

Have a home fire safety plan

The recent high rise apartment fire in Toronto - in which six people lost their lives - has refocused attention on the issue of fire prevention and fire safety at home.

The threat of fire is frightening for everyone, but it presents special challenges for those who live in high rise buildings.

Whether you live in a 24th floor apartment or a split level bungalow, your best defence against fire continues to be advance planning - knowing how to get out of your home. Keeping a level head in the confusion of a fire can save your life. That may be easier said than done, but by being prepared, warding off panic with rehearsed drills will be much easier.

Install smoke alarms to give yourself as much time to reach in a fire as possible. Test the alarm monthly and make sure you replace the batteries each year.

In an apartment, learn where the exits to the stairwells are located. The first objective in a fire is always to get outside (although elderly people who have difficulty walking or those who are disabled should stay inside and take the precautions outlined two paragraphs on!) Know where the exits are located and if you don't encounter smoke in the stairwells, move downward to safety. If you encounter smoke on the way down, move onto the nearest floor and seek shelter in an apartment. Don't attempt to move up in an apartment fire, as smoke rises and you may be overcome by the fumes.

If you determine that leaving the building is not an option, seal the cracks around the door of the apartment with wet sheets or towels. If you have a balcony and it is not engulfed in smoke rising up the outside of the building, move onto the balcony and close the door

behind you. By shouting or waving, signal your location to firefighters and wait for help to arrive.

Where a balcony is not available, choose the room furthest from the fire. Close the door and again seal its edges with wet towels or clothing. With another damp sheet build a tent around yourself and an open window. However, don't break the window as you may need to close it should smoke from outside the building begin to enter the room.

It is then a waiting game. Stay where you are until the firefighters inform you it is okay to leave.

If the fire originates in your apartment, leave quickly, shutting the door behind you so as to rob the flames of the air which fuels the fire. Sound the alarm and use the stairs to get to safety. Normally you should never attempt to fight a fire yourself. Under rare conditions - such as a small stove-top fire when you have the proper extinguisher - it may make sense. But the safest course of action is to direct your energies toward getting yourself and family to safety, and toward alerting the fire department.

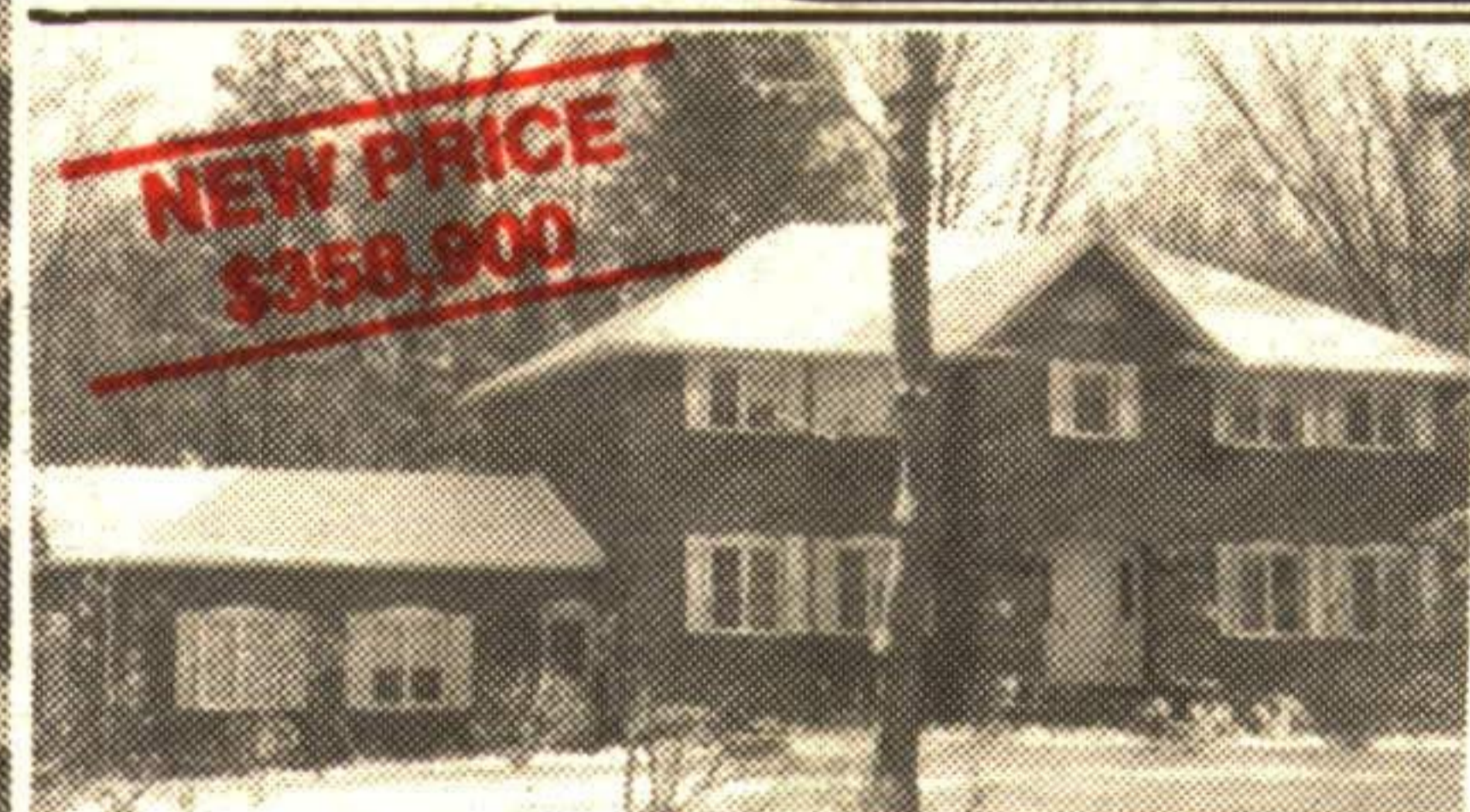
Some specific rules also apply to house fires. Hold fire drills, rehearse your evacuation routes - you should have alternatives in case the first one is blocked by fire - and establish where everyone will meet once safely outside. If you suspect someone remains in the burning building, do not go back inside. Tell fire fighters and allow them to conduct any rescue work.

For more help in planning your response in the case of a fire, contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada for an informative brochure on fire safety.

Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) represents the companies that protect your home, your car and your business.



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WALKOUT BASEMENT

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All these listed properties had free market evaluations. You can have one too! I'm just a phone call away!
 Intended to solicit properties for sale not already listed.

**Some restrictions do apply.