

**Minute No. 560**

**Report – Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks –  
September 18, 2020**

**Item No. 1                      WFPS Smoke Alarm for Every Family Program - Opportunities for  
Growth**

**COUNCIL DECISION:**

Council concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks and adopted the following:

1.        That the report be received as information.

**Report – Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks – September 18, 2020****DECISION MAKING HISTORY:**

Moved by Councillor Rollins,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks be adopted by consent.

Carried

**EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

On September 21, 2020, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks and submitted the matter to Council.

**STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

On September 18, 2020, the Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT**

**Title:** WFPS Smoke Alarm for Every Family Program - Opportunities for Growth

**Critical Path:** Standing Policy Committee on Protection, Community Services and Parks –  
Executive Policy Committee – Council

**AUTHORIZATION**

| Author     | Department Head | CFO | CAO                     |
|------------|-----------------|-----|-------------------------|
| M. Reshaur | J. Lane         | N/A | M. Ruta,<br>Interim CAO |

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On February 12, 2019 the Smoke Alarm for Every Family (SAFE) Program was launched in Winnipeg by the Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service (WFPS), in partnership with the Manitoba Office of the Fire Commissioner, the Manitoba Firefighters' Burn Fund and Red River Mutual (corporate sponsor).

Since the launch, the program has struggled to meet initial smoke alarm installation targets. Due to a number of challenges, fewer residents have taken advantage of the program than was originally estimated.

By continuing to work hard at a community level, knowledge of the program will continue to spread. Expansion of the program clientele by 25% (80 households annually) in fiscal 2023 is a reasonable and achievable target.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That this report be received as information.

**REASON FOR THE REPORT**

At its March 20, 2020 meeting, Council directed the Winnipeg Public Service to report back within 90 days with a plan to increase uptake in the proactive smoke alarm program by 25% in fiscal year 2023. At the June 26, 2020 Council meeting, an extension of 120 days was granted.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

There are no implications arising from receiving this report as information.

**HISTORY/DISCUSSION**

SAFE Family is a program run by the WFPS in partnership with the Manitoba Office of the Fire Commissioner, the Manitoba Firefighters' Burn Fund and Red River Mutual (corporate sponsor). The goal of the program is to supply and install smoke alarms in households not equipped with a working one (be it missing, expired or defective).

The Office of the Fire Commissioner and the Manitoba Firefighters' Burn Fund supply the smoke alarms, the WFPS identifies at-need households and installs the alarms. Red River Mutual funds marketing of the program.

In preparation for the SAFE Family Program, a market analysis was funded by Red River Mutual and conducted by the research firm Environics. This analysis determined there were approximately 59,194 households with a high risk of fire in Winnipeg, with smoke alarm compliance averaging 49.5%. Therefore, approximately 29,893 high-risk households are believed to be without smoke alarms.

The SAFE Family Program provides smoke alarms only to owner-occupied dwellings. The Fire Prevention By-Law 35-2017 requires the installation of a by-law compliant smoke alarm in all residential rental properties. Residential rental properties found to be in non-compliance are referred to the Fire Prevention Branch for enforcement of smoke alarm installation by the property owner.

The SAFE Family Program intake is handled online at [www.winnipeg.ca/safefamily](http://www.winnipeg.ca/safefamily), or by calling 311. After registering clients are contacted by a program clerk and asked screening questions to ensure the client meets the program criteria. Once screened the installation is scheduled.

WFPS Fire Operations installs smoke alarms every Saturday by appointment only. To facilitate efficient operation of the program, all WFPS Engines and Rescues have been equipped with a smoke alarm installation kit. Each Saturday, five apparatus are scheduled for program installations. They check the program schedule for the day and if installations are scheduled, they attend the appointments in the predetermined time slot, from 10:00 a.m. until noon, and 1:30 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. Fire Operations has a maximum capacity of 20 installation appointments each Saturday. In the event of a fire or medical emergency in the area, apparatus may not be able to attend appointments. If this occurs, the client is advised they will be contacted to reschedule another appointment when apparatus are again installing smoke alarms in their community.

The SAFE Family Program launched on February 12, 2019 and installations began on February 16, 2019.

Early program uptake was encouraging. The program generated media attention and public enrollment sustained approximately 15 installations per week. The pace of installations declined by June 2019.

The program has encountered some issues:

- The scheduling process is very time consuming.
  - Discussions with clients have revealed they are not taking time to read the program information. This results in clients not being able to answer screening questions when asked by our scheduler. When there is any doubt about qualifying for the program the WFPS errs on the side of caution and schedules the installation.
  - Clients often have little or no understanding regarding smoke alarms, making telephone screening difficult. It is common to discover a client has multiple smoke alarms in their home when they reported they do not have a smoke alarm.
  - Clients are hard to reach during regular business hours. This problem has become acute enough that the writer will regularly work from home in the evening to schedule clients who are difficult to contact during the day.
- Fire apparatus are busy. We have cancelled a number of installations due to incident priority.
- Fire crews regularly encounter circumstances at the clients' homes that are different than what was reported at the time of screening. This is attributed to many clients' lack of familiarity with smoke alarms and the program.

