

A Functioning Monitored Smoke Detection System is Essential on BHI

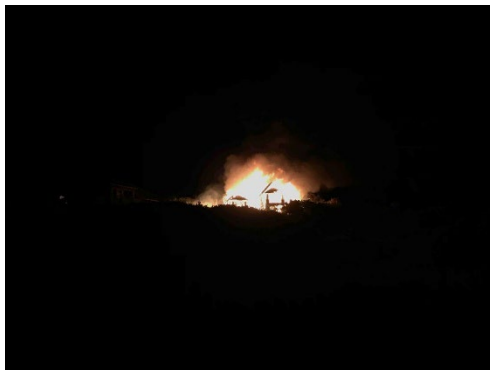
By Carin Faulkner, Village Public Information Officer

With limited accessibility to the island and the associated delayed response of mutual aid from surrounding communities, it is *extremely* important that the Public Safety Department respond to fires quickly to minimize the potential threat to life, property, and loss of the island's protected maritime forest.

The presence of a properly functioning monitored fire alarm system means the Public Safety Department is able to respond as quickly as possible to a fire at a home, even if it is unoccupied. A while back, a fire was caused by a short circuit at a property's bollard. The crofter was included in the property's monitored fire alarm system (as it should be) and the Public Safety Department was alerted promptly enough to contain the fire before it spread to the main house and adjacent properties.

Village Ordinance Section 6-163 includes requirements for *monitored* smoke detection systems in residential structures that are over 500 square feet in size. Monitored means a *working* system. Most crofters on Bald Head Island are over 500 square feet and are required to be on a monitored smoke detection system. Even if a crofter or garage is not over 500 square feet, if it is used for permanent or temporary storage of any electrically powered vehicle it is required to be on a monitored system. Property owners should take action as soon as possible to make sure their monitored smoke detection systems are functioning and that their crofters are currently included on the home's monitored alarm system.

Public Safety Director Alan May says that the Public Safety Department would rather respond to a false alarm than no alarm at all. The photo below is of a structure fire that took place in 2018. The home did not have a working fire alarm. By the time an onlooker off-island alerted Public Safety about the visible flames, it was too late. The home ended up being a total loss which could have been prevented by a functional monitored smoke detection system. May added, "alarm monitoring is only a few dollars more on your internet bill and it provides you the assurance that the department of public safety is alerted immediately when there is a fire emergency on your property."



2018 structure fire, this home did not have a working fire alarm.

Here are a few fire alarm tips:

- 1) Make sure your alarm system is functioning properly by getting it routinely inspected. An annual inspection as part of a scheduled maintenance program with your alarm service provider making all necessary repairs and/or recommended system improvements should be taken into consideration.
- 2) Inquire with your alarm service provider for recommendations on the various methods of connectivity for required monitoring services given your current alarm system configuration. An old or outdated alarm system that currently uses a conventional landline connection may be converted for connection through the internet. Radio communicator devices through a cellular based service provider is another option worth considering.
- 3) Change your smoke alarm batteries every six (6) months.
- 4) Have adequate power surge protection and battery backup for your fire alarm system.

For more information on smoke detectors please visit the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) website at <http://www.nfpa.org/public-education/by-topic/smoke-alarms>. Also contact your alarm service provider if you have any questions.