



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 16th, 2009

To: The Media

From: Karen Lindsay, Nanaimo Fire Rescue

Re: Nanaimo Fire Rescue Evacuates Homes to Ensure Life Safety

Nanaimo Fire Rescue began the process on Monday to evacuate 2 multi tenancy dwellings located on one parcel of land in the unit block of Haliburton Street. The evacuation is required based on results of an investigation by Nanaimo Fire Rescue that began due to a complaint regarding possible fire and life safety concerns in the dwellings. Fire Prevention Officers have been actively working this file and as a result have concluded that there are significant life safety issues for the tenants living there that require them to be evacuated.

The two dwellings are zoned to be single dwelling residential units. Over the years the buildings have been modified without proper building, electrical or occupancy permits in place and were converted into boarding homes with a total of 8 separate suites. Life safety features such as smoke alarms and fire extinguishers are not in place and there are no fire separations between the suites. The structural integrity of the buildings has been compromised due to the number of renovations over the years. Nanaimo Fire Rescue is requiring that both buildings be converted back to single residential dwelling units. This will require the landowner to have proper permits in place to ensure the building is brought up to code with a final inspection required.

The homes currently house a total of 8 individuals. 3 suites located in the basements of the dwellings will see immediate evacuation involving 3 people. The need for immediate evacuation of the 3 basement suites is required as there are currently inadequate fire escape routes in place and the ceilings in the suites are well below the minimum height requirements. As a result, should a fire occur in these suites, the escape time for the tenants is reduced significantly. Of greater concern is that tenants have no escape route from the sleeping area. The other suites which house an additional 5 tenants will require that they be evacuated on or before April 30th with a mandatory order for the owner to immediately install fire extinguishers and smoke alarms in the interim to ensure the remaining tenants have minimum life safety features in place. This is a temporary solution that will protect the residents still residing in the building until April 30th.

It has been determined that the work required to bring the homes to single family residential code is so extensive that the homes have to be empty to perform the upgrades.

The Fire Department continues to actively work to prevent injuries and deaths from fires on an on-going basis and resources continue to be dedicated to make sure these buildings are safe for individuals residing in them. Before the building is evacuated, Fire Prevention Officers work with the tenants and various agencies in the community to ensure that displaced individuals are made aware of their options.