

Portable Heaters

Portable Heaters

- Never touch a heater while in use or leave one unattended especially near children and pets.
- Keep heaters away from curtains, pillows, blankets, throws, and high traffic areas.
- Turn off or unplug heaters when you leave the room, go to sleep, or when not in use.
- Never use a heater to thaw frozen pipes, heat water or food, dry clothing, or for outdoor use.
- Never use heaters as your only source of heat.
- Never place your heater on a rug.
- Let your heater cool for at least 5 minutes before moving it.
- Leave repairs to a professional.
- Never leave camping heaters and lanterns on while sleeping.

Electric Space Heaters

- ▶ Look for safety devices including an alarm, tip-over switch, and an overheating cut-off device. Watch for overheating.
- ▶ Keep heaters away from water. Never touch one when you are wet.
- ▶ Plug the heater directly into a wall outlet for this type of appliance.
- ▶ Never use a heater if the cord is frayed or damaged.
- ▶ Keep the heater off its cord.
- ▶ Pull the plug not the cord to unplug. Use the handle.

Approximately 3,000 fires, 102 deaths, and 294 injuries are caused by space heaters.



- **Kerosene Heaters** (*may be illegal in some states*)
- Use with proper ventilation. Never use near flammable liquids, aerosols, or oils.
- Check the wick twice a month for cleaning.
- Refuel cooled heaters outdoors, using approved kerosene.
- Make sure your kerosene heater has a protective cage around it.

Heating & Cooling Units

Have all systems inspected and maintained by a certified and licensed heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) technician. Always check with local inspectors before installing a permanent unit.

Furnaces

- Replace old furnaces with a modern efficiency unit.
- Make sure your thermostat is working properly.
- Replace the filter once a month.
- Wash, brush, or vacuum permanent filters.
- Check the exhaust vent for debris.
- Make sure the skirting in a mobile home has 4-6 vents so air can pass freely underneath.
- Use or install a humidifier. Relative humidity should be 20-40%.
- Use ceiling fans to distribute the heat.
- Give your furnace space.
- Make sure the automatic controls and emergency shutoffs are working properly.
- Have a service technician inspect the wall and ceiling near the furnace to make sure it has adequate insulation.

Air Conditioning Systems

- ▶ Planting shrubs (at least 3 ft. away) provides shade so the unit works more efficiently.
- ▶ Clean or change the filter on the blower.
- ▶ Use a protective cover over your outside unit to keep out leaves and other debris when not in use.



Keep children and pets away from any heating unit.

Window Air Conditioning Units

- Unplug the unit before any maintenance.
- Remove the cover and clean out any debris.
- Make sure window units are removed or properly sealed during the winter months to keep from straining the furnace.

Heating Safety

Heat without hazards.



National Fire Safety Council, Inc.

Warming Up

Faulty heating equipment is responsible for over 40% of winter home fires and is the 2nd leading cause of year-round fires.

Have heating and cooling systems cleaned and inspected by a qualified technician each season. This includes furnaces, central air systems, woodstoves, and fireplaces.

Make sure heating units comply with local fire codes and are approved by an independent testing laboratory. Follow all manufacturer's instructions. Keep all heating units at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn. Remember, fueled heaters must be vented to prevent carbon monoxide from building up in your home.

Install and maintain fire safety devices such as smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, and fire extinguishers. Create a Home Fire Escape Plan and practice it often. It may save your life.

In 1998, there were 49,200 heating-related fires, resulting in 388 deaths, 1,445 injuries, and over \$515 million in property damage.

2 out of 3 home heating fires and 3 out of every 4 deaths were due to space heaters.

Common causes of these fires:

- lack of proper maintenance
- creosote build-up
- not providing enough space around a portable heater
- improperly installed woodstoves
- using the wrong fuels

Fireplaces & Woodstoves

There are over 22 million fireplaces in use in the U.S., plus a variety of other heating sources. Never use charcoal grills, camping lanterns, or generators to warm a home, tent, or camper. They emit carbon monoxide. Heat safely and never leave a fire unattended.

- ✓ Before starting a fire, be sure the fireplace was constructed for actual use, not just for decoration.
- ✓ Clean out ashes. Use a metal container to dispose of cooled ashes. Store it outside.
- ✓ Have chimneys cleaned and inspected yearly including the flue and damper.
- ✓ Use a fire-proof fireplace mat over a wood or carpeted floor. Place woodstoves on a fire-resistant hearth rug or stove board.
- ✓ Open the damper and flue before lighting the fire.
- ✓ Never use an accelerant such as gasoline or lighter fluid. Vapors can travel the length of a room and explode.
- ✓ Keep the fire in proportion to the unit.
- ✓ Install a spark arrester on top of any chimney.
- ✓ In the winter months, if snow does not accumulate on your roof, you may be losing heat and may need more insulation or a new roof.

Heating equipment is the leading cause of home fires during the winter months.



Firewood and Fire Logs

- Only burn dry, well-seasoned firewood.
- Manufactured firelogs are cleaner and safer than firewood. Never use more than one at a time.
- Never add an artificial log to a natural wood fire that is already burning. Wait at least 2 hours.
- Manufactured logs that contain wax are to only be used in a fireplace.
- Never poke artificial logs or break them apart.
- Never soak home rolled newspaper logs in flammable fuels, only water.

More than 6,000 children and adults were hospitalized for fireplace injuries. Children under 5 years old sustained 65% of the injuries.



Safety Tips

- ▶ Always use a fireplace screen or closure to keep sparks from escaping.
- ▶ Never burn paper, garbage, or charcoal in a fireplace or woodstove.
- ▶ Make sure any decorations are well away from the fire.
- ▶ Only use woodstoves that are air-tight and have a controlled airflow.
- ▶ Check with your local building inspector to make sure your woodstove is placed at least 3 feet away from walls, floors, and ceilings.

Extinguishing the Fire

1. Make sure the fire is out before going to bed or leaving the house. Let a woodstove fire burn out on its own.
2. If you must extinguish a fire NEVER USE WATER. Instead, use sand or cat litter.
3. NEVER close the flue until the fire is completely out. Wait until it is done smoldering.
4. Only fight a fire if it is small enough to use a fire extinguisher. Make sure there is an escape route clear of obstacles behind you. If the fire doesn't go out right away, get out.

Keep a fully charged ABC fire extinguisher nearby and know how to use it.

