

Microwave ovens built to take metal cookware

There are now millions of microwave ovens in Canadian households, astonishing when you think that they have only been around in any real numbers since 1975.

Convenience combined with the energy crunch means tens of thousands more Canadians will be cooking with microwave ovens next year. In some areas of Canada, like Alberta, one household in five already has a microwave.

With the boom in micro-electronics just now beginning to computerize the Canadian home, we find more and more appliances equipped with this time and labor-saving gadgetry.

Home automation means household appliances require less and less attention to operate. And this is fine, since generally speaking the consumer doesn't like pouring over operating manuals. How many Canadians carefully read the instruction book before driving a new car off the lot?

Yet we should. Certainly with microwave ovens there are some important, straightforward, operating guidelines to remember.

"When you cook with aluminum containers," says Al Heathfield, executive chef of Litton microwave systems, there are three simple rules:

1. There must be more food than metal.
2. The food must not be left enclosed in metal, or completely wrapped in foil.
3. The metal container must not touch the sides of the oven.

This last is important with the earlier microwave ovens, since contact could cause arcing between the oven wall and food container. There is no danger, nor is there any damage to the oven mechanism. However, the pinprick burn through the coating of the oven wall could lead to eventual corrosion.

John Batstone of Alcan's foil and packaging division says: "Microwave ovens are not quite goof-proof yet

but each year we see improvements and each year the new models reduce the possibility of arcing."

Food containers made out of treated paper products are also vulnerable to certain conditions in both microwave and conventional ovens. In microwave ovens they do not sufficiently shield food edges, and food scorching can take place.

Similarly this "ovenable" board container can only be used in conventional ovens below 425 degrees. Otherwise grease in foods can soak into the container and you run the risk of it burning.

Dr. Robert Decareau, a U.S. based microwave consultant, thinks two factors triggered reservations found in cookbooks about use of foil or metalware in microwave ovens; arcing and fear of shock.

"In fact you can use

metal in microwave ovens, whether foil containers, or pots, pans, skillets and so on," says Dr. Decareau.

"You just have to make sure they don't have plastic handles which will melt or break down in a microwave field, and metal handles must not be loose."

Dr. Decareau said fears that using a metal or foil container will somehow result in burning out the magnetron power tube (source of the oven's energy) are groundless.

"As long as there's food in the containers, fresh or frozen, microwave energy is mostly absorbed by the food."

Al Heathfield agrees: "In the early days using metal containers did pose a problem. But that was 20 years ago."

Aluminum foil has been used as frozen food containers for the past 25 years. It is truly universal in that it can be used not

only in all kinds of ovens but also on burners, barbecues and open flames.

In addition it can be used over and over again. When used for cooking meat in microwave ovens it also shields the outside sufficiently to allow the meat to cook evenly all the way through. This prevents scorching or crisping.

- Two other handy tips:
4. Remove foil lid from top of foil container otherwise all the microwaves will be reflected.
 5. Set the microwave oven for the combined thaw/cook cycle when cooking food still frozen. This turns the power on and off to prevent uneven cooking.

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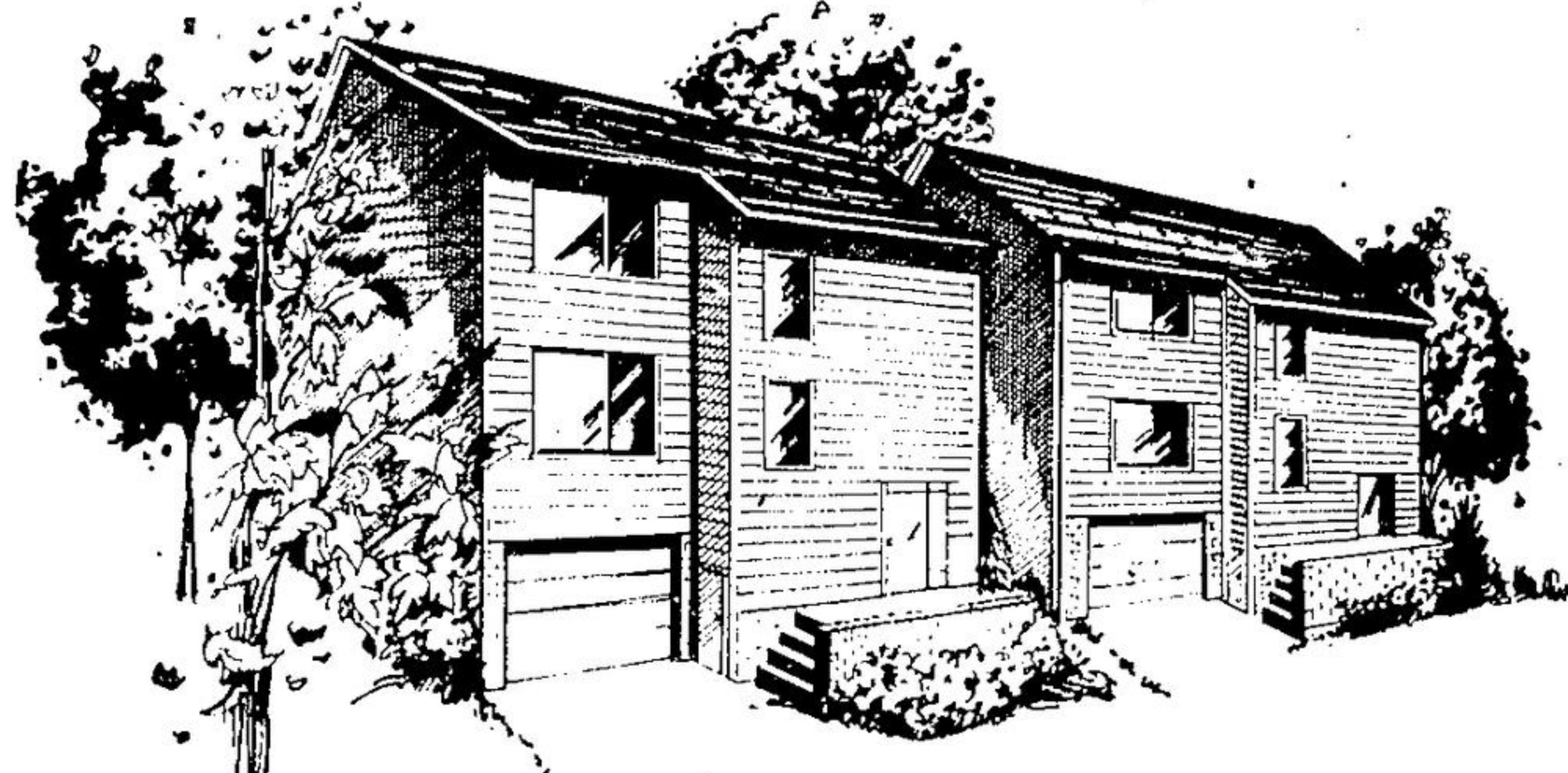
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Radar squad nabs 215 drivers

The Halton Regional Police special radar squad laid 215 charges against drivers in District 1 when it was on patrol in the area from October 10 to 17.

A spokesman for the police said 214 charges were laid under the Highway Traffic Act, and one charge was laid under the Criminal Code of Canada. The squad patrolled in Halton Hills and Milton.

Of the charges laid under the Highway Traffic Act, 207 were for speeding, and seven were for failing to obey a stop sign and seat belt infractions. The charge laid under the criminal code was for dangerous driving.

About 90 per cent of the charges were laid between 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. The speed was usually between 20 and 30 kilometres over the limit, although this went as high as 40 to 60 kilometres over the limit in the later hours of the shift.