

## Improving Indoor Air Quality

The more time we spend indoors, the more likely we are to be exposed to questionable indoor air quality (IAQ), and to be breathing in undesirable gases and toxins emitted from within the home. Among the most common indoor air pollutants in our homes are those coming from biological sources, such as mould, dust mites and bacteria, as well as those coming from chemical sources. Common chemical sources include fossil fuel residues like carbon monoxide (CO), and other off-gases emitted from common synthetics, such as building materials, new furniture, upholstery, drapery, clothing and textiles.

To help reduce such risks and improve indoor air quality in your home, consider investing in a system that employs high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration. Also, be attentive to the size of your home and/or rooms, relative to the capacity of the circulation fan(s) and the clean air delivery rate (CADR) of any systems you're considering. Finally, don't assume that all air purifiers on the market will be effective for everyone in the home. For example, if someone in your



home has respiratory discomfort, you may need medical advice to identify the specific contaminants or irritants that are problematic and then determine the best possible IAQ solution for that pollutant.



## Fire Prevention and Precaution

Every house and condo needs diligent safety measures to help ensure that everyone living in the home (and all of their belongings) are adequately protected from accidental fire. This means taking precautions beyond having standard battery-powered and hard-wired smoke detectors. For example, every home should have a serviceable fire extinguisher on every floor, including one in or near the kitchen, but not too close to a potential fire location such as a stovetop or fuel tank. The same advice applies to a natural fireplace area, and a garage where combustibles are common.

Ideally, residences should have a multipurpose "ABC" extinguisher in all such areas, as it's very important to have the right kind of extinguisher for each potential class of fire. Class A is for paper and wood fires, while B is for petroleum-fueled fires, including some greases, paints and chemicals, and C is for electrical fires. Note that every fire extinguisher needs to be in working order, which often means it must be tested annually or replaced on occasion, according to the manufacturer's warranty or your local fire department's recommendations. Another key fire safety measure, often overlooked in many residences, is to ensure that everyone knows a proper evacuation plan, including a designated meeting place.

## Upsizing or Downsizing?

Whether a homebuyer is looking for a larger space or a smaller place to live, resizing is a big step that is best taken with insightful planning. Of course, it starts with a budget, but there's much more to upsizing and downsizing than simply relocating within a certain price point – especially when considering a different neighbourhood. For example, any growing family that's upsizing is often concerned about schools and other enrichment for children and youth, such as local lessons and recreation. The home's layout will also be critical, as it may need to accommodate changes as kids mature – perhaps with needs growing from suitable play spaces to quiet study places.

Meanwhile, those who are downsizing might be empty-nesters with more leisure time, possibly interested in a location that facilitates easy airport access. They could also be seeking more financial freedom by retrieving equity from their current home and reducing their household overhead, thanks to lower maintenance and operational costs. In some cases, those downsizing may be approaching retirement and want to make new local acquaintances, such as in a condo community. Whatever the reason for a change in the size of living arrangements, a careful examination of your choices is the best approach. It all starts with thoughtful conversation.

