



News Release

Office of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal
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State Fire Marshal's Office Encourages Extra Safety Precautions with Heaters

Baton Rouge LA, Each year fire claims the lives of 3,500 Americans, injures 20,000, and causes billions of dollars worth of damage. The misuse of wood stoves, portable space heaters and kerosene heaters are especially common risks to homes in our state. Louisiana State Fire Marshal H. "Butch" Browning believes the fire problems can be reduced by teaching people to recognize the hazards. The Fire Marshal stated, "I ask every person to take the time to check your heating equipment in your home as well as to ensure your smoke alarm is properly working, the life you save could be yours or your loved one". By following some of the outlined precautionary steps, individuals can greatly reduce their chances of becoming a fire casualty.

Wood Stoves

Wood stoves cause over 4,000 residential fires every year. Carefully follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions. Look for solid construction, such as plate steel or cast iron metal. Check for cracks and inspect legs, hinges and door seals for smooth joints and seams. Use only seasoned wood for fuel, not green wood, artificial logs, or trash. Inspect and clean your pipes and chimneys annually and check monthly for damage or obstructions. Be sure to keep combustible objects at least three feet away from your wood stove.

Electric Space Heaters

Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Check to make sure it has a thermostat control mechanism, and will switch off automatically if the heater falls over. Heaters are not dryers or tables; don't dry clothes or store objects on top of your heater. Space heaters need space; keep combustibles at least three feet away from each heater. Always unplug your electric space heater when not in use.

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Kerosene Heaters

Buy only