



# Practice Alert

## Heating Equipment Fire Safety

Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January, and February and trails only cooking equipment fires year-round.

### Safety Tips

- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory and is legal for use in your community. (Some communities do not permit portable kerosene heaters).
- Install your stationary (fixed) space heater according to manufacturer's instructions or applicable codes or have installed by a professional.
- Plug your electric-powered space heater into an outlet with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- Use the proper grade of the proper fuel for your liquid-fueled space heater, and never use gasoline in any heater not approved for gasoline use. Refuel only in well ventilated areas and when the equipment is cool.
- Use only dry, seasoned wood in your wood stove or fireplace to avoid the build up of creosote, an oily deposit that easily catches

fire and accounts for most chimney fires and the largest share of home heating fires.

- Use only paper or kindling wood, not flammable liquid, to start a fire. Do not use artificial logs in wood stoves.
- Use a sturdy screen around your fireplace to prevent sparks from flying in the room.
- Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container and is kept a safe distance from your house.
- Turn off space heaters when the room they are in is unoccupied or when instructions state they should be turned off.
- Turn off portable space heaters when you go to bed.
- Do not use your oven to heat your home.
- Make sure fuel burning equipment is vented to the outside, and the venting is clear and unobstructed. Ensure the exit point is properly sealed around the vent, all of which is to make sure deadly carbon monoxide does not build up in the home.
- Inspect all heating equipment annually and clean as necessary.
- Test smoke alarms monthly; install a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area.

## Facts and Figures

- In 2005, heating equipment was involved in approximately 62,200 reported U.S. home structure fires, resulting in 670 deaths and 1,550 injuries and \$909 million in property damage.
- Space heaters, whether portable or stationary, accounted for one-third (32%) of the home heating fires and three-fourths (73%) of home heating fire deaths in 2005.

- Excluding small confined fires, heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding, is by far the leading factor contributing to home heating fires (27%) and home heating fire deaths (53%).
- Chimneys and chimney connectors accounted for the largest share (36%) of home heating fire incidents in 2005. Failure to clean accounted for two-thirds (64%) of the confined chimney and chimney connector fires in 2002-2005.

NOTE: Information cited from the National Fire Protection Association

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