



Winter Safety Tips

Accidents involving home heating equipment are a major cause of home fires every year.

Give Space Heaters Space

- Place all space heaters at least 3 feet from anything that can burn.
- Remember that this also includes YOU!
- Remember, if your clothes catch on fire then always STOP right where you are, DROP to the floor, cover your face with your hands and ROLL over and over until the flames are out.

Fireplaces and Chimneys

- When using a fireplace, cover the opening with a sturdy metal screen or heat-tempered glass doors to reduce the chance of a fire starting from flying sparks or rolling logs.
- Open the damper before starting any fire. Begin blaze with kindling. Never use lighter fluid, kerosene, gasoline, charcoal lighter fluid or other flammable liquids to ignite a fire. Do not use trash as a fireplace fuel. Burning gift wrappings and packaging can create a "Flash fire," as well as produce toxic fumes in poorly ventilated fireplaces.
- The best wood to burn is a dry, well-seasoned hardwood such as oak. Hardwoods burn the most efficiently, thus producing the most heat. Avoid softwoods, as well as any wood that is green and moist. Such wood produce less heat and increase creosote build-up.
- If using man-made logs, follow directions on the package. Many commercial products are not designed for use in prefabricated fireplaces, such as those found in many apartments, because of the intense heat produced by artificial logs. Never break a man-made log apart to quicken a fire.
- Have your chimney checked by a professional before each heating season. The buildup of creosote can be hazardous. Phone numbers of chimney cleaners are found in the Yellow Pages under "Chimney."
- Never leave a fire unattended in the fireplace and make certain all fires are out before going to sleep. Do not use water to cool a fire in a fireplace. This can crack the hot firebrick lining. Do not close a damper with hot ashes in the fireplace. A closed damper can cause hot ashes to build up heat, and thus be a potential hazard.
- Do not remove ashes from the fireplace for disposal until they are totally cold. Avoid a large build-up of ashes in the fireplace.

Keep Your Equipment in Good Operating Condition

- Be sure all heaters, stoves, fireplaces and chimneys are working properly. Check for worn or overloaded electrical cords, gas leaks or faulty switches.
- Do not use any equipment that is damaged. If the cord is frayed or split, or hot to the touch, have it replaced by a professional.
- Avoid overloading a circuit. Do not use an extension cord with a portable heater unless it is a heavy duty cord rated as high as the current rating listed on the heater. Never run a heater cord or extension cord under carpet or rugs.

Use Only Approved Heaters and Fuels

- All heaters should be approved by a nationally known safety testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories or Factory Mutual.
- Look for a heater with a solid base, as well as an automatic cut-off switch which operated when the unit is tipped over.
- If your heater is not electric, be sure there is proper ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide accumulation. Never use the burners on your cook stove or your oven to heat your home.

Central Heating Needs Attention, Too!

- If you have central heating in your home, have professionals periodically check and clean the system. Leave central heating repairs to the experts.

Flammable Liquids

- Always use the right fuel in a heater that is recommended by the manufacturer. Do not use substitutes or lower grade fuels.
- Never use gasoline-even for cleaning-as it gives off deadly fumes.
- Do not smoke when handling flammable liquids.
- Store flammable liquids in special containers outside the residence at all times.
- Never fill a heater with oil or kerosene inside your residence.
- A fuel spill can be dangerous. Avoid filling a heater completely with oil or kerosene because as fuel warms, it expands; a spill could cause a flare-up.
- Let the heater cool before refueling.

Natural Gas or Liquefied Petroleum Gas Heaters

- When using gas space heaters, light the match before turning on the gas to the burner, thus avoiding the risk of a flare-up from accumulated gas.
- If there is a strong gas smell, turn off gas flow and ventilate by opening windows and doors. Call immediately for gas service personnel.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- It is invisible, odorless, and tasteless, and can hurt you before you even know it's there. Early symptoms of CO exposure are headache, sleepiness, nausea, and dizziness. If anyone has symptoms, leave the house immediately. Use a neighbor's phone to call 911 for the fire department.
- A carbon monoxide detector can warn you if a problem occurs. Purchase one from any hardware store. Place one carbon monoxide alarm near all sleeping areas. Install one on each level of the home.
- Any machine that burns fuel (natural gas, propane, wood, coal, or oil) can produce carbon monoxide. Non-electric fuel-fired furnaces, gas water heaters, stoves, dryers, gas-powered generators, fireplaces, wood stoves, charcoal grills, lawnmowers, and leaf blowers, etc.
- Prevent CO emergencies by avoiding dangerous activities. Never run your car or other gas-powered vehicles in the house or garage, even if the garage door is open. Do not use a charcoal grill or a gas-powered generator inside a house, tent, or other enclosed space.

Frozen Pipes

- Do not try to thaw them with a torch or other open flame. Call the water department for assistance and advice.

Be Prepared!

Make sure your family is prepared for any fire emergency that might happen in your home regardless of the season.

Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside each bedroom area. Test your detectors at least monthly and change the battery every year. You can test your detector by using the end of a broom handle to press and hold down the button on the smoke detector.

Know 2 ways out of every room, especially bedrooms.

Map out an emergency escape plan with your entire family. Decide on a meeting place outdoors where everyone will gather in case of fire.

Practice your plan by holding periodic home fire drills.