

Safety Steps for Wintry Weather

Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department and the Home Safety Council

Minnesota winter brings bitter winds, icy paths and dipping temperatures. But perhaps the most chilling result of wintry weather is the marked increase in home injury during this season.

“Carbon monoxide, home fires and power outage hazards pose harmful threats to our families and their well being,” says Meri-K Appy, president of the Home Safety Council. “Unfortunately, only 35 percent of homeowners have a carbon monoxide detector in their home – leaving more than half of families exposed to this silent killer.”

The Home Safety Council recommends following these simple steps to avoid potential dangers during the winter months:

Carbon Monoxide(CO) Precaution: Heating Systems and Gas Appliances

- Install a smoke alarm in the bedroom and on each level of the home.
- CO alarm on every level of your home where people are sleeping and within 10 feet of these sleeping areas.
- The fall is a great time to have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune-up central heating system and repair leaks.
- Keep gas appliances properly adjusted and serviced.
- Avoid using a cooking stove to heat your home.
- Never use a gas grill inside your home or in a closed garage.

Home Fire Precautions: Fireplaces and Wood Stoves

- Burn only wood- not trash, cardboard boxes, or Christmas trees because these items increase the risk of uncontrolled fires.
- Check the chimneys you use regularly every year for cracks, blockages and leaks.
- Keep all persons and flammable objects, including wallpaper, bedding, clothing and pets, at least 36 inches away from fireplaces and wood stoves.
- Open flues when fireplaces are in use.
- Hire a professional sweep to clean your chimney at least once a year to prevent creosote build-up.

House Fire Precautions: Space Heaters

- Turn off space heaters before leaving a room or going to sleep.
- Supervise children and pets at all times when a portable space heater is in use.
- Avoid using space heaters to dry flammable items such as clothing or blankets.
- Keep all objects at least three feet from space heaters.

Power Outage Precautions: Lighting Sources and Perishable Food

- Stock up on batteries, flashlights, portable radios, canned foods, manual can openers, bottled water and blankets.
- Use flashlights instead of candles to avoid a possible fire hazard.
- Run water at a trickle to help prevent pipes from freezing and bursting if outside (except when in a manufactured home) temperatures are below freezing for an extended period of time and your home has no heat.
- Store perishable food outside in the snow or in an unheated outside building if power goes out.