



Alternative Heating Safety

The high cost of home heating fuels and utilities have caused many Americans to search for alternative home heating sources such as wood burning stoves, space heaters, and fireplaces. Heating is one of the leading causes of residential fires. Over one-quarter of these fires result from improper maintenance of equipment, specifically the failure to clean the equipment. Heating fires can be prevented by following a few safety tips:

- Have chimneys professionally inspected and cleaned each year;
- Ensure wood stoves are properly installed;
- Make sure space heaters are kept at least 3 feet away from flammables and have an emergency tip-over shutoff control;
- Use a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting drapes, furniture, and carpets; and
- Never use a range or oven to heat your home.

Carbon monoxide poisoning is another danger when using heating equipment fueled by fossil fuel. It occurs most often when equipment is not vented properly. Between 1999 and 2004, more than 450 Americans died from unintentional carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide poisoning is most fatal to adults age 65 or older. The USFA recommends following these safety practices:

- Equipment should be cleaned and checked annually by a professional;
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors so that if carbon monoxide begins to build up in the home, the detector will provide ample opportunity for residents to get out of the home and call for assistance.



FEMA

U.S. Fire Administration

For information and resources on this subject visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/focus