Emergency Services, Community Risk Reduction Division.

Sincerely,

Jay Plato
Fire Chief & CEMC

Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services

Short Term Rental Fire Safety Information Package



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Smoke Alarms:

- Smoke alarms must be installed on every level of the home (outside all sleeping areas on levels with bedrooms).
- Smoke alarms must meet the appropriate Canadian standards and be installed as per the manufacturer's specifications.
- Smoke alarms expire and must be replaced after 10 years or as noted by the manufacturer.
- If a smoke alarm is required to be replaced, it must be replaced with the same type of alarm (i.e. battery or hardwired). This means hardwired alarms cannot be replaced with battery-operated alarms.
- Battery-operated smoke alarms must have the battery replaced on an annual basis, at minimum.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms:

- Carbon monoxide alarms must be installed on every level of the home (outside all sleeping areas on levels with bedrooms) for a home that contains a fuel-burning appliance, a fireplace, or an attached garage.
- Carbon monoxide alarms must meet the appropriate Canadian standards and be installed as per the manufacturer's specifications.
- Carbon monoxide alarms expire and must be replaced before their expiration date, as noted by the manufacturer.
- Battery-operated carbon monoxide alarms must have the battery replaced on an annual basis, at minimum.



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Alarm Testing and Documentation:

- The Ontario Fire Code requires that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are tested annually and after every tenancy change, regardless of the length of stay.
- Records are to be kept indicating the alarms were tested. This means that after your guests leave the property, you are required to test all alarms and keep a written record of the testing before the next tenants rent the property or room on a short-term or long-term basis.
- If the property is unoccupied for 10 days or longer, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms must be tested and recorded before guests arrive.
- All testing and maintenance records must be kept for no less than two (2) years and must be available upon request by the fire department.

Fire Extinguishers:

- Fire extinguishers must be installed on every level of the home and must have a minimum rating of 2A-10BC.
- Fire extinguishers must be installed/hung in a clear and accessible location, not inside closets or cabinets.
- All fire extinguishers must be inspected and tagged by a service provider on an annual basis, **including new extinguishers**.
- Fire extinguishers are to be inspected with their tags signed monthly by the person completing the inspection. Property owners are permitted to complete monthly inspections themselves.
- The required monthly check on an extinguisher must consist of:
 - Checking that the extinguisher gauge is in the "green;"
 - The hose and handle are not damaged; and,
 - The canister is free of cracks/dents.

Electrical Safety:

- Extension cords must be limited to temporary use only. If an electrical device requires a permanent electrical connection, a licensed electrician must install a plug.
- Extension cords are not to be used under carpets or across walkways.
- Electrical fuse or breaker panels must be properly labelled with all required covers in place.
- No plug expanders should be used to connect multiple devices to a single outlet. Where numerous devices require an electrical connection, a power strip with surge protection must be used (limit of 1 high-wattage appliance per outlet).



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Furnaces/HVAC/Water Heaters/Fire Places:

- Furnaces, gas water heaters, and gas fireplaces must be serviced/inspected annually by a licensed service provider. Proof of furnace and gas fireplace inspections in the form of an invoice must be available upon request.
- The furnace filter must be changed on an annual basis, at minimum.
- No combustible items are to be stored within 2 meters (6 feet) of a furnace or hot water tank.
- Fireplace chimneys must be inspected and cleaned annually (if the fireplace is in use).
- If wood-burning fireplaces are available to tenants for use, instructions for safe operation must be permanently posted.
- If gas or wood-burning fireplaces are in the rented space but are not for tenant use, a sign must be permanently mounted near the fireplace indicating that it is out of service and not to be used.

General Fire Safety:

- Bedrooms located in a basement must be equipped with an egress-style window with a minimum 0.35 sq/m unobstructed area and no dimension less than 328mm, or a separate exit leading directly outside from the basement.
- Portable space heaters must be connected directly to electrical outlets and maintain a clear space of 1 meter (3 feet) from all combustible items.
- Dryer lint traps and exhaust pipes are to be clean and free of lint after each use.
- All escape routes are to be clear of any obstructions at all times.
- Any door with an automatic door closure must ensure that the door properly closes and latches.
- Doors with automatic door closures must not be wedged open.
- Any required exit signs must be illuminated while the building is occupied (if applicable).
- Sprinkler systems must be tested and inspected annually by a licensed service provider (if applicable).
- Fire alarm systems must be tested and inspected annually by a licensed service provider (if applicable). Note: A fire alarm system and residential smoke and carbon monoxide alarm system are not the same thing. If you are unsure which you have, please contact the fire department for assistance.
- Rules must be established for smokers. If you permit smoking on your property, large, sturdy ashtrays are to be used that cannot be easily tipped over. Ashtrays should be emptied regularly into a metal container, not a garbage can.



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Candle Fire Safety:

- Candle use is never recommended in Short-Term Rentals. Consider using alternative flameless candles, if required.
- If candles are used, they must be placed in a sturdy glass container. Flames are to be 1" below the top edge of the container.
- Never place a candle near combustible materials.

