

News Release from: Oregon State Fire Marshal

STATE FIRE MARSHAL URGES WINTER HEATING SAFETY

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State Fire Marshal Randy Simpson is urging Oregonians to be fire safe and use caution when heating homes this winter.

From 2004 through 2008 in Oregon there were 2,899 home heating-related fires resulting in 12 deaths, 85 injuries, and more than \$42 million in property loss. These heating-related fires also resulted in 34 injuries to firefighters.

"Homeowners need to have the chimneys and flues on their fireplace and woodstoves cleaned and inspected annually," said State Fire Marshal Randy Simpson. "Also be sure to give heaters their space, keeping them three feet away from combustible materials."

Oregonians can keep themselves safe by following these home heating safety tips:

Fireplaces and Woodstoves

- Have chimney and woodstove flues inspected and cleaned each year by a qualified chimney sweep. Ask them to check for creosote deposits, soot build-up, or physical damage. . Always use a fireplace screen. Make sure the screen is made of sturdy metal or heat-tempered glass to prevent sparks from escaping.
- Keep a clutter free environment. Store kindling, fire logs, and wood at least three feet from any heat source.
- Dispose of ashes in a metal container and place the container outdoors at least three feet from anything flammable. Ashes may retain heat for days after they appear out.

Portable Space Heaters

- When using portable heaters make sure they come with an automatic tip-over switch and a high temperature limit switch. The tip-over switch turns the heater off if it is knocked over. The high temperature limit switch regulates the heater preventing it from overheating.
- Give heaters space. Keep at least three feet of space between the heater and combustibles such as furniture, curtains, papers, and people.
- Check heater electrical cords. If the cord is frayed, cracked, or becomes hot have it serviced.
- Never use extension cords with portable electric heaters. It can overload the circuit and cause a fire.
- Unplug heaters when not in use or before going to bed.

Electric baseboard and wall heaters

- Be aware of electric baseboard or wall heaters. These heaters are thermostatically controlled and turn on without warning when temperatures drop. Keep combustibles at least three feet from these types of heaters.
- Propane appliances
- If using a propane-fueled heater, make sure it is designed for indoor use. Read all of the manufacturer's instructions and make sure it is properly vented.
- Do not use barbecues indoors for heating or cooking.
- Make sure propane-fueled appliances are properly vented and follow all manufacturers' instructions.

- If you smell gas, do not operate any switches, appliances, or thermostats. A spark from one of these could ignite the gas. Get everyone outside and away from the building. Shut off the gas supply. Call your propane supplier from a neighbor's phone.
- Avoid kerosene heaters. They can emit poisonous fumes.

Smoke alarms and home escape plans

- Working smoke alarms alert you to a fire and more than double your chances of surviving a fire. In a fire, minutes could mean the difference between life and death.
- Install smoke alarms in every home, on every level, outside each sleeping area and in each bedroom.
- Test and vacuum your smoke alarms each month to make sure they are working.
- Smoke alarms 8 to 10 years old or older should be replaced.
- Make a home escape plan and practice it with your family at least twice a year.

Carbon Monoxide dangers

- Home heating and cooking equipment that burn fuels such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil and methane are sources of carbon monoxide.
- Carbon monoxide poisoning can be fatal if not detected early.
- If you burn one of these fuels for home heating, make sure your carbon monoxide alarm is working properly.

For more home fire safety tips, visit:

http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/Com_Ed_Section.shtml

For more smoke alarm information, visit:

http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/CommEd_SA_Program.shtml#Smoke_Alarm_Q_A

For more information on carbon monoxide and Oregon's carbon monoxide law, visit:

http://www.oregon.gov/OSP/SFM/CommEd_CO_Program.shtml