

Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire Safety Tips

November 2008



Heating Sources

The crunch of leaves under our feet, the crispness of the morning air, the longer nights and shorter days - these are all signs of the changing season. As the weather gets colder we feel the need, the need for heat.

To combat higher home heating bills, clever homeowners may look for alternative ways to warm their homes. Be careful, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires during the months of December through February. They trail only cooking equipment in home fires year round. In 2005, space heaters alone accounted for 32% of the home heating fires and 73% of home heating fire deaths. These tragedies can be prevented by becoming aware of the dangers in your home and taking corrective measures to stay safe.

This month we will focus our attention on space heaters, furnaces, fireplaces and wood stoves.

SPACE HEATERS



Carefully follow all the manufacture's instructions for operation.

Never plug your electric space heater into an extension cord.

Turn space heaters off when you leave the room.

Portable space heaters can be easily knocked over, be sure your space has an auto-off feature that shuts it off in case of a tip-over.

They should be turned off when you go to bed, make sure your primary heating equipment is sufficient to avoid risks to residents from severe cold.

Use the proper fuel and grade for liquid-fueled space heaters. Never use gasoline in any heater not approved for it!

Refuel in a well-ventilated area after the equipment has sufficiently cooled.

Make sure fuel burning equipment is properly vented to the outside. Deadly colorless and odorless carbon monoxide can build up very quickly.

FURNACES



When maintained and used properly, furnaces can be relatively fire safe. Here are a few things to keep in mind:

Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for operation and maintenance.

Dirty filters, coils and fans reduce airflow throughout the system. This can decrease performance and damage your system.

Leaking and/or dirty ductwork can have the same effect.

FIREPLACES AND WOOD STOVES



Never use a flammable liquid to start a fire.

Use only dry seasoned wood in your fireplace to avoid the build-up of creosote. Creosote is an oily deposit that easily catches fire and accounts for most chimney fire (the largest share of home heating fires).

Do not burn wrapping paper, cardboard boxes, plastics, green wood/branches, or trash of any kind in your fireplace or wood stove.

Assure that your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying in the room.

Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire completely before going to bed or leaving the home.

Soak ashes in water and place in a metal container outside.

ADDITIONAL HOME HEATING RELATED INFO



Further protect your home by not using your oven to heat your home and by keeping stacked firewood outside and at least 30 feet away from the house. Install carbon

monoxide detectors in a central location outside of your sleeping areas to protect yourself from this silent killer. Test your smoke detectors monthly.

Have heating equipment, chimneys and vent pipes professionally inspected annually. If you haven't had it done yet, assure that the top of your chimney and vent pipes on the roof are protected by a properly fitting screen or vent cap. Animals and birds can get inside without you knowing it and block the dangerous exhaust gases from escaping your home. Carbon monoxide poisoning becomes a real problem. Besides, it can be really difficult to get them back out once they are inside and not much fun for the animal.

With all heating equipment, having them too close to things that can burn is a problem. This includes YOU. Keep all heating equipment at least 3 feet away from combustibles. Clear the area around your furnace and wood stove. Teach children about the 3 foot rule by insisting that they stay, "Three big steps back from things that are hot, because burns hurt a lot!"

As part of Macomb Township Fire Department's *Safe from Fire Initiative* we have additional information on winter fire safety and home heating fire safety tips from the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the NFPA. Call or visit any station. As an added service to the residents of Macomb Township, we offer Home Fire Safety Inspections free of charge. The purpose of these inspections is to help the homeowner recognize potential hazards before a preventable tragedy occurs. We can also discuss escape planning in the event of a fire to get everyone out alive. Call Sgt. Thompson at Station 1 during normal business hours for more information or to schedule an appointment. (586) 286-0027.

REFERENCES



National Fire Protection Association



United States Fire Administration



Macomb Township Fire Department
Safe from Fire Initiative