

FIRE IN THE SKY



Fire safety in high buildings

General guide for high buildings

Each building is unique so you should review the approved Fire Safety Plan designed for your building.

What is a high building?

The Ontario Building Code defines high buildings as those seven storeys or more in building height.

High building fire safety concerns

High buildings are designed to be fire-safe. But, because they may contain large numbers of people, and because of the building's tremendous size, emergency response is difficult and the potential for major incidents is great.

Due to equipment limitations, firefighters cannot rescue you from any balcony or window above the seventh floor. Also, rooftop helicopter rescue is dangerous. Firefighters must use interior firefighting and rescue tactics.

How am I, as an occupant, protected from fire?

Fire-resistant construction

High buildings are designed to be more fire-safe than the average single-family dwelling. Floors and ceilings are constructed with fire-resistant materials and are separated into fire compartments. The compartments act as a barrier.

Fire alarm system

High buildings contain a fire alarm system designed to alert occupants when activated.

Types of fire alarm devices include smoke detectors, thermal detectors and sprinkler flow switches.



If you discover a fire, immediately activate the red manual pull station next to the stairwell and leave the floor. This will identify the specific location at the lobby alarm panel to responding firefighters. Your fire alarm system is not connected to the Fire Services. You must call 9-1-1. Make sure you give your name, the correct address and the location of the fire.

Stairway fire escapes



High buildings are designed with interior fire-separated stairwell shafts. Signs should be posted within the stairwell indicating which floor level you are on, and also indicating the nearest cross over to the alternate stairwell. Keep stairwell doors closed at all times to preserve the safety of these escape stairs.

Interior water supplies

In addition, high buildings contain a standpipe system, which is an interior water supply system of fire hose cabinets on each floor for use by firefighters. Most buildings also have portable fire extinguishers in each of these cabinets.

What actions must I take in a fire?

During a fire emergency, never attempt to leave the building by the elevator. Heat can activate elevator call buttons, sending the elevator to the fire floor, where dense smoke may interfere with the elevator's light-sensitive eye and prevent the door from closing.

Also, you may become trapped in the elevator if water from firefighting operations creates a power failure. In addition, firefighters require designated elevators to carry them and their equipment to the floor below the fire.

In reacting to a fire in a high building, you must decide on two options:

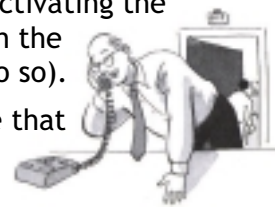
Do I leave the building to safety?

or

Is it safer to stay where I am?

What steps do I take if there is a fire in my apartment or office?

- Alert everyone in your apartment or office. Leave immediately. Close, but don't lock, the door behind you.
- Sound the fire alarm by activating the red manual pull station on the fire floor (when safe to do so).
- Call 9-1-1. Never assume that someone else has already done so. Make sure you give your name, the correct address and the location of the fire.
- Use the exit stairwells. Don't use elevators. Don't return until the firefighters have declared the apartment/office safe.



What steps do I take if I hear the fire alarm?

If you choose to leave the building:

- Do it as soon as possible.
- Before opening any door, feel the door handle and the door itself, starting from the bottom, moving to the top. If the door is not hot, open it slightly.

- If you see or smell smoke, or feel or hear air pressure or a hot draft, close the door quickly.
- If the corridor is free of fire or smoke, take your keys, close the door behind you, and leave the building by the nearest exit stairwell, again closing any doors after you.
- If you encounter smoke in a stairwell, consider taking an alternate exit. If the alternate stairwell is also contaminated with smoke, return to your apartment/office.
- When you are safely outside call 9-1-1. Never assume that someone else has already done so.

If you cannot leave your apartment/office or have returned to it because of fire or heavy smoke:

- Close, but don't lock any doors to ensure possible entry by firefighters.
- Seal all cracks where smoke can enter by using wet towels or sheets.
- Move to your balcony or to the most protected room in your apartment/office.
- Partially open a window if you can. Close the window if smoke comes in.
- Keep low to the floor. Heat and toxic gases rise.
- Signal firefighters by waving a white sheet or towel.
- Wait to be rescued. Remain calm. Don't panic or jump from the building.
- Listen for instructions or information from authorized personnel (via the building communication system or loudspeaker).



TO STAY OR GO IS YOUR DECISION - PLAN YOUR DEFENCE

In case of an emergency call
Markham Fire & Emergency
Services at 9-1-1

For more information,
contact the
Fire Prevention Division at
(905) 415-7521,
or visit our website at
www.city.markham.on.ca



Information produced in this brochure is subject to change without notice. Produced by Markham Fire & Emergency Services 10/02