



Cold Weather Fire Safety Tips

Cold temperatures may prompt families to turn to drastic measures, such as using a gas oven or charcoal grill, to heat the home. Even traditional alternative heating sources, such as a fireplace or space heater can be dangerous if not used properly. As temperatures drop in your community, some simple tips can help keep families safer.

Winter months in particular are the peak time for house fires and carbon monoxide poisonings, with most incidents due to improperly ventilated or malfunctioning heating sources. Families can better protect themselves by having working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms on every level of the home and in sleeping areas, as well as fire extinguishers within reach in the kitchen, garage and bedroom. In addition, the experts recommend the following heating safety tips:

CARBON MONOXIDE PREVENTION

- Do not use ovens or stoves to heat your home.
- Do not use charcoal or gas grills inside or operate outdoors near a window where CO fumes could seep in through a window.
- Keep chimneys clear of animal nests, leaves and residue to ensure proper venting. Have all fireplaces cleaned and inspected annually.
- Have a licensed professional inspect heating systems and other fuel-burning appliances annually.
- Install fuel-burning appliances properly and operate according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Do not use kerosene space heaters in enclosed spaces. Keep doors open to the rest of the house to help promote proper ventilation.
- Open the fireplace damper before lighting a fire, and keep it open until the ashes are cool to avert the buildup of carbon monoxide, especially at night while families sleep.
- Do not run a fuel-powered engine, such as a vehicle or generator, inside the home or in an attached garage or carport. CO fumes can seep into the home through air intake valves, baseboards and doors.

FIRE PREVENTION

- Ensure that space heaters meet the latest safety standards, which would include having an automatic cut-off device and guarding around the heating coils and burners.
- Place space heaters on a level, hard and nonflammable surface, and keep them at least three feet away from bedding, drapes, furniture and other flammable materials.
- Turn off space heaters when you leave an area or before going to sleep. Keep children and pets away.
- Never use gasoline, charcoal lighter or other fuel to light or relight a fireplace because the vapors could explode. Keep flammable materials away.