



**Attention News Editors:**

## **Insurance brokers to help Surrey homeowners get smoke alarms**

VANCOUVER – August 31, 2009 – Most Surrey home fires could have been prevented with a working smoke detector, an alarming fact that has Surrey insurance brokers talking to homeowners about what they can do to protect their most valuable assets - their lives and their homes.

The Insurance Brokers Association of BC, which serves as the voice of the general insurance brokerage industry, has partnered with Surrey Fire Service to raise the hot topic of fire safety in a new initiative called the HomeSafe Program. There are currently 63 IBABC-member insurance brokerages in Surrey.

“The single detached residential dwelling is one of the only types of buildings that don’t require regular safety inspections, putting residents at risk if they don’t have a smoke alarm,” said Lorne Perry, President of IBABC and a broker based in Port Moody.

HomeSafe is an initiative of the Surrey Fire Service that aims to reduce the risk of residential home fires. The majority of home fires take place in the kitchen, the result of flying oil grease or from leaving cooking unattended. In a majority of these fires, seniors and children under the age of five are twice more likely to die or be injured than any other age group.

“The HomeSafe Program aims at educating homeowners about fire safety in the home and insurance brokers are usually the first point of contact with homeowners about the safety and protection of their homes,” said Gord Anderson, Deputy Chief for Surrey Fire Service.

“House fires are tragedies that can easily be prevented with a smoke alarm,” said Perry.

“Homeowners should talk to their insurance brokers about fire safety and prevention, and make a request to the Surrey Fire Service to receive a free home safety inspection.”

Upon request from the resident, the fire service will run through a safety checklist and discuss every-day fire hazards such as improper use of extension cords, etc., as well as provide and install, free of charge, a working smoke alarm in the event that there isn't one.

## **About IBABC**

The Insurance Brokers Association of B.C. serves as the voice of the general insurance brokerage industry and promotes its members as the premier distributors of insurance products and services in British Columbia. IBABC is the primary provider of pre-licensing and continuing professional education for the general insurance brokers in B.C. IBABC represents the interests of the public and its member brokers to government and to industry stakeholders.

IBABC represents in excess of 700 property and casualty insurance brokerages that in turn employ more than 8,000 people in approximately 140 B.C. communities. Member offices are the consumer's choice for the vast majority of all property and casualty insurance policies and premiums written in the province. Consumer satisfaction with their insurance brokers is high. In survey after survey, consumers report that they value their brokers' knowledge, professional advice, unbiased review of their needs and coverage options, and service and advocacy in the event of a claim. IBABC member brokerages have an average of 13 staff members and therefore fit within the small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) category.

## **Contact Information**

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## Fact Sheet

- The single detached residential house is the most common building in Surrey to become involved in a fire.
- The highest percentage of residential fires result from cooking; for example, from unattended food or a cooking oil.
- In the majority of those fires, there was no functioning smoke alarm in place.
- Children under the age of five and seniors are twice more likely to be injured or die in a house fire than any other age group. Consequently, these groups will receive priority in fire inspection requests.
- Residential homes are not subjected to the same requirement for regular fire safety inspections as most other buildings.
- Requests for home safety inspections can be put through the insurance broker or phoned/emailed/faxed to the Fire Prevention Office. For more information or to receive complimentary Home Fire Safety inspection, please call 604-543-6780 or visit us online at [www.fire.surrey.ca](http://www.fire.surrey.ca).
- To find out more about fire safety or other home-related hazards, visit [www.bestinsurance.ca](http://www.bestinsurance.ca). To locate a broker near you visit: [http://www.ibabc.org/consum/consum\\_select\\_finder.asp](http://www.ibabc.org/consum/consum_select_finder.asp)



## **Tips for preventing a fire in the home:**

- Do not leave cooking unattended, even just to leave the room for a few seconds. Turn off the stove or oven until you return.
- Have a flat cookie sheet or pot lid readily available in the event of a fire, which can appear quickly when using cooking oil.
- If fire appears on the stove, place the lid or cookie sheet over the pan to suffocate the flame. Turn off the stove and let it cool down. Do not try to move the pan. Do not pour water over the fire as the steam may cause burn damage or grease may spread the fire onto the walls, countertops, or other flammable objects nearby.
- Inspect your electrical system or have a professional inspect it for you.
- Avoid smoking cigarettes when you are tired. Leaving a cigarette unattended is extremely dangerous.
- Keep flammable objects away from space heaters and do not use extension cords for air conditioners.
- Be wary of candles and open flames. They could fall or tip over by wind, children, or pets. If leaving the room, blow out the candle.
- Talk to your children about fire safety in the home, such as not playing with lighters or matches, not to turn on or operate an oven or stove without an adult.
- Inspect your smoke alarm. Batteries should be changed annually and alarms tested every month. Your chances of surviving and preventing a fire are increased magnificently with a working smoke alarm and they have saved countless lives.
- Unplug all electrics before you go to bed.

For more tips about home safety, visit [www.bestinsurance.ca](http://www.bestinsurance.ca) or contact your insurance broker.