

HEATING SAFETY TIPS

Heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fire deaths and is, in fact, second only to cooking fires as a cause of home fires. It's no surprise that more than half of home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January and February since those are the months when this equipment is most likely to be in use. However, there are some simple steps can prevent most heating-related fires from happening.



Flammable material stacked around the heating system is an invitation for a fire.

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove or a portable space heater.
- Have a three-foot "kid-free, pet-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.



Heating your home with poorly maintained equipment is like playing with fire—sometimes quite literally. Even if you don't have a fireplace with an open flame, you could be putting the safety of your home and family at risk especially if you slack off on monitoring the condition and performance of your heating systems.

- Place space heaters on a level, hard and nonflammable surface (such as ceramic tile floor) not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep the heater at least three feet from bedding, drapes, furniture and other flammable materials. Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed. Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters. Keep in mind that some propane heaters can create locally humid conditions which can cause dangerous molds to grow.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Don't burn cardboard, pressure-treated wood, particle board, plywood, plastic, trash, Christmas trees or Christmas paper in your fireplace. Fireplaces were meant to burn wood, not be a trash disposal option. Open the fireplace damper before lighting the fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. Never close the damper if the ashes are still warm. An open damper may also help prevent build-up of poisonous gases inside the home. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a covered metal container. Keep the ashes container a safe distance away from your home.



- Test your smoke alarms once a month.
- Carbon monoxide is a silent killer. This colorless, odorless, poisonous gas kills nearly 500 U.S. residents each year, five times as many as West Nile virus. Make sure you have working



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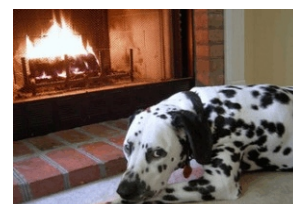
- carbon monoxide detectors in your home.
- Never burn charcoal inside of homes, vehicles, tents or campers. Charcoal should never be used indoors even if ventilation is provided.

KEEPING KIDS AND PETS SAFE AROUND FIREPLACES

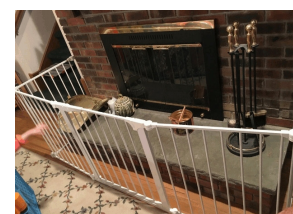


The flickering flames of a fireplace can be an irresistible magnet for small children and pets. While we generally think that dogs and cats have enough sense to stay away from an open flame, that's often no more true of pets than it is of kiddies as both share the same lack of understanding about fireplace safety and most, whether human, canine or feline love to sit or lie

close to the warmth of the fire. Every type of fireplace – whether wood-burning, gas, or electric – is a potential danger to children and pets.



Obviously, the best way to prevent having a child or a pet get burned by getting too close to the fireplace is to supervise them at all times when there is a fire burning. If you have to leave the room while the fire is burning, take the child and your pets with you.



The glass doors on a fireplace heat up quickly and, if touched, the doors can cause serious burns. Fireplace hearth gates can provide a great deal of protection since they prevent pets and children from getting too near the fireplace. These barriers do not have to be an eyesore. There are many stylish hearth gates available.