Outdoor Fire Pits/Open Air Burning

- Open-air burning is not permitted in Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- It is highly recommended that guests are not given access to outdoor fire pits and that the use of existing fire pits is prohibited by the property owner.
- If a complaint about an open-air burn is received, a cost recovery fee for the response of the Fire Department of \$878.00/apparatus/hour will be charged to the property owner as per the Council-approved 2025 Fee Schedule.



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Ontario Fire Code Considerations

The Ontario Fire Code has very specific requirements for residential dwellings used as Short-Term Rentals. Specific requirements can be enforced if the number of people sleeping in the home reaches 11 people or more. Some of those specific requirements may include installing fire alarm systems, secondary exits, emergency lighting, exit signs and fire separations, including rated doors and closures.

For further information regarding the Ontario Fire Code's application to your property, please contact the Niagara-on-the-Lake Fire & Emergency Services by phone at **905-468-3266** or by email at **firedepartment@notl.com**.

Attached to this document, you will find a smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm information sheet that can be completed and left with your guests. An emergency contact number must be left with the guests should they encounter issues with the smoke or carbon monoxide alarms in the home. A smoke and carbon monoxide alarm checklist has been provided for use after each change in tenancy. Lastly, instruction on how to properly use a fire extinguisher has also been provided.

Appendices

Appendix A: Smoke and carbon monoxide alarm information sheet.

Appendix B: Smoke and carbon monoxide maintenance checklist.

Appendix C: Fire Extinguishers Instructions

Appendix A

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Information Sheet

Landlord/Host Emergency Contact Number: _____

Smoke Alarms:

The Ontario Fire Code mandates that every home have working smoke alarms installed and maintained on all levels of a home and outside all sleeping areas. Smoke alarms are intended to give the residents an early warning of a fire emergency, ensuring they have enough time to escape safely. Your landlord/host is responsible for installing smoke alarms and maintaining them in working condition. This includes testing, maintaining, and replacing as required. Your landlord/host must also repair or replace any alarm that is not operating as intended.

This home has been provided with smoke alarm(s) that are:

- Battery-operated** **Hard-wired**

The number of smoke alarms in the home: _____

If the smoke alarms activate, leave the home immediately via the nearest exit and call 911 from outside the home. If the alarms are chirping intermittently, the alarm may have a low battery, be expired, or require maintenance. If there is no emergency and no signs of smoke or fire, do not call 911 for a chirping smoke alarm. Contact your landlord/host at the number listed above. They are responsible for ensuring the smoke alarms are in working order at all times in the home.

Carbon Monoxide Alarms:

The Ontario Fire Code mandates that every home with a fuel-burning appliance, fuel-burning fireplace or an attached garage have a carbon monoxide alarm outside all sleeping areas **and, as of Jan. 1, 2026, on every level of the home**. Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas that can only be detected by a working carbon monoxide alarm.

This home has been provided with carbon monoxide alarm(s) that are:

- Battery-operated** **Hard-wired** **Plug-in**

The number of carbon monoxide alarms in the home: _____

If the carbon monoxide alarm activates, evacuate the residence immediately and call 911 from outside the home. If the carbon monoxide alarm is chirping intermittently, contact the landlord/host at the number listed above to have the alarm serviced.

Disabling a Smoke Alarm or Carbon Monoxide Alarm is a Provincial Offence. Tenants and Landlords may be subject to fines or other charges/legal proceedings if convicted.

Appendix B

Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Maintenance Checklist

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| ADDRESS OF PROPERTY | |
| DATE | |
| OWNERS NAME | |
| TYPE OF ALARM | <input type="checkbox"/> Smoke Alarm <input type="checkbox"/> Carbon Monoxide Alarm <input type="checkbox"/> Combination Smoke/CO Alarm |
| TYPE OF ALARM | <input type="checkbox"/> Battery <input type="checkbox"/> Hardwired <input type="checkbox"/> Hardwired & Interconnected |

An alarm has been tested as a result of:

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Routine test and maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Annual test and maintenance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Change of tenancy | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Change of battery | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Change to electrical circuitry | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Complaint | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (e.g. extended absence) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

| Smoke Alarm(s) | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Smoke alarm(s) is securely fastened to the wall or ceiling | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Smoke alarm(s) is positioned adjacent to sleeping areas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Smoke alarm(s) is installed on every level of the home | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Smoke alarm(s) is clean, not painted, and vent holes are clear | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Smoke alarm(s) battery has been replaced within the last year | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Smoke alarm(s) audible signal is clear when the test button is operated | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Smoke alarm(s) is within the manufacturer's expiry date | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carbon Monoxide Alarm(s) | YES | NO |
| Carbon Monoxide alarm(s) is securely fastened to the wall or ceiling | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carbon Monoxide alarm(s) is positioned adjacent to sleeping areas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carbon Monoxide alarm(s) is installed on every level of the home | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carbon Monoxide alarm(s) is clean, not painted, and vent holes are clear | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carbon Monoxide alarm(s) battery has been replaced within the last year | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carbon Monoxide alarm(s) audible signal is clear when the test button is operated | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Carbon Monoxide alarm(s) is within the manufacturer's expiry date | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Owners Signature:

Date: