Hoarding

Fire Prevention Division

March 7, 2025

Intent: Provide information along with clear, manageable tasks aimed at reducing risks to life and property in hoarding situations.

Understanding Hoarding

"Compulsive hoarding (aka pathological hoarding) is acquiring possessions along with the failure to discard them, even if the items are worthless, or no longer useful. Hoarding items fill the person's home, and can cause severe problems with day-to-day activities and relationships, and also pose a danger to life through fire and health safety hazards." [eMentalHealth Services and Resources]

To Reduce Fire and Life Hazards

- Maintain a minimum 1m (3ft.) path to all windows and doors, as a secondary means of egress in an emergency situation.
- Maintain a minimum 1m (3ft.) path through all hallways to ensure adequate space for first responders.
- Pile over 1.2m (4ft.) high must be shored to the wall. Otherwise, they pose an avalanche hazard to both occupants and emergency personnel.
- Maintain a minimum 30cm (1ft.) clearance of items for all heat vents, and electrical outlets.
- Provide clear access to bed(s).

Additional Information

- Residents in low- and high-rise buildings share common walls with their neighbors, meaning excessive storage can create fire hazards and attract pests, which puts the entire building at risk. Residential units are not designed for high density storage.

- Owner-occupied strata dwellers and renters should consult with strata bylaws, rental contracts, insurance policies and other agreements that may be applicable. Violation of an applicable regulation or agreement may result in fees, fines, or other consequences. For a strata building, the Strata Property Act states that the strata council's role is to "exercise the powers and perform the duties of the strata corporation, including the enforcement of bylaws and rules".

For information on enforcing strata bylaws and rules, visit the Government of BC website and search "enforcing strata bylaws and rules".

New Westminster

1 East 6th Avenue
New Westminster BC
V3L 4G6

604 519 1000
fire@newwestcity.ca
newwestcity.ca