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LEARNING THE "LIFE SAFETY" OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT



New training program brings safety realities to property management industry

BY JASON REID

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Leaders within the property management industry are continually empowering their teams with training programs designed to provide better services to the people and properties under their care. Yet while advancements continue to be made in this regard, the demands of tenant safety continue to evolve, requiring a greater emphasis on training, emergency response, and awareness for protecting properties and their occupants.



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The term "Life Safety" can encompass many difference aspects of building operations, as shown in the National Life Safety Group's chart to the right.

Under Provincial Fire Code, building managers, residential superintendents, and property supervisory personnel are required to be familiar with the building life safety systems for which they are responsible. The term "Life Safety" itself is a broad one, and refers to anything that may impact building occupant safety.

Addressing this subject head-on, over 35 property management industry leaders were invited to the Fire & Emergency Services Training Institute (FESTI)'s safety training program, The "Life Safety" of Property Management, an educational initiative uniquely developed for the property management industry.

"It is exciting to see an education program that will bridge gaps between property management, residents and contractors," says Matthew J. Williams, a condominium security specialist. "As a security professional who works with property managers daily, I believe this would significantly enhance best practices as well as helping to make people work together cohesively and safely."

Launched on October 9, the program provides a clear overview of building safety systems, procedures for supervisory personnel, and reference material for use in the event of a building emergency. It also supplies detailed information on testing and inspection requirements, occupant training, and what to do in the event of a life safety system failure, as these are all critical components to successfully managing a property and protecting both tenants and the public.

"The event was very informative and full of critical information on how to prepare for being part of the solution when it comes to managing fire emergencies," recalls Babak Ardan, District Manager for Del Property Management.

Moreover, the program reviews best practices for persons requiring assistance during evacuations. These can include anyone who has reduced mobility; a speech, hearing, or visual impairment; or a cognitive limitation – regardless of whether or not these conditions are temporary or permanent.

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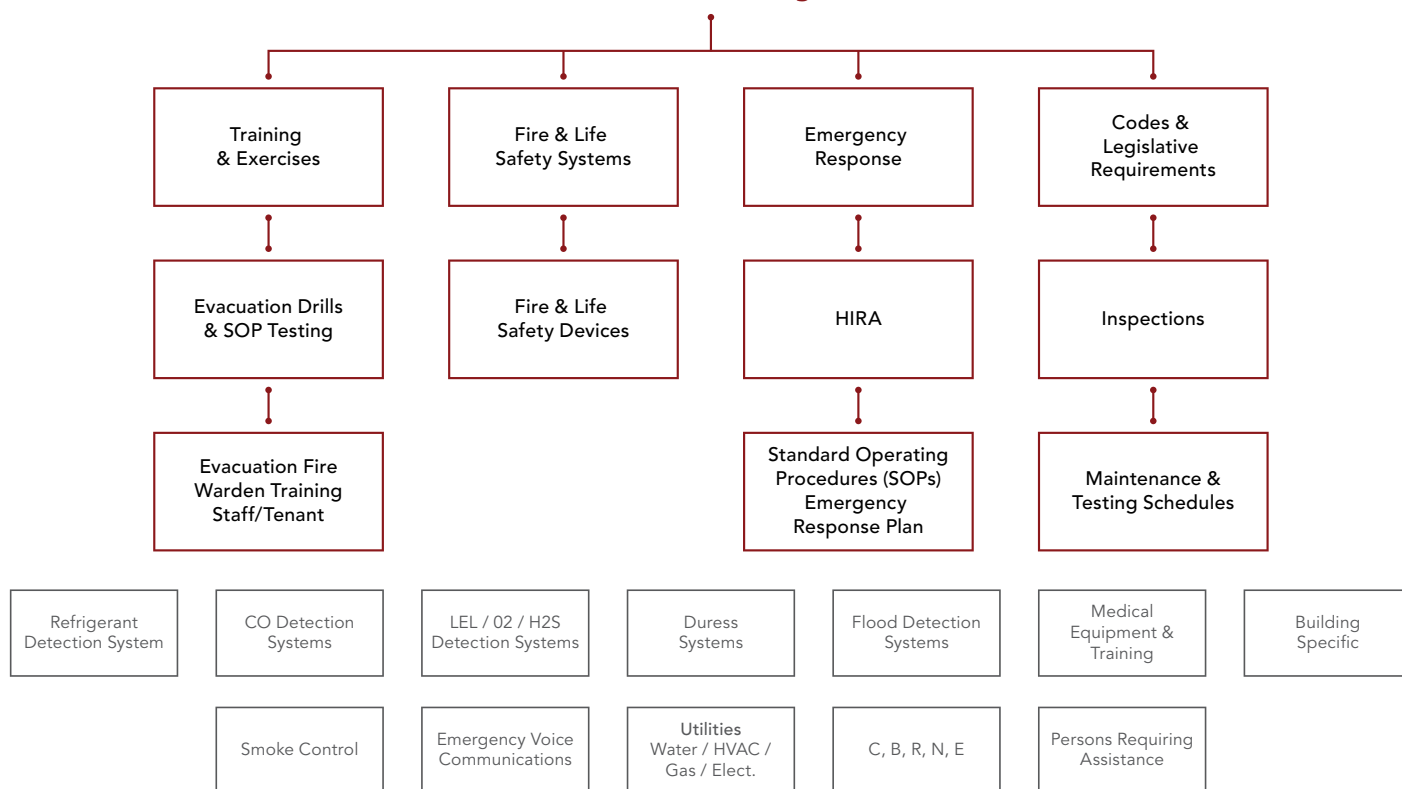
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THE LIFE SAFETY OF PROPERTY MANAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS:

