

**From:** "Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>  
**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"  
**Date:** 1/5/2023 10:36:13 AM  
**Subject:** Memo: SRO fire safety  
**Attachments:** VFRS - ADM - Memo to Council - SRO Quick Facts 2022\_2023-01-04.pdf

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Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Chief Karen Fry in regard to fire safety issues and VFRS calls for service to SRO buildings for 2022. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) released a statistic on social media reporting that one specific SRO had over 500 incidents in 2022, and that VFRS was ticketing for smoking related false alarms, and that VFRS was prosecuting the building owner. The post was misleading and the post was removed.

SROs are high-risk occupancies for fires based on the age of the building and the high-risk population within the buildings. Behaviours such as smoking, open flames, lithium ion batteries and hoarding have all contributed to as major causes of calls for service.

On average, 1 fire a day occurs in an SRO in the City of Vancouver.

In 2022, we had five (5) fire-related fatalities in SRO fires.

As noted by Chief Fry in her memo, she and her team are working with BC Housing and building operators to address fire safety in SRO and the associated demands on VFRS suppression resources. As you are aware, the management of SRO properties is a challenging undertaking given the state of many of those buildings and the needs of the tenant population. Building condition, tenant behaviour, ancillary support services and property management are all factors that impact this particular issue. This is one dimension of the broader challenge we face in relation to the SRO housing stock as the housing option of last resort for a significant number of Vancouver residents.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Chief Fry.

Best,  
Paul

**Paul Mochrie** (he/him)  
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City of Vancouver  
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.



FIRE RESCUE SERVICES  
Fire Chief/General Manager  
Karen Fry

**CONFIDENTIAL**

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager  
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk  
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC  
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Kareem Allam, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Trevor Ford, Director of Operations, Mayor's Office  
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office  
Rob Renning, Deputy Chief Community Safety & Education

FROM: Karen Fry, Fire Chief/General Manager, Vancouver Fire Rescue Services

SUBJECT: **SRO (Single Residential Occupancy) Quick Facts for 2022**

RTS#: N/A

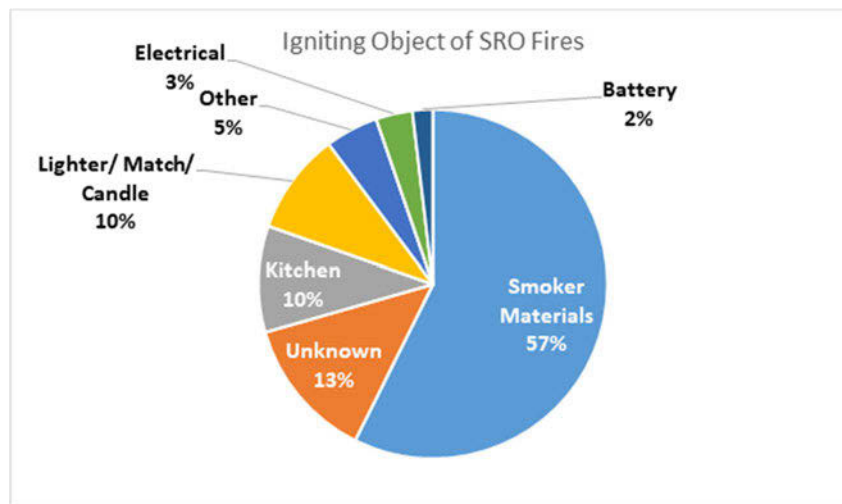
**Summary:**

- Vancouver Fire Rescue Services (VFRS) released a statistic on social media reporting that one specific SRO had over 500 incidents in 2022, and that VFRS was ticketing for smoking related false alarms, and that VFRS was prosecuting the building owner. This was misleading and the post was removed.
- SROs are high-risk occupancies for fires based on the age of the building and the high-risk population within the buildings. Behaviours such as smoking, open flames, lithium ion batteries and hoarding have all contributed to the major causes of calls for service.
- On average, 1 fire a day occurs in an SRO in the City of Vancouver.
- In 2022, we had five (5) fire-related fatalities in SRO fires.

**VFRS has identified 188 properties as an SRO (or has similar SRO qualities). Of the 188 buildings the following facts from 2022 have been generated:**

- 7347 incidents required VFRS response to these locations in 2022.
- VFRS Inspectors performed 700 inspections on these properties.
- Sent 2 locations to Prosecution for charges, these are in relation to fire code compliance.
- Issued 18 municipal tickets to various operators.
- Medical calls accounted for 3068 incidents.

- Smoking related false alarms accounted for 1663 incidents.
- Cigarette Smoke is the leading cause of alarms in SROs (56% in 2021 and 57% in 2022).
- In 2022, 4.6 alarms per day were recorded due to Cigarette Smoke compared to 1.7 in 2019.
- 380 fires have occurred with reportable damage, inside and outside of SROs.
- Total # of fires in SRO's has almost tripled on an annual basis from 2016 to 2021.
- SRO fires as a percentage of Total fires in the City has increased from 7% in 2016 to 11% in 2022.
- It is roughly 380 times more likely that a fire will occur at an SRO compared to other buildings in the City of Vancouver.
- The causes of fire cause is broken down into the following categories:



VFRS increased inspections in SROs in 2022, but staffing is limited to 2 inspectors and an officer to manage this portfolio and the two encampments currently in the city. VFRS worked with stakeholders including BC Housing and SRO management companies to emphasize fire safety training for their staff. This work is ongoing.

The department started a pilot program in the fourth quarter of 2022 to educate the SRO building staff on fire safety and the devices that are in their buildings and their importance in ensuring they are working. The course was designed for Supervisors and Managers.

To date we have only trained a total of about 86 SRO building staff, this is also partly due to the size of the Public Education team.

VFRS is working to assist the DTES SRO Collaborative in developing a course for residents on fire safety (report is forthcoming to council in January).

The department is also working with Legal and the Chief Building Official to propose changes in SRO/ Fire bylaw to increase safety. More information to follow in 2023.

**Top 10 SROs for responses and false alarms:**

<b>Address</b>	<b># of Incidents</b>	<b>Fires with damage</b>	<b>False alarms due to smoking</b>
518 Richards	462	10	289
344 E Hastings	329	13	159
177 E Hastings	135	2	59
112 Water St.	102	2	62
225 Dunlevy	264	16	107
1161 Granville	161	5	51
1119 Hornby	110	4	50
261 E Hastings	160	3	31
7 W Hastings	125	7	33
122 Water St.	94	7	33



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