

# State Fire Marshall offers home heating tips

As colder weather arrives, State Fire Marshal Jim Walker is urging Oregonians to use heating appliances wisely.

“With the onset of cooler weather, I urge citizens to ensure all their heating appliances are in good working order,” says Walker. “Have your woodstoves, fireplaces and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified specialist before using them. Portable space heaters also pose a high risk. Use these with extreme caution and follow our space heater safety tips.”

Although woodstove- and fireplace-related fires are more common, the most deadly home heating fires result from combustibles too close to portable electric heaters.

From 2011 through 2015 in Oregon, there were 2,267 home heating-related fires resulting in nine deaths, 57 injuries, and more than \$30.9 million in property loss. Although chimney and fireplace-related fires accounted for more than 66 percent of these fires, six of the nine fatalities occurred in portable heater-related fires.

Oregonians can keep themselves safer from heating-related fires using these safety tips:

### Portable Space Heaters

- Only use portable space heaters with an automatic shut-off so if they're tipped over they will shut off.

- Give heaters space. Keep at least three feet of space

between the heater and combustibles such as furniture, curtains, bedding, and papers.

- Check heater electrical cords. Inspect for cracked or damaged cords, broken plugs, or loose connections. Replace before using the space heater.

- Plug portable electric space heaters directly into a wall outlet. Never plug them into a power strip or extension cord.

- Never allow children to play with, or around a heater.

- Turn heaters off when not in use, before going to bed or when leaving the room.

### Electric Baseboard and Wall Heaters

- Be aware of electric baseboard and wall heaters. These heaters are thermostatically controlled and may turn on without warning when temperatures drop.

- Give these heaters space. Just as with portable space heaters, keep at least three feet of space between your baseboard/wall heater and combustibles items such as furniture, curtains, bedding and papers.

### Fuel Burning Space Heaters

- If using a fuel-burning space heater, make sure it is designed for indoor use. Read all manufacturer instructions and make sure it is properly vented.

- Allow the heater to cool before refueling. Refuel outside or in a well-ventilated area.

- If you smell gas, do not

light the heater or operate any electrical switches or thermostats. Leave the building and call 911, the fire department, or the gas company.

### Fireplaces and Woodstoves

- Have chimney and woodstove flues and vents inspected and cleaned every year by a qualified specialist. Ask them to check for creosote deposits, soot build-up or physical damage.

- Always use a fireplace screen. Make sure the screen is made of sturdy metal or heat-tempered glass to prevent sparks from escaping.

- Keep a clutter-free environment. Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations, and flammable materials.

- Store kindling, fire logs, and wood at least three feet from any heat source.

- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue and chimney temperatures.

- Use proper fire starters. Proper fire starters include newspaper, kindling or specially manufactured starters designed for indoor use. Never use flammable liquid, such as lighter fluid, kerosene or gasoline to start a fire.

- Never burn charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal can release lethal amounts of carbon monoxide.

- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around woodstoves.

- Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing of them.

- Dispose of ashes in a tightly covered metal container outdoors, at least ten feet from the home and any other nearby buildings. Ashes may retain heat for days after they appear to be out.

### Smoke Alarms and Home Escape Plans

- For increased protection, have working smoke alarms on every level of your home (including the basement), in each bedroom and outside any sleeping area (hallways).

- Test smoke alarm batteries at least once a month by pushing the test button.

- Look at the date on the back of your smoke alarm, if it is 10 years old or older, it is more than 10 years old and should be replaced.

- Ensure you have a home fire escape plan and practice it with your family.

### Carbon Monoxide Dangers

- Carbon monoxide poisoning can be fatal if not detected early.

- Home heating and cooking equipment that burn fuels such as gasoline, wood, coal, natural gas, propane, oil and methane are sources of carbon monoxide.

- Make sure you have working CO alarms on every level of your home, in every bedroom and outside each sleeping area.

- Test and maintain your carbon monoxide alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions.

# Elks hosting children's holiday party Saturday

The Florence Elks Club will host its annual Children's Christmas Party on Saturday, Dec. 17, from 1 to 3 p.m.

During the festivities, there will be a performance by the CROW children's theater and the Elks Dance Group.

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