

Fire & Life Safety

Provincial Public Education Position Paper

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Issue: Should the term **Smoke Alarm** or the term **Smoke Detector** be used in public education messages?

Position:

The term **Smoke Alarm** should be used in public education messages wherever possible. However, in certain circumstances the term **Smoke Detector** may have to be used.

Rationale:

In British Columbia, the term smoke alarm has traditionally been used to identify self-contained residential smoke detection and alarm devices. This is primarily due to the fact that a smoke alarm is a defined term in both the National and BC Fire Codes, and means a combined smoke detector and audible alarm device designed to sound an alarm within the room or suite in which it is located.

In the National and BC Building Codes, a fire detector is a defined term that may be either a heat detector or a smoke detector, and means a device which is part of a fire alarm system intended to detect a fire condition and automatically initiate an alert or alarm signal throughout the building.

The different use of terminology does not appear to be a problem in regard to the application and enforcement of the BC Fire Code. The Fire Code is the regulation that applies in BC, and defined terms are the ones that should be used for technical matters.

In the United States however, the term smoke detector is used to define a residential device that we in BC call a smoke alarm.

With the exchange of educational materials between Canada and the United States, the terms smoke alarm and smoke detector are being used interchangeably. The public identifies with both terms to mean the same thing, much like referring to a motor cycle helmet as a crash helmet.

In order to be consistent with messages contained in some National Fire Safety Programs, the term smoke detector may have to be used. For example, the 1996 National Fire Prevention Week theme, "Let's Hear it for Fire Safety - Test Your Detectors", created by the National Fire Protection Association was adopted by Fire Prevention Canada as a national program. The theme was also featured in the Fire Prevention Week proclamation from the Governor General.

Purpose of Public Education Position Papers:

In order to provide for the consistent delivery of fire and life safety education in the Province of British Columbia, the BC Public Fire & Life Safety Education Advisory Committee through the Public Education Strategic Plan has identified the need for the development of Public Education Position Papers. While it is not mandatory for individual agencies who deliver fire and life safety educational programs to follow these position papers, it is hoped that these positions will be supported throughout British Columbia, in order to achieve consistency in the delivery of fire and life safety education.

Fire & Life Safety Public Education Position Papers are published by the Office of the Fire Commissioner in conjunction with the BC Public Fire & Life Safety Education Advisory Committee.

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