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"Think Fire Safety All Year Long!"

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'Get Out Alive' Family fire drill could save lives in Markham

By STEVE HOUSTON
Staff Reporter

Fire Chief Ken Beckett urges Markham residents to 'Plan to Get Out Alive'.

The Markham Fire Department in conjunction with the local McDonald's Restaurant at Hwy 7 and McCowan Rd. is taking part in the Oct. 9 Plan to Get Out Alive fire drill in Markham and across Canada.

Chief Beckett said the program is significant because it will educate local families on the importance of having an escape route should their house catch fire.

"It's something they will re-

member, something that will get them out of the house," he said.

The fire drill, scheduled for 6 p.m. next Wednesday will give children a chance to bring home the fire drill knowledge they learn at school.

Chief Beckett said his department will sound the alarm to start the drill in Markham and get people out of their homes.

"It's an excellent concept," said McDonald's owner Dick Cohen. "This joint effort will help get that general awareness out there to learn about fire safety in the home."

Mr. Cohen's staff have been handing out kits to children with fire safety pointers and graph paper to map an escape route from individual homes.

The drill will culminate in a Chief for a Day Draw and a local boy or girl will get the honors.

"It's fun for the kids. I did it at home with my children and we enjoyed figuring out how to get safely out of the house," Mr. Cohen said.

He added that this type of program isn't something McDonald's is doing to sell hamburgers. The decision for the company to participate in the original drill in Edmonton, Alta. was an easy one.

"We're not trying to talk people into anything. Everyone concerned was more than happy to participate in something like this," he noted.

Pointing out some statistics, Mr. Cohen said there was an 80 per cent public awareness of the event in Edmonton. Of the figure, 40 per cent actually participated in the evacuation drill. He thinks that if those numbers can be achieved in Markham, it will be a safer place to live.

In a release from the fire de-

partment, officials give six steps to a successful fire evacuation plan:

- At the sound of the fire alarm carefully roll out of bed, keeping low. This way you will avoid smoke and heat.
- Crawl to the door. Touch it with your hand to see if it's hot. If it is don't open it. Get out an alternate way (through a window or other exit). If the door is not hot, proceed with your escape plan.
- In the hallway, stay low to stay beneath the smoke level.
- Once outside, everybody go to a predetermined meeting place.
- Once your family has gathered, send one member to a neighbor to call the Fire Department.
- Stay at your meeting place until the Fire Department arrives to tell firefighters your family is safe, and where the fire is.

Other points of interest regarding fires are:

- Approximately one-third of all fire fatalities are children. In Canada, about 10 per cent of the population is under 15 years of age but about 25 per cent of all fire injuries and deaths occur in the 15-and-under age group.
- In Canada, the polio epidemic peaked in 1951, but even that year only one-third as many died of polio as in fires.
- It takes less than two minutes for 750 children to vacate a school during a fire drill.

To look at the fire prevention picture overall, both Dick Cohen and Fire Chief Beckett agree that it's something no person can afford to overlook; the very idea of the awareness program is to save a life that otherwise could have been lost due to ignorance.

"That's the motive for doing the whole thing," Mr. Cohen said.



OCTOBER 9
YOUR FAMILY FIRE

Seniors coming

Parkview Village, Stouffville's 124-unit apartment complex for seniors, is well on its way to completion.

In a recent interview, Whitchurch-Stouffville Fire Chief Walt Smith was asked if such a building creates fire-fighting problems for his department.

Although the Town lacks for an aerial ladder truck, Chief Smith isn't worried.

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