

Heating

Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January and February, and trails only cooking equipment in home fires year-round.

FACTS & FIGURES:

- ✦ Heating equipment--furnaces, fireplaces, etc., can create fires, or give off carbon monoxide.
- ✦ In 2002, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 45,500 home structure fires reported to U.S. fire departments. These fires caused an estimated 220 civilian deaths, 990 civilian fire injuries, and \$449,000,000 in direct property damage.¹
- ✦ These fires fell 14% from the 2001 total to the lowest point since data collection began. Deaths from these fires fell 12% and injuries fell 11%.¹
- ✦ Fireplaces and chimneys rank first in the number of fires among types of heating equipment. Most of these were caused by creosote build-up.¹
- ✦ Portable and fixed spaced heaters, including wood stoves, caused a disproportionate share of the home heating fire deaths. Space heaters were involved in 25% of the home heating fires but 75% of the deaths.¹
- ✦ The leading cause of space heater fires was combustibles too close to the heater, except for wood stoves, where the leading cause was creosote build-up, and fixed electric space heaters, where the leading cause was equipment left unattended.¹

¹Source: Fire statistics were derived from the NFPA's annual fire department survey. Detailed statistics were derived by NFPA from the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and NFPA's fire department survey

SPACE HEATERS

- ✦ Never add fuel to a portable heater that is turned on or still hot--the fuel could explode into flames
- ✦ Never run the heater's cord under a carpet, rug or furniture. This could cause the cord to overheat and start a fire.
- ✦ Keep flammable materials--including bedding, clothing, draperies, rugs and furniture--at least three feet away from the heater.
- ✦ Even if you space heater has safety features such as cut-off switches or heating element guards, don't rely solely on them. A tipped over unit can still be hot enough to ignite carpet.
- ✦ Don't use space heaters in rooms where children are unsupervised.
- ✦ Never leave heaters on while you are sleeping.
- ✦ If using space heaters, be sure to have smoke detectors in your house.
- ✦ Be sure to use the heater according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- ✦ Make sure portable space heaters are set on a firm steady base.
- ✦ Electric space heaters should be properly grounded.
- ✦ Make sure that the heaters are plugged into a circuit that can handle the load.
- ✦ NEVER use a gas stove, electric range, or a charcoal grill as a space heater.

FIREPLACES

- ✦ Clean your fireplace regularly.
- ✦ Have the chimney cleaned and inspected every year.
- ✦ Use a screen around the fireplace to protect your home from popping embers.
- ✦ Extinguish the fire before you go to sleep.
- ✦ If using a fireplace or wood stove, you should have smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors installed in your house.
- ✦ Place embers in a closed metal container on a fire proof surface.
- ✦ Never start a fire or try to revive one with gasoline or other flammable liquids.
- ✦ Trim tree branches at least 10 feet from your chimney.
- ✦ When burning wood, it is important to use properly seasoned wood. Moisture content of 20-25% is the best. Wood that is too well-seasoned or not seasoned enough will create excessive creosote build-up.

KEROSENE HEATERS

- ✦ Place the heater out of high traffic areas such as doorways and hallways.
- ✦ Store kerosene outdoors, out of the reach of children in a tightly sealed and correctly labeled container.
- ✦ If flames appear outside the heater cabinet, call the fire department immediately. DO NOT attempt to move the heater.
- ✦ Keep kerosene heaters in well-ventilated rooms.
- ✦ Turn off the heater when you go to sleep.
- ✦ Never leave the heater operating unattended.
- ✦ Place the heater at least three feet from furniture, curtains, clothing and other flammable objects.

FURNACES

- ✦ In the fall, have your furnace dealer or an authorized repairperson check your furnace--especially in the following areas:
 - ✦ Burner and pilot assemblies
 - ✦ Cracks in the heat exchanger
 - ✦ Check the pilot thermocouple
 - ✦ Examine the filter
 - ✦ Check vent piping
 - ✦ Test the electronic ignition
 - ✦ Test the fan
 - ✦ Test the limit switch
 - ✦ Burner adjustment
 - ✦ Measure manifold gas pressure

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- ✚ Carbon monoxide test
- ✚ Set heat anticipator
- ✚ Check/adjust belt tension
- ✚ Examine the draft diverter
- ✚ Lubricate the fan motor
- ✚ You can check for combustibles around the furnace--keep the area clear at least 3 feet around the furnace
- ✚ Install a ceiling of fire-resistant acoustic tile, especially if heating equipment is in a basement that is often in use.
- ✚ Have a fire extinguisher located near the furnace
- ✚ Have smoke & carbon monoxide detectors located on each floor of your home
- ✚ Clean or repair air filters as required per manufacturers directions
- ✚ lubricate motors, blowers and water pumps according to manufacturers directions
- ✚ Know the location of gas/oil shut off valves and how to use them in case of emergency
- ✚ Never store paints, thinners or other solvents near your furnace
- ✚ Keep upstairs heating & return air ducts openings clear and open
- ✚ Never hang anything from gas/oil pipes
- ✚ Use kitchen exhaust fans sparingly during the heating months
- ✚ Don't use whole house fans during the heating season

WOOD BURNING STOVES

- ✚ Check the stove pipes & chimney for creosote buildup.
- ✚ Have your chimney inspected & cleaned at least once per year.
- ✚ Shiny creosote deposits look like black paint, and are an indication that your wood stove is not working properly.
- ✚ Burn seasoned wood to minimize creosote build-up.
- ✚ Don't overload the stove with wood.
- ✚ Keep combustibles away from the stove.
- ✚ Keep a dry chemical fire extinguisher on hand.
- ✚ In the event of a chimney fire, close the damper and air inlet immediately, then call the fire department.
- ✚ Don't connect a wood stove to a fireplace chimney unless the chimney has been properly sealed around the stovepipe and also be sure that local codes/laws will allow such a connection.
- ✚ Be sure to have a fire resistive material installed on walls around the stove.
- ✚ Never let children stoke or start the wood burning stove.