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Campbell River fire statistics on the rise, contrary to national trend

While the number of structure fires across Canada each year has been declining, in Campbell River that number is growing.

Going against the national trend, Campbell River has seen a rise in the number of structure fires in recent years, with a 28 per cent increase in 2019.

That puts extra urgency on getting the word out during this year's Fire Prevention Week about how people can plan to protect themselves in the event of a fire, according to fire chief Thomas Doherty.

The Campbell River Fire Department is teaming up with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) — the official sponsor of Fire Prevention Week for more than 90 years — to promote this year's campaign, ***Not Every Hero Wears a Cape. Plan and Practice Your Escape!***

"The campaign works to educate everyone about the small but important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe," Doherty said.

The most recent available data from Statistics Canada show that the number of structure fires declined by 26 per cent between 2005 and 2014. Residential fires consistently account for roughly six of every 10 structural fires during that period – and cooking equipment and smokers' material caused approximately six of every 10 residential fires.

"These numbers show that home fires continue to pose a significant threat to safety," said Lorraine Carli, NFPA's vice president of outreach and advocacy. *"In a typical home fire, you may have as little as one to two minutes to escape safely from the time the smoke alarm sounds. Escape planning and practice can help you make the most of the time you have, giving everyone enough time to get out."*

While NFPA and the Campbell River Fire Department are focusing on home fires, these messages apply to virtually any location.

"Situational awareness is a skill people need to use wherever they go," Doherty added. *"No matter where you are, look for available exits. If the alarm system sounds, take it seriously and exit the building immediately."*

Throughout the month of October, members of the Campbell River Fire Department will visit local Grade 3 classes to introduce the fire safety house program, reinforcing Fire Prevention Week information.

A fire burn and prevention contest, with an opportunity for elementary students to win prizes, is hosted by the BC Fire Training Officers Association, BC Professional Fire Fighters' Burn Fund, Fire Chiefs' Association of BC, Fire Prevention Officers' Association of BC, First Nations' Emergency Services Society, FortisBC and Office of the Fire Commissioner. Find details, including deadlines, rules and prizes at www.gov.bc.ca/FireSafety/FirePreventionWeek.

For more information on Fire Prevention Week and fire safety, visit www.nfpa.org/fpw.

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