

If your home has fuel-burning heating equipment such as kerosene heaters, woodstoves, fireplaces, or a furnace that burns oil or natural gas, you are at risk for a home fire and/or carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning.

In 2004, 428 Minnesota homes experienced fires due to heating systems—fires that caused \$1.9 million in loss. Five people were injured. Most of these people thought their heating systems were just fine. The fact is that home heating equipment is a necessary tool for survival, but it needs careful attention to function safely.

The good news is that by following a few safety tips and giving your heating appliances the attention they deserve, you can enjoy a safe and cozy winter.



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HOME

HEATING SAFETY



Staying comfy, cozy and safe



WOOD BURNING STOVES

Wood stoves and other fuel-burning devices are becoming popular because of high fuel prices. When you purchase one for your home, consider safety as well as appearance and efficiency, and have your stove installed and inspected by a professional.

Most heating fires occur in chimneys. Chimney fires can result from poorly constructed or damaged masonry chimneys, poor installation of factory-built chimneys or creosote ignition. Creosote is a tar-like residue that builds up in chimneys. It can be ignited even by low temperature fires. To reduce the risk of fire, have chimneys checked and cleaned by a qualified chimney sweep before and during the heating season to prevent a dangerous creosote buildup. At the same time, the fireplace and chimney should be checked for structural integrity.

Never burn trash, charcoal, or plastic in your wood-burning appliance. These items can overheat your stove or fireplace and cause a chimney fire. They can also cause pollutants to escape when they're burned in a fireplace. Always make sure the area is properly ventilated. And as a final precaution, wet down ashes and dispose of them in metal containers after use.



- Have your furnace cleaned and inspected annually. Change the filter monthly.
- Never use a vented-type heater without venting and flue (chimney).
- Follow manufacturer's recommendations for the propersize heater and for installation, maintenance and use. Have it professionally installed, if possible.
- Have your heater installation checked by the local fire marshal, building inspector or gas company before you light the heater.
- Never use a heater that is in disrepair. Always keep your heater in proper operating condition.
- Turn off the heater if the burner flame looks yellow, unsteady or smoky.
- Turn off the heater, ventilate the room and go to a place with fresh air if you get a headache, nausea or fuzzy vision. CO has no odor; you may become unconscious before you realize that there is a problem.
- Never sleep in a room where a gas heater is burning.
- Install and maintain smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.
 Make a home escape plan and practice it.



ELECTRIC SPACE HEATERS

Portable electric heaters can cause serious problems if they're not used properly. These heaters are not designed to heat a home or operate for extended periods; they are meant to heat a small space for a short time. All electric heaters must be kept at least 36 inches from anything that can burn, including furniture, bedding, clothing, pets and people. Supervise children whenever space heaters are in use. Space heaters must not be left on when you are not in the room or when you go to sleep.

GAS SPACE HEATERS

Gas heating equipment can lead to tragedy if they are not installed and used properly. These products are doubly dangerous; they can cause both fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. New, unvented gas-fired space heaters are equipped with oxygen depletion sensors(ODS) that detect reduced levels of oxygen and turn the devices off before hazardous levels of carbon monoxide accumulate. These heaters also have labels to warn users about carbon monoxide dangers.

Portable kerosene heaters must be fueled only outdoors, in a well ventilated area free of flame and other heat sources, and only when the device has cooled completely. Use only the type of kerosene specified by the manufacturer for that device, and never use gasoline instead of kerosene.