

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 7, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Wood Burning Awareness (BOH15026) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Matthew Lawson (905) 546-2424, Ext. 5823
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Council Direction:

At the April 1, 2015 Board of Health meeting, members requested:

- (a) That staff be directed to implement an outreach campaign respecting Residential Wood Smoke, similar to one used by Halton Region, with an update to come back to the Board of Health; and,
- (b) That staff from Public Health Services open up a discussion, to include staff from the Hamilton Fire Department, Municipal Law Enforcement, Public Health Services, and others, to discuss Residential Wood Smoke issues, focusing on urban areas, and, to report back to a future meeting of the Board of Health.

Information:***Outreach and Awareness Campaign***

A webpage respecting Residential Wood Burning similar to the one used by Halton Region was developed and can be viewed at <http://www.hamilton.ca/woodburning>. Content is consistent with Health Canada's Fact Sheet on Wood Smoke. The webpage describes:

- How wood burning contributes to air pollution,
- How wood smoke affects health,
- Who is at risk,
- How to reduce exposure and protect your family,
- What by-law regulates "open air burning" in the City of Hamilton,
- Actions to reduce air pollution from wood heating; and,
- Additional resources for more information.

An outreach campaign that will use a combination of printed media ads, radio ads, and social media messaging is being planned for winter 2015/16 that will create awareness of the health impacts associated with wood burning. The outreach campaign will direct people to the City webpage about wood burning. The funds necessary for this outreach campaign will come from the approved 2015 program operating budget.

Residential Sources of Wood Smoke

Public Health Services staff met with staff from the Hamilton Fire Department, Municipal Law Enforcement (MLE), and the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC), to discuss residential sources of wood smoke, existing regulations and by-laws related to residential wood smoke, and, any processes that exist to investigate and enforce violations.

Residential wood smoke can be considered to originate from one of two environments:

- 1) Outdoor, or, open air burning; and
- 2) Indoor wood burning (i.e., fireplaces; wood burning stoves).

Open Air Burning

Open air burning means any fire that is conducted outside a building, which includes "bonfires" in fire pits, as well as fires within chimineas. Open air burning in Hamilton is regulated by the Open Air Burning By-law (No.02-283), which is enforced by the Fire Department. The by-law does not permit any outdoor burning within the urban boundary, except if the Fire Department has carried out an inspection of the proposed site to determine whether the burn can be safely conducted without nuisance or risk to neighboring properties. Additionally, the by-law does not apply where the open air burning consists of a small, confined fire, supervised at all times, and used to cook food on a grill or a barbecue.

In 2014, the Fire Department received 1,815 complaints about open air burning, of which approximately 350 were valid and resulted in a warning letter being issued to the offending property owner. If a second offence occurs, the offending owner is billed an amount of \$463.30 as a penalty for non-compliance with the by-law. In 2014, there were a total of 8 incidences of repeat offences under the by-law that resulted in the property owner being billed.

Indoor Wood Burning

There is not a by-law in Hamilton that regulates indoor wood burning. The Ontario Environmental Protection Act allows for indoor wood burning in fireplaces and wood stoves, as long as the only fuel used is natural gas, untreated wood or manufactured fire logs. If it is suspected that a homeowner is burning fuel other than the approved fuel types, the Hamilton District Office of the MOECC is available to receive reports of suspected improper materials being burned in indoor environments and will investigate. The Hamilton District Office of the MOECC office reports that they receive fewer than 10 reports per year related to indoor burning of non-approved. MOECC can be reached locally by calling 905-541-7640.