

Wintertime Home Safety Practices

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Heating equipment, especially portable and space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves, require careful use and proper maintenance. Together, the Spring Lake Park-Blaine-Mounds View Fire Department and The Home Safety Council offer the following tips to help families prevent fire- and burn-related injuries during the winter months.

Portable Space Heaters

- Purchase electric space heaters that bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory, such as UL, ETL, CSA, etc.
- Place space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn - including furniture, people, pets and window treatments.
- 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.
- Use kerosene heaters only where permitted by law. Use the recommended grade kerosene and never use an alternative fuel. Kerosene heaters must be fueled outside.
- Never use space heaters to dry clothing or blankets.

Fireplaces and Wood Stoves

- Burn only seasoned hardwood - not trash, cardboard boxes, or Christmas trees because these items burn unevenly, may contain toxins, and increase the risk of uncontrolled fires.
- Have a professional chimney sweep inspect chimneys annually for cracks, blockages and leaks and have them cleaned and repaired as needed.
- Keep all persons, pets and flammable objects, including kindling, bedding, clothing, at least three feet away from fireplaces and wood stoves.
- Use sturdy screens or doors to keep embers inside fireplaces.
- Install at least one smoke alarm on every level of your home and inside sleeping areas.
- Keep young children away from working wood stoves, gas fireplaces and heaters to avoid contact burn injuries.

Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning Precautions:

Carbon monoxide is commonly known as “the silent killer.” Because it is colorless odorless, and tasteless, none of your senses can detect it. CO claims the lives of nearly 300 people in their homes each year according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). CO is a potentially deadly gas that is produced by fuel-burning heating equipment, such as furnaces, wood stoves, fireplaces, and kerosene heaters. Follow these guidelines to help keep your family safer.

- Install at least one CO alarm within 10 feet of sleeping areas. Consider one with a digital readout. Replace the device every 5 years.
- Have a trained professional inspect, clean and tune-up your home’s central heating system/water heater and repair leaks or other problems; fireplaces and woodstoves should also be inspected each year and cleaned or repaired as needed.
- Keep gas appliances properly adjusted and serviced.
- 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.

- Portable electric generators must be used outside only. Never use them indoors, in a garage or in any confined area that can allow CO to collect. Follow usage directions closely.

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 *flameless* candles to avoid a possible fire hazard.
- Run water at a trickle to help prevent pipes from freezing and bursting if outside temperatures are below freezing for an extended period of time and your home has no heat, unless you are in a manufactured home.
- Store perishable food outside in the snow or in an unheated outside building if power goes out.