



Headlines



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Winter Fire Safety Tips from the Rock Island Fire Department

The high cost of home heating fuels and utilities have caused many Americans to search for alternative sources of home heating. The use of wood burning stoves is growing and space heaters are selling rapidly. Fireplaces are burning wood and man-made logs.

All of these methods may be acceptable. They are, however, a major contributing factor in residential fires. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) estimates that space heaters, including both fixed and portable heaters, are associated with about **21,800 residential fires every year**. About 300 people die each year in fires started by these heaters. The following safety tips can help you maintain a fire safe home this winter.

Fireplace and Chimney Safety

The fireplace in your home is a source of warmth and relaxation for your family and friends. Like any home appliance, it should be safe, properly maintained, and good for the environment-inside and out.

- Have the chimney inspected annually and cleaned if necessary, especially if it has not been used for some time
- Install a carbon monoxide detector and keep a fire extinguisher on hand.
- Use only well seasoned hardwoods, well seasoned firewood is easier to start, produces more heat, and burns cleaner.
- Use kindling and wooden matches to light fires – not flammable liquids.
- Be sure the chimney flue is open before lighting a fire and closed only when you are sure the fire is completely out.
- Be sure the stove or fireplace is installed properly. Woodstoves should have adequate clearance (36") from combustible surfaces, and proper floor support and protection.
- Woodstoves should be of good quality, solid construction and design, and should be UL listed.
- 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 occupants.



Install a chimney cap and spark arrestor on your chimney to avoid fires and water damage as well as keeping animals and birds out of your chimney.

Space Heater Safety

- Select a space heater with a guard around the flame area or heating element. Place the heater on a level, hard and nonflammable surface, not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Keep the heater at least three feet from bedding, drapes, furniture, or other flammable materials.
- Choose a space heater that has been tested and certified by a nationally recognized testing laboratory. These heaters meet specific safety standards.
- Keep doors open to the rest of the house if you are using an un-vented fuel-burning space heater. This helps prevent pollutant build-up and promotes proper combustion. Follow the manufacturer's instructions to provide sufficient combustion air to prevent carbon monoxide production.
- Never leave a space heater on when you go to sleep.
- Turn the space heater off if you leave the area. Keep children and pets away from space heaters.
- Have a smoke detector with fresh batteries on each level of the house and a carbon monoxide detector outside your sleeping area.
- Be aware that mobile homes require specially designed heating equipment. Only electric or vented fuel-fired heaters should be used.
- Have gas and kerosene space heaters inspected annually.

Furnace Heating

It is important that you have your furnace inspected to insure 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 pipes and pipe seams. Are they well supported? Free of holes, and cracks? Soot along or around seams may indicate a leak.
- Is the chimney solid? Any cracks or loose bricks? All unused flue openings should be sealed with solid masonry.

Keep trash and other combustibles away from the heating system.



Be sure every level of your home has a working smoke detector, and be sure to check and clean it on a monthly basis. Change the batteries regularly: for example, twice a year, when changing your clock for Daylight Savings Time.