

## CARBON MONOXIDE AND HOME FIRE RISKS ARE HEATING UP THIS WINTER

*Lowe's, the Home Safety Council® and the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department*

With frigid temperatures and winter storms blanketing communities across the United States, the national nonprofit Home Safety Council and Lowe's are encouraging families to keep safety in mind when heating the home this winter. Following safe heating practices will protect homes against two of the most common winter safety hazards: fires and carbon monoxide (CO).

The Home Safety Council's State of Home Safety in America™ report revealed 67 percent of American households use fuel-burning appliances and equipment, such as gas fireplaces, wood stoves and kerosene heaters, to keep their loved ones warm during winter months. When using such products, be sure to follow all the manufacturers' instructions and install a working CO monitor that will detect and alert your family when dangerous levels of the deadly—and odorless—gas are present.

“In January and February, fires caused by heating appliances overtake cooking fires as the leading cause of home fires, and carbon monoxide risks also rise as families turn to alternative heating solutions to keep warm,” said Meri-K Appy, president of the Home Safety Council. “To protect against fire, it is critical that families check all heat sources throughout their home to make sure they are not too close to anything that can burn. To be safe from CO poisoning, have all fuel-burning appliances inspected and cleaned by a professional, and install at least one CO detector to alert you to dangerous levels of the deadly gas in your home.”

An alarming 59 percent of American households have not installed a CO detector, and many other homes do not have a working CO detector due to missing or dead batteries. The start of 2010 marks the perfect opportunity to check the batteries in CO monitors and smoke alarms to ensure they are working properly.

“Space heaters, generators and other alternative heating solutions offer cost-effective ways to keep your family warm throughout the winter without heating the whole house, allowing you to lower your thermostat to reduce your energy bills,” said Eric Sowder, Lowe's senior vice president of merchandising over outdoor living. “Many products have built-in safety features like automatic shutoffs, anti-tipping devices and heat guards, but be sure to follow all manufacturers' instructions for use and placement of heating devices to avoid serious home injuries and help you rest easy throughout the winter.”

The Home Safety Council and Lowe's offer the following tips to help warm up your home while preventing fire and CO dangers this winter.

### Portable Space Heaters

- Make sure your heater has been tested for safety. Look on the bottom for a label such as ETL, UL or CSA.
- Place space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn, including furniture, people, pets and curtains.
- There should always be an adult in the room when a space heater is on.
- Turn off space heaters before leaving a room or going to sleep.
- Never use space heaters to dry clothing or blankets.

### Prevent CO Dangers

- In MN, you must have a CO alarm within 10 feet of the bedrooms. If you have people sleeping on multiple levels, there must be one on each level.
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune-up your home's central heating system and repair leaks or other problems annually.
- Keep CO alarms away from any combustion, furnace vents or fresh air.
- Never use an oven or range to heat your home.
- Never use a gas or charcoal grill inside your home or in a closed garage.

### Fireplaces and Wood Stoves

- Burn only seasoned hardwood like oak, ash or maple. Do not burn trash, cardboard boxes or Christmas trees because these items burn unevenly, and may contain poisons or cause a home fire.
- Have a professional chimney sweep inspect chimneys every year.
- Open flues before fireplaces are used.
- Use sturdy screens or glass doors to keep embers inside fireplaces.

### Generator Safety

- Always read the Owner's Manual and instructions for the generator.
- Carefully follow all instructions and warnings to safely start and operate the generator. Do not cut corners when it comes to safety.
- Permanently installed automatic standby generators are the safest way to provide backup power to your home.
- Portable generators can produce carbon monoxide. They should always be used outdoors and placed away from open windows. Never use a portable generator indoors or in any enclosed space, such as a garage.
- Be careful when refueling generators to avoid starting a fire or getting burned.
- Be sure the generator is connected correctly.
- Never try to power the house wiring by "backfeeding" the generator into a wall outlet. This can put utility workers and neighbors in danger.
- After starting a generator, wait 10 seconds for the power to stabilize. Then plug in your appliances. This helps avoid electrical shocks.

If you would like to have a *free* **Home Safety Survey** that is provided by the Fire Department, call 763-767-4003 for an appointment.