

# WAYNESBORO FIRE DEPARTMENT



## FIRE PREVENTION and LIFE SAFETY EDUCATION

### E-BULLETIN

November/ December 2011

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## Cold weather fire prevention tips for the home

The high cost of home heating fuels and utilities have caused many Americans to search for alternate sources of home heating. The use of woodburning stoves is growing and space heaters are selling rapidly, or coming out of storage. Fireplaces are burning wood and manmade logs. All these methods of heating may be acceptable. They are, however, a major contributing factor in residential fires. Many of these fires can be prevented. The following fire safety tips can help you maintain a fire safe home this winter.

### Kerosene Heaters

Be sure that kerosene heaters are legal in your area.

Be sure your heater is in good working condition.

Inspect exhaust parts for carbon buildup. Be sure the heater has an emergency shut off in case the heater is tipped over.

Never use fuel burning appliances without proper room venting. Burning fuel (coal, kerosene, or propane, for example) can produce deadly fumes.

Use **ONLY** the fuel recommended by the heater manufacturer. **NEVER introduce a fuel into a unit not designed for that type fuel.**

Keep kerosene, or other flammable liquids stored in approved metal containers, in well ventilated storage areas, outside of the house.

**Never** fill the heater while it is operating or hot. When refueling an oil or kerosene unit, avoid overfilling.

Refueling should be done outside of the home (or outdoors). Keep young children away from space heaters—especially when they are wearing night gowns or other loose clothing that can be easily ignited.

When using a fuel burning appliance in the bedroom, be sure there is proper ventilation to prevent a buildup of carbon monoxide.

## **Wood Stoves and Fireplaces**

Wood stoves and fireplaces are becoming a very common heat source in homes. Careful attention to safety can minimize their fire hazard.

### **To use them safely:**

Be sure the fireplace or stove is installed properly. Wood stoves should have adequate clearance (36") from combustible surfaces and proper floor support and protection.

Wood stoves should be of good quality, solid construction and design, and should be laboratory tested.

Have the chimney inspected annually and cleaned if necessary, especially if it has not been used for some time.

Do not use flammable liquids to start or accelerate any fire.

Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace opening, to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out, unwanted material from going in, and help prevent the possibility of burns to occupant.

Keep flammable materials away from your fireplace mantel. A spark from the fireplace could easily ignite these materials.

Before you go to sleep, be sure your fireplace fire is out. NEVER close your damper with hot ashes in the fireplace. A closed damper will help the fire to heat up again and will force toxic carbon monoxide into the house.

## Furnace Heating

It is important that you have your furnace inspected to ensure that it is in good working condition.

Be sure all furnace controls and emergency shutoffs are in proper working condition.

Leave furnace repairs to qualified specialists. Do not attempt repairs yourself unless you are qualified.

Inspect the walls and ceiling near the furnace and along the chimney line. If the wall is hot or discolored, additional pipe insulation or clearance may be required.

Check the flue pipe and pipe seams. Are they well supported and free of holes and cracks? Soot along or around seams may be an indicator of a leak.

Is the chimney solid, with cracks or loose bricks? All unused flue openings should be sealed with solid masonry.

Keep trash and other combustibles away from the heating system.

## Other Fire Safety Tips

Never discard hot ashes inside or near the home. Place them in a metal container outside and well away from the house.

Never use a range or an oven as a supplemental heating device. Not only is it a safety hazard, it can be a source of potentially toxic fumes.

If you use an electric heater, be sure not to overload the circuit.

Avoid using electrical space heaters in bathrooms or other areas where they may come in contact with water.

Frozen water pipes? Never try to thaw them with a blow torch or other open flame, otherwise the pipe could conduct the heat and ignite the wall structure inside the wall space. Use hot water or a laboratory tested device such as a hand held dryer for thawing.

If windows are used as emergency exits in your home, practice using them in the event fire should strike. Be sure that all the windows open easily. Home escape ladders are recommended.

If there is a fire hydrant near your home you can assist the fire department by keeping the hydrant clear of snow so in the event it is needed, it can be located.

## **FINALLY...**

Be sure every level of your home has a working smoke alarm, and be sure to check and clean it on a monthly basis.

Plan and practice a home escape plan with your family.

Contact your local fire department for advice if you have a question on home fire safety

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November and December are the holiday months for gathering with family and friends for food, gifts, and fellowship. This is also a time when fire can strike, especially cooking fires. The following is from the U.S. Fire Administration with tips to be safe this holiday season. Holiday trees and lights can cause a hazard, so use caution on how you light trees and homes. Have a happy and safe holiday season from the Waynesboro Fire Department.

### **Choose the Right Equipment and Use It Properly**

Always use cooking equipment tested and approved by a recognized testing facility.

Follow manufacturers' instructions and code requirements when installing and operating cooking equipment.

Plug microwave ovens and other cooking appliances directly into an outlet. Never use an extension cord for a cooking appliance, as it can overload the circuit and cause a fire.

## Watch What You Heat

The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.

Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.

If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.

Stay alert! To prevent cooking fires, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.

## Keep Things That Can Catch Fire and Heat Sources Apart

Keep anything that can catch fire - potholders, oven mitts, wooden utensils, paper or plastic bags, food packaging, towels, or curtains - away from your stovetop.

Keep the stovetop, burners, and oven clean.

Keep pets off cooking surfaces and nearby countertops to prevent them from knocking things onto the burner.

Wear short, close-fitting, or tightly rolled sleeves when cooking. Loose clothing can dangle onto stove burners and catch fire if it comes into contact with a gas flame or electric burner.

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## Stop the holiday fire before it starts:

Do not place your holiday tree close to a heat source, including a fireplace or heat vent. The heat will dry out the tree and it could catch fire by heat, flame, or sparks more easily.

Never put holiday tree branches or needles in a fireplace or wood burning stove.

When the tree becomes dry, remove it from your home right away. The best way to get rid of your tree is to take it to a recycling center or have it collected by a community pick-up service.

Check holiday lights each year for wires that are worn out or coming apart, bare spots, gaps in the insulation, broken or cracked sockets, and a lot of bends or twists in the wire.

Only use laboratory-tested lighting and extension cords.

Never overload outlets or extension cords. Connect strings of lights to an extension cord before plugging the cord into the outlet.

Do not leave lit holiday lights on unless someone is in the room.

Avoid using lit candles. If you do use them, make sure they are in stable holders and put them where they cannot be easily knocked over and start a fire.

Never leave the home with candles burning.

## **Be prepared for a fire:**

One of the best ways to protect yourself and your family is to have a working smoke alarm that can sound fast for both a fire that has flames, and a smoky fire that has fumes without flames. It is called a "Dual Sensor Smoke Alarm." A smoke alarm greatly reduces your chances of dying in a fire.

Prepare an escape plan and practice it often. Make sure everyone in your family knows at least two (2) escape routes from their bedrooms.



November 6, 2011 Daylight savings time ends. When you change your clocks before you go to bed or at 2 am, remember this, change your clocks, change your batteries. Put new batteries in your smoke detector(s). The Waynesboro Fire Department encourages everyone to have a working smoke detector on every level of their homes. For more information contact us at (540) 942-6730. Waynesboro Fire Department installs smoke detectors free to the residents of the City of Waynesboro.

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