



Winter Fire Safety

As we head into the winter months and in particular the winter holidays, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reminds us that there are fire hazards that increase during this time. With knowledge and some planning, the risk of fire during what should be a happy time spent with family and friends may be reduced.

Heating

Per the NFPA, heating appliance related fires are the second leading cause of U.S. home fires, deaths and injuries. December, January and February are the leading months for these fires. Space heaters represent the leading cause of fires within this category. When using space heaters please be aware and adhere to the clearance to combustibles recommendations. Be aware when using a space heater near a bed or couch. Items like blankets could fall off the furniture and onto the space heater, resulting in a fire.

Try to avoid the use of extension cords with space heaters. If you must use an extension cord make sure it is rated for the current draw of the space heater. Also, make sure the cord is in good condition, with no nicks or other damage.

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide is an odorless gas that is created during the combustion process in appliances such as water heaters, boilers, furnaces and gas fireplaces. While a properly maintained and adjusted appliance will not generate carbon monoxide, issues such as poor maintenance and lack of combustion air can result in the generation of carbon monoxide (CO). The most important factor in preventing carbon monoxide deaths/injuries is having a working CO detector in your home.

Generators

Winter storms can cause power outages due to downed power lines. Many people use portable generators during these events to make sure their home remains heated and that there is power to refrigerators and freezers. When using a portable generator the placement of the unit is critical. Since generators can produce carbon monoxide, do not place the generator within the home. Also, do not place the generator near windows, furnace vents or other areas where the fumes from the generator can be brought into the home.

Candles

Candles can be not only a cause of fires, but they are also responsible for soot losses within a home. Per the NFPA, the 2 days that have the most candle related fires are Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

Soot losses from candles are many times mistaken for a furnace problem. This is because the furnace distributes the soot throughout the home. If you have jar candles that are black around the opening to the jar, you are introducing soot into the home. This can also represent a health issue, especially for those people with allergies or other breathing issues, such as COPD. Make sure to keep the candle wick trimmed and only buy high quality candles.

Electrical

Electrical fires represent the single largest category of home fire losses, per the NFPA. This involves not only the home electrical distribution system, but also electrical appliances such as dryers, stoves, toasters, coffee makers, etc.

As we enter the winter holiday season, there are some simple steps you can take to minimize your chances of becoming a statistic. Make sure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home. Do not remove batteries from these detectors to power holiday gifts. The current guidance on smoke detectors is to have a smoke detector on each level of your home and also to have a smoke detector in each bedroom. Newer requirements are for the detectors to be interconnected, so if one detector sounds, they all do. Keep bedroom doors closed while you are sleeping. This minimizes the infiltration of smoke into the bedrooms, giving you additional time to safely escape a fire. You should also have an escape plan from your home and a common meeting place. Make sure that all family members are aware of the escape plan.

With knowledge and some preparation, a safe and happy holiday season will be yours.

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Wishing you a happy holiday season from the team at Pyro-Technical Investigations.