

Nobody home at house fire

Smoke damage took its toll at two house fires in Markham this week.

On Thursday afternoon, Markham's fire and emergency services responded to a \$200,000 blaze at 18 Carr Ct., near Raymerville Drive.

Neighbours were alerted to an emergency when they heard fire alarms ringing at the two-storey, single-family dwelling. Deputy Chief Bill Snowball said. The neighbours called the fire department. Just before fire fighters arrived, the owner of the house came home.

"This was a serious fire," Mr. Snowball said. "There was extensive smoke damage to the home."

Cooking oil left on a stove is the likely cause, he said.

When firefighters arrived at 11 Reginald Cres. at 11 p.m. Wednesday, they found two adults, both occupants of the house, standing safely on their neighbour's front lawn.

The fire started in a utility room in the basement of the two-storey, semi-detached home, Mr. Snowball said.

While the cause of the blaze has not been determined, damages are estimated at \$40,000.

No injuries were reported in either fire. Investigations continue into both.

—Joan Ransberry

Smoke alarm alert follows fatal blaze

BY JOAN RANSBERRY
Staff Writer

At least a quarter of homes in Markham and Whitchurch-Stouffville do not have working smoke alarms, according to local fire chiefs.

In the wake of Monday's tragic fire in West Lincoln that killed a pregnant woman and her seven children, Markham fire chief Don McLean and Whitchurch-Stouffville fire chief Tim Beckett are reminding residents of the importance of working smoke alarms.

"Every house in Ontario should have at least one working smoke alarm and it is recommended there be a minimum of one on each level of your home," Chief Beckett said.

"There is no excuse for not having one. This tragedy in West Lincoln could easily have occurred here if homeowners, landlords or tenants are ignorant about installing working smoke alarms."

During a recent door-to-door alarm blitz in Whitchurch-Stouffville, fire and emergency services found 25 per cent of the homes canvassed did not have working smoke alarms, Chief Beckett said.

The situation is worse in

Markham.

"The (failure) rate is higher than 25 per cent here," Chief McLean said. "It could be as simple as not putting in a battery. People are just not maintaining their smoke alarms."

Both municipalities are taking measures to protect residents.

"We're going out to look for the problem," Chief McLean said. "We're offering to help people rectify any problems with the alarms. We'll test them and give people advice as to what to do if an alarm is not working."

The Ontario Fire Code makes it mandatory to have a smoke alarm on each level with sleeping quarters.

"A fine of up to \$10,000 could be levied for those without a working smoke alarm," Chief Beckett said.

Whitchurch-Stouffville fire and emergency services has installed smoke alarms in people's homes. "If we are aware of a home without a working alarm, we will not leave without first installing one," Chief Beckett said.

Residents with any questions regarding smoke alarms can call 905-415-7521 in Markham and 905-640-9595 in Whitchurch-Stouffville.

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