

Home Heating Safety

Nearly three in four people killed in home heating fires in 2006 died in fires that involved (stationary or portable) space heaters, according to a new report released by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

In 2006, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 64,100 U.S. home structure fires, 540 civilian deaths, 1,400 civilian injuries, and \$943 million in direct property damage. The peak months for home heating fires are December, January, and February. Home heating fires are more likely to occur in the evening and peak between 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

- Fatal home heating fires are more likely to occur between midnight and 10:00 a.m.
- The leading factor contributing to home heating fires was when heating equipment was left too close to things that can burn.
- Sixty percent of the confined chimney and flue fires (2003-2006) occurred because the chimney was not cleaned.

To keep you and your family we offer the following heating safety tips.

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable heater.
- Only use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters, or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- For fuel burning space heaters, always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room and burn only dry, seasoned wood. Allow ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from the home.
- For wood burning stoves, install chimney connectors and chimneys following manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation.
- Make sure all fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.
- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and windows. Call a gas service person.
- Test smoke alarms at least monthly.