Installation of smoke alarms was suspended on March 21, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It remains suspended as of June 1, 2020. A plan for resumption of smoke alarm installation is currently under review.

As of June 1, 2020 the SAFE Family Program has 322 client applications on file, dating back to the start of the program. Forty-four installations are currently pending.

Of the 278 applications closed:

- 199 - Installation completed
- 28 - Cancelled by client prior to installation
- 51- Did not meet program criteria

The SAFE Family Program is currently promoted in a variety of ways:

- The program is prominently featured on the WFPS pages of winnipeg.ca
- WFPS Fire crews can self-initiate installations when at calls for service and the absence of a smoke alarm is noted
- WFPS Emergency Paramedic In The Community (EPIC) team members check clients' homes for smoke alarms and make referrals to the program
- The WFPS Public Information Officers include mention of the program at every opportunity in social media and traditional media

- The WFPS Public Information team regularly submits promotional materials to Corporate Communications to include on corporate social media
- The WFPS Executive team regularly promotes the program when conducting media interviews on related matters
- Program posters supplied by Red River Mutual have been supplied to every community club and library in the city
- Program bookmarks supplied by Red River Mutual are available at every city-owned library
- Program pamphlets have been supplied to a number of service agencies such as the Bear Clan Patrol, Andrews Street Family Centre and the North YMCA-YWCA Youth Centre
- Home Care Support Workers – SAFE Family Program information was included in the 2019 Complex Housing Issues in-service
- Bus Ads – Red River Mutual purchased interior bus advertising in February 2020. The ads will be in place until July 27, 2020.
- The WFPS Public Education team provides SAFE Family promotional materials at every presentation and community event as appropriate

The following opportunities for program promotion have been identified:

- Work with City of Winnipeg Corporate Communications to increase promotion of the program through the City of Winnipeg social media presence
- Provide program information to school divisions to send home with students or post on their web sites
- Go door-to-door in identified high priority neighbourhoods utilizing staff temporarily restricted to alternate duties
- Increase outreach to media / local community media outlets and publications
- Promote more at Fire Prevention Week Station Open-House event. It is notable this event was cancelled in 2019 due to the unprecedented weather event emergency. This is historically a very popular event, and its absence in 2019 may have contributed to the slowing uptake of the SAFE Family program.
- Work with City Councilors to ensure message is distributed to their constituents

By continuing to work hard at a community level, knowledge of the program will continue to spread. Expansion of the program clientele by 25% (80 households annually) in fiscal 2023 is a reasonable and achievable target.

Having a working smoke alarm reduces the likelihood of a fire-related injury or death. When a fire starts in a home it can spread quickly. Fires that start at night are especially dangerous because they can grow undetected, unless a home has a working smoke alarm located close enough to the sleeping area to be heard.

Cost and installation knowledge can be barriers for lower-income residents. Continuing to support the residents who need assistance in obtaining and installing a working smoke alarm is an effective way to reduce lost lives, injuries and lost property to fire.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

**Financial Impact Statement**    **Date:** **10-Jul-20**

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**Project Name:**

**WFPS Smoke Alarm for Every Family Program -  
Opportunities for Growth**

**COMMENTS:**

The SAFE Family Program is a partnership program whereby the City of Winnipeg firefighters install fire alarms in at risk homes. The staff time involved in this program are fully covered by the approved budget in any year and no additional staff are employed.

There are no financial implications arising from the work or this report.

Original signed by:

**John Hall FCMA, CGMA**

Financial Controller

Fire Paramedic Services

**CONSULTATION**

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:

N/A

**OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT****01-2a Collaborate to Make Safe Communities, Direction 7- Implement an Approach to Safety and Security that is Collaborative and Involves the Community.**

- The SAFE Family Program is a partnership with the Manitoba Office of the Fire Commissioner, The Firefighters' Burn Fund and Red River Mutual
- The SAFE Family Program reaches out to community groups to ensure they are aware of the program and that qualifying members take advantage of it

**01-2b Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery, Direction 1- Improve Community Safety through Risk Reduction.**

- The SAFE Family Program equips households to respond to fire emergencies effectively through early warning

**WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT**

N/A

**SUBMITTED BY**

Department: Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service  
Division: Fire Prevention  
Prepared by: Mark Reshaur  
Date: July 10, 2020  
File No: N/A