

Emergency Access and Fire Safety

Road Access Requirements for Emergency Service Vehicles a message from Drummond/North Elmsley Tay Valley Fire Rescue:

It is important that a fire truck or ambulance be able to access your laneway when responding to an emergency call at your house or cottage. An access that is not suitable for a large pumper truck or ambulance may affect the effectiveness of emergency personnel responding to an emergency call at that location. You are responsible to ensure that your laneway is snow ploughed and clear of limbs or trees to a minimum width of 16 feet with a clearance of 20 feet overhead. Any turns or corners must be wide enough to allow the trucks to drive directly to the residence. It is also important to ensure that your blue and white civic address sign is clearly visible.

Some other things to keep in mind:

When you call 911 from a regular land phone line emergency services receive enhanced 911 data indicating the address and municipality of where the call is originating, should the caller be unable to provide this information. This enhanced 911 data is not available for cell phone calls, so ensuring everyone at the cottage knows the exact location in the event of an emergency is critical in obtaining a timely response from emergency services. (Windsor Fire and Rescue Services)

Plowing your Private Road and Driveway at the Cottage

<https://www.kawarthawaterfront.com/kawartha/news-blog/the-upside-to-plowing-your-private-road-and-driveway-at-the-cottage/>

What do I have to know when calling 911?

Adapted from: <https://www.paudashlake.org/blog-seed/2017/8/14/safety-guide-emergencies-at-the-cottage>

When 911 is called you can either say the service(s) required or describe the emergency to the operator. 911 operators are trained to ask questions to determine whether Police, Fire or Ambulance services are needed. Who are you? Where are you located? Remember that it might be you on the floor or dock and someone else making the call (perhaps a visitor, grandchild, family member.....). It's not "good enough" to say, "It's Grandpa's or Uncle Phil's place", "Oh, you know, the big white place with all the windows on XX bay"!

Post Location Information. The OPP strongly suggest that you post your location information in large print near the phone, by cottage entrance doors and even on the dock, boathouse or where people often gather so all family members and guests know exactly how to describe your location (owner's name, 911 "street" address, Tay Valley Township, Lanark County, Otty Lake, part of the lake, access road, major intersection, etc.). Include helpful special instructions such as: use the second driveway, at the top of a steep hill, cottage on the left, etc. Use large print and make multiple copies. Panic/crisis situations are not the time to be searching for those reading glasses! One suggestion is to have these instructions laminated to protect the). After all, the cottage is not likely to change locations: you want these information sheets to last!

Make sure your 911 "street" sign is clearly visible (not lying on the ground, overgrown or missing) and ensure that your road signs are in place. Winter snow and plows are often not kind to signage!

Fire Safety at the Lake

Adapted from <https://www.windsorfire.com/cottage-fire-safety/>

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

- The Ontario Fire Code considers a cottage a residence and as such requires smoke alarms on every storey and outside all sleeping areas.
- Carbon monoxide alarms should be installed in all residences with fuel-burning appliances. Follow the manufacturer's installation instructions. The primary location for installation is outside any sleeping areas. Additional carbon monoxide alarms can be installed near any fuel-burning appliance within the residence.
- Test all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms; replace batteries, as needed. Ensure you have battery-powered back-up alarms to alert you during a hydro outage at your cottage.

Wiring and Appliances

- Inspect hydro lines servicing your cottage for tree or storm damage and report any damage to the local utility for repair.
- Inspect indoor and outdoor wiring for damage by mice or other rodents. Have an electrician repair any damage found.
- Have propane-powered appliances like stoves, refrigerators and heaters inspected and repaired, if necessary, by a qualified technician. Install a propane leak alarm at floor level, no more than 6 inches above the floor or lowest level to alert you in the event of a propane leak. Propane is heavier than air and propane vapours tend to pool in low spots.
- Maintain fuse boxes, heaters, wiring, stoves, and other possible heat sources in good operating condition.

Fire Extinguishers

- Install a fully charged multi-purpose or ABC fire extinguisher in a visible, easily accessible location near an exit where escape is also an option. Make sure everyone knows where it is and how to use it. If you already have a fire extinguisher installed, check the pressure gauge to ensure it's fully charged, indicated by the needle in the green area. A partially discharged fire extinguisher is always considered an empty one – have it refilled or replaced immediately. Also keep in mind that the dry powder chemical inside the extinguisher tends to pack down in the bottom of the extinguisher over time, which may make it ineffective. Once a month pick up the fire extinguisher, check the gauge or pin for pressure, turn it upside down and hit the bottom sharply with your hand, then shake it well. This should dislodge any compacted dry chemical inside the extinguisher. Most fire extinguishers have a lifespan of 5 to 15 years.
- Most residential fire extinguishers discharge in 8-10 seconds with a range of only 2 – 3.5 metres (6 – 10 feet). They should only be used to extinguish small, contained fires or to reduce a fire sufficiently to allow escape.
- Remember, **DON'T FIGHT A FIRE** unless you call the fire department first! A fire extinguisher is no substitute for the fire department.
- Ensure family members know how to use the extinguishers and understand which extinguishers are effective on what types of fires.

Fires and Ashes

- Check exhaust vents and flues for all fuel-burning appliances to ensure they are free of obstructions or debris.
- Have your chimney and fireplace cleaned and inspected yearly for creosote build-up, cracks, crumbling bricks or mortar and any obstructions. This is best done by a professional chimney sweep.
- If you burn wood in a stove or fireplace, keep your chimney clean and use a screened chimney cap to catch sparks and embers.
- Burn only dry, well-seasoned hardwood to minimize creosote build-up.
- Place ashes outdoors in a covered metal container at least one metre (3 feet) away from anything that can burn. Don't set the container on a wooden porch floor or any other combustible surface.
- Always use a fireplace screen to prevent sparks from escaping from the fireplace.
- Establish safe campfire rules to be followed at the cottage.

Other

- Clean up and remove any rubbish, fallen leaves, branches and dried brush surrounding the cottage. Maintain an open area around the cottage to create a firebreak. Gravel, stone or brick pathways make a good firebreak. Green, actively growing grasses, ground covers and flowers are more fire-resistant.
- Stack any firewood or lumber well away from the building.
- Dispose of old cleaning solvents, fuels and paints, etc. at a hazardous waste disposal centre.
- Store all flammable liquids in approved containers OUTSIDE the cottage. Never store gasoline, propane cylinders or other highly flammable liquids inside or adjacent to the cottage.
- Keep highly flammable fibreglass boats and canoes away from the building.