

# Condominium Home Owners' Association

Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976

Bulletin: 300-213

## Condo Smarts

Headline: Always check buildings after heavy snow

Topic: Emergency access

Publication date: February 4, 2007

Publication: The Province

Written by: Tony Gioventu

**Dear Condo Smarts:** During one of the previous wind storms our condo in the Tri-Cities area survived very well, or so we thought. Our fourth-floor penthouse units all have skylights, and during a major gust one of the panes was literally lifted off the roof and vanished into the night.

The owners were away on vacation at the time, and our strata was unaware of the damage until the owners on the third floor reported water leaking through their ceilings. The heavy rain that accompanied the wind left the fourth-floor unit severely water damaged. Fortunately our insurance is covering the damage to the building and the owner's insurance is covering the damage to their furniture and contents.

Turns out we had a number of skylights that were never properly fastened to the roof. This raises a question for our council though. If we had to quickly enter a strata lot, what is an emergency and what are we legally permitted to do?

— Karen

**Dear Karen:** The Strata Act doesn't tell us much about emergencies. The Act and Bylaws do address emergency expenses/access where there are reasonable grounds to believe that an immediate expenditure is necessary to ensure safety or prevent significant loss or damage.

But immediate action is often necessary. How would you act in case of smoke or fire, water running through a ceiling or under a

door, a pipe burst, strange smells with no apparent activity in the strata lot, a serious earthquake, gas leak, or extreme weather conditions?

In most events, the strata should call emergency services. In the case of a water leak, the strata may have to engage a plumber or in your case a roofer/glazer and access the suite(s) quickly to isolate the water and seal the breach.

Before you enter, ask yourself, is it safe to enter? Is it an emergency, or is it a potential crime scene? One strata was faced with a gruesome crime scene over the holidays, and several strata council members foolishly entered the unit before the police arrived, frustrating the investigation.

Here's an important message for every building owner in the province: whenever there is a significant weather event, wind, freezing rain, heavy snow, heavy rain, or extreme cold, inspect your buildings including your roofing as soon as it is safely possible.

Routine inspections are a significant part of preventive maintenance. Damaged gutters and downspouts that become disconnected, a piece of missing flashing, torn tiles or membranes, plugged drains, puncture holes from tree branches and debris, broken windows, aging and missing caulking, deck and balcony membranes that are failing will all cause significant damage to your buildings. A five-minute walkabout can save thousands.

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Condominium Home Owners' Association of B.C.  
1-877-353-2462  
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FILE: 300-008

**Condo Smarts**

Headline: Strata has say on tree disposal

Topic: Christmas tree disposal

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Written by: Tony Gioventu

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