- ✓ Commercial and residential property management and life safety integration: Building critical infrastructure and facility life safety features.
- ✓ Emergency response and continuity of building operations: Hazardous materials, fire, evacuation, medical emergencies, extreme weather, evacuation and shelter in place, H2S, O2, CO2, suspicious packages, and bomb threats.
- ✓ Fire safety plans: fire and human behavior, building / facility fire warden roles and responsibilities, persons requiring assistance during evacuations, effective fire drills, and industry leading documentation practices.
- ✓ Code compliance, facility inspections and hazard identification, and preventative maintenance.
- ✓ Emergency systems; Fire alarms, sprinklers, gas and refrigerant detection systems, firefighter elevators, emergency power, public address systems, emergency lighting.
- ✓ Arriving fire, police, and EMS priorities and expectations, lessons learned, and common challenges during evacuations.
- ✓ Building the "Life Safety" business case.


With respect to fire drills, property managers are mandated to conduct these drills as required by law, yet little to no guidance is provided to them with respect to preparing – or even holding – these drills. Knowing this, FESTI's program provides step-by-step instructions, coupled with lessons learned from both an operational impact and liability realm.

"This is an area where majority of condominium managers can improve their knowledge and be more prepared," notes Babak. "Ultimately, it helps us avoid serious liabilities while protecting the communities that we manage."

Upon completion, FESTI's training program provides the industry with a recognized certificate training in building fire and life safety code compliance, as well as a vast array of operational and safety best practices.

KNOWING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS, LEARNING THE RIGHT ANSWERS

In addition to reviewing vital life safety strategies, FESTI's program also brings





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“ARMING BOTH PROPERTY MANAGERS AND BUILDING SECURITY WITH CURRENT CODE COMPLIANT INFORMATION IS A VITAL COMPONENT OF ONGOING INDUSTRY EDUCATION.”

property managers up to speed on newly introduced legislation, so that they may be better prepared for the impacts in their industry.

“Arming both property managers and building security with current code compliant information is a vital component of ongoing industry education,” says Matthew, adding, “This is empowering our industry.”

For example, attendees were prepped for the incoming changes to the Ontario Fire Code (OFC) with regard to carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. Implemented as

part of the Hawkins Gignac Act, the changes affect all properties and were therefore a key issue during FESTI’s program.

QUESTIONS COVERED INCLUDED:

Why is the Ontario Fire Code (OFC) being amended?


The Hawkins Gignac Act amended the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 (FPPA) to allow the regulation of CO alarms through amendments to the OFC. It also proclaims the week beginning November 1 as Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week.

Do all existing residential buildings require CO alarms?

Existing residential occupancies that contain at least one fuel-burning appliance (e.g., gas water heater or gas furnace), fireplace, or an attached garage, require the installation of a CO alarm.

When did the CO alarm regulation come into force?

The CO alarm regulation came into force on October 15, 2014. Buildings that contain no more than six suites of residential occupancy are required to comply with the installation




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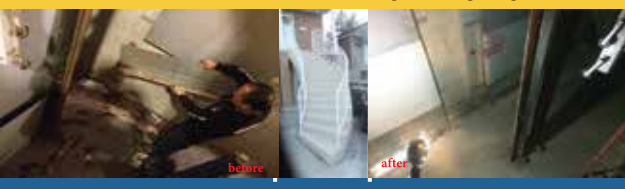
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Jason D. Reid, President, National Life Safety Group; Steve Hall, Acting Deputy Fire Chief, FESTI; Audrey McGuire, Regional VP, Larlyn Property Management; Steve Hill, CEO/Owner, Whitehall Residential; Matthew J. Williams, Condominium Security Specialist.

and replacement requirements within 6 months of the in-force date (April 15, 2015, at the latest). Elsewhere, buildings that contain more than six suites of residential occupancy are required to comply with the installation and replacement requirements within 12 months of the in-force date (October 15, 2015, at the latest).

The maintenance and testing requirements for existing CO alarms (e.g. those devices previously installed to comply with the OBC or a municipal by-law) take effect on the October 15 in-force date.

Many municipalities already have bylaws in place that may or may not require CO alarms in a building. For example, Toronto

has a bylaw (www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_387.pdf). Industry experts recommend each building review their own respective requirements for CO code compliance based on their annual hazard review conducted at each of their properties.

ESSENTIAL TRAINING

Covering this topic and more, The "Life Safety" of Property Management provided an invaluable learning opportunity for property management professionals.

"The program provides best practices, lessons learned, and valuable insights from high-rise fire safety experts, police, fire, and EMS personnel" says Jason Reid, co-author of the program, adding "It brings reality to the operations world of property management."

For more information, visit www.festi.ca. ■

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