

**Ministry of Community Safety
and Correctional Services**

**Ministère de la Sécurité
communautaire et des Services
correctionnels**



Ontario

Office of the
Fire Marshal

Bureau du commissaire
des incendies

Place Nouveau Building
7th Floor
5775 Yonge Street
North York ON M2M 4J1
Telephone 416-325-3100
Facsimile: 416-325-3162

Édifice Place Nouveau
7^e étage
5775 rue Yonge
North York ON M2M 4J1
Téléphone: 416-325-3100
Télécopieur: 416-325-3162



For Immediate Release

Recent fire in Barrie prompts OFM to issue fire safety warning

Toronto (July 12, 2007) – Ontarians should plug portable air conditioners directly into electrical outlets or, if that is not possible, use heavy-duty appliance extension cords warns Deputy Fire Marshal Doug Crawford. This fire safety warning comes after the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM) confirmed a near million-dollar fire in Barrie began with the improper use of an extension cord.

When OFM investigators arrived at the Dupont Street West building, which contained nine apartments and three retail outlets, they noted a refrigerator and a portable air conditioner plugged into a 16-gauge extension cord. OFM investigators examined the electrical wire within the melted cord and noted obvious arcing damage.

“If you can, plug portable air conditioners directly into an electrical outlet. If that is not possible, use a ‘listed’ 14 gauge, three-wire grounding type appliance extension cord,” said Crawford. “The type of cord at the fire scene was a light-duty extension cord. These cannot handle the load of air conditioners and other heavy appliances. For example, last summer, a young father and his three-week-old child tragically died in an apartment fire where an extension cord was being used improperly with a portable air conditioner. Fortunately in this latest fire, no one was injured and the fire alarm system was functional.”

As the warm weather continues and people turn to their air conditioners for relief, these fires should serve as reminders, for landlords and tenants in particular, of how important it is to ensure that air conditioners are operating safely and that homes and multi-unit dwellings be equipped with working smoke alarms on every storey and outside sleeping areas.

The fast-moving fire began on Sunday and left a number of Barrie businesses out of operation and several people homeless. The Office of the Fire Marshal, Barrie Fire & Emergency Service and the Barrie Police Service conducted the investigation.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Carol Gravelle, Office of the Fire Marshal, 416-325-3138

Bev Gilbert, Office of the Fire Marshal, 416-325-3178