



OREGON

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Cooling temperatures prompt safe heating advice from the state fire marshal

As cooler weather arrives, State Fire Marshal Mark Wallace is urging Oregonians to use heating appliances wisely and have fireplaces, woodstoves, and other heating equipment inspected for safety.

“With the onset of cooler weather, I am appealing to citizens to have the chimneys and flues on their fireplaces and woodstoves cleaned and inspected before using them,” says Wallace. “This is one of the most important steps you can take to increase the safety of you family during the winter months.”

From 2006 through 2010 in Oregon, there were 2,169 home heating-related fires resulting in nine deaths, 77 injuries, and more than \$37 million in property loss. Seventy-six percent of home heating fires occur in the months from October through March.

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 specialist.** 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.** Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations, and flammable materials.
- **Store kindling, fire logs, and wood at least three feet from any heat source.**
- **Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures.**

- **Use proper fire starters.** Proper fire starters include newspaper, kindling, or specially manufactured starters designed for indoor use. Never use flammable liquid, such as lighter fluid, kerosene, or gasoline to start a fire.
- **Never burn charcoal indoors.** Burning charcoal can give off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide.
- **Use fire-resistant materials on walls around woodstoves.**
- **Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing of them.**
- **Dispose of ashes in a tightly covered metal container and place the container outdoors, at least ten feet from the home and any other nearby buildings.** 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, blankets, papers, and people.
- **Check heater electrical cords.** Have your cord serviced if it is frayed, cracked, or becomes hot during use.
- **Never use an extension cord with a portable electric heater.** It can overload the circuit and cause a fire.
- **Never allow children to play with, or around, the heater.**
- **Unplug heaters when not in use, before going to bed, or when leaving the room.**

Electric Baseboard and Wall Heaters

- **Be aware of electric baseboard and wall heaters.** These heaters are thermostatically controlled and may turn on without warning when temperatures drop.
- **Keep combustibles clear. Give heaters space.** Just as with portable space heaters, keep at least three feet of space between your baseboard/wall heater and combustibles items such as furniture, curtains, blankets, papers, and people.

Propane Appliances

- **If using a propane-fueled heater, make sure it is designed for indoor use.** Read all manufacturer instructions and ensure it is properly vented.
- **Do not use barbecues for heating or cooking indoors.**
- **Make sure propane-fueled appliances are properly vented and follow all manufacturer instructions.**
- **If you smell gas, do not operate any switches, appliances, or thermostats.** A spark from any 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 deadly 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.

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

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