Supplemental Heating Sources

According to the United States Fire Administration, usfa.dhs.gov, January and February are the peak months for residential portable heating fires. Many of these fires are in homes without a working smoke detector. Make sure you have a smoke detector on each level of your home and outside each sleeping area. Before you strike that match or plug in a heater, read the following tips for safe operation of winter heating devices.

Electric Space Heaters

- Use only heaters with the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) safety listing and follow all instructions in the manual.
- Level the heater, and never place on top of furniture.
- Make sure the space heater has a feature that automatically shuts off the power if the heater falls over. This is especially important in homes with children, elderly people, and animals.
- Don't use an extension cord with an electric portable heater.
- Don't plug in more than one heating device in an electric outlet.
- Never leave a space heater unattended or go to sleep with a space heater operating.

Electric or gas ovens and stove burners should never be used to help heat a home.

Fireplaces and Wood Burning Stoves

- Make sure the flue is open before lighting a fire, and never close the flue while a fire is still smoldering.
- Don't leave a fire burning unattended in a fireplace or wood stove.
- Never start fires with gasoline, kerosene, or lighter fluid.
- Have the chimney regularly cleaned to clear creosote and periodically inspected for cracks or obstructions.
- Use a fireplace screen large enough to catch flying sparks and stop rolling logs.
- Keep decorative objects and fabrics away from a fireplace or wood stove.
- Allow clearance between a wood burning stove and walls, floors and ceilings. Be sure to check with your fire department to verify it conforms to local codes.

Kerosene and Gas Space Heaters

- Make sure your room has proper ventilation. Keep interior doors open to the room where the heater is operating.
- Burn only 1-K kerosene and never burn any fluid that is not recommended for your heater. Refuel your heater outside, after it has cooled down.
- Keep kerosene outside in a sealed, labeled container.
- Never use a kerosene heater in a room where flammable solvents, aerosol sprays, gasoline, or any type of oil is stored.
- All unvented gas-fired space heaters should be equipped with an oxygen depletion sensor (ODS). The ODS detects reduced levels of oxygen in the area where the heater is being used and shuts off the heater before carbon monoxide reaches hazardous levels.
- Have a gas heater and the venting system professionally installed and inspected.

Further Information

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home, especially near bedrooms. Check and replace the batteries at least once a year.
- Install a carbon monoxide alarm that meets federal standards in the hallway near each sleeping area in the home.
- Keep at least one fire extinguisher in the home at all times.
- Develop a fire-escape plan with your family before a fire occurs. Your local fire department can provide valuable information.

More detailed information on fireplace safety may be found at usfa.dhs.gov and additional information on space heating may be found on the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's web site at: cpsc.gov