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To: The Media

From: Karen Lindsay, Nanaimo Fire Rescue

**COUNCIL ADOPTS NEW FIRE PROTECTION & LIFE SAFETY BYLAW TO IMPROVE FIRE SAFETY IN THE CITY.**

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At the 2011-MAY-16 meeting, Council gave the final reading to the new Bylaw No. 7108 to regulate Fire Protection and Life Safety. The purpose of the new bylaw is to replace the older version, originally established in the early 1990's. Since that time, the nature of fire and life safety issues has evolved and the need for alternate approaches has become evident. The main premise of the bylaw is that responsibility is placed onto owners and occupants to prevent fire hazards and maintain their premises in good repair so that fire will not endanger life or property or increase the danger of fire.

To support the property and life safety goal, the Bylaw also provides additional authority for Department Officers to order the remediation of fire hazards. In extreme circumstances, Evacuation Orders can now be issued to protect occupant safety. The costs to provide security and/or to secure vacant buildings and structures are now the full responsibility of the land owner. It also makes provision to complete the necessary work and charge back as part of the property taxation.

Buildings requiring a Fire Safety Plan must now submit their plan on an annual basis or when alterations or additions have been made. Building owners are also responsible to ensure fire drills, fire doors and egress from structures, as well as the proper storage of flammables are completed to Fire Services Act and Fire Code requirements or a municipal fine may be imposed. The fee structure has also been updated in the new 'Fire and Life Safety Bylaw'. New rates have been established for permits and the Bylaw also establishes new charges for file searches, special inspections and fire extinguisher training. Where an owner or occupant fails to remedy fire and life safety requirements, a fee can be assessed for all inspections beyond the primary and follow-up. A fee can also be assessed where alarm systems activate repeatedly creating multiple false alarms due to the lack of repairs or maintenance.

Another key approach that the new Bylaw addresses is the policy regarding frequency of fire inspections in public buildings. The Fire Chief now has the authority to modify the schedule based on classification, use, age, fire history, condition and fire risk assessment. More hazardous buildings will receive more inspections where safe buildings will receive less. Placing resources where they are needed the most is critical to property and life safety in the community.

The intent of the 'Fire and Life Safety Bylaw' is to enhance public safety, a goal that Council has adopted. Through safer buildings, the threat of fire and resulting harm to citizens can be minimized.

Bylaw 7108 Fire Protection and Life Safety can be found at [www.nanaimo.ca](http://www.nanaimo.ca).

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For more information contact Doug Bell, Captain Fire, Loss and Prevention Division, 250-268-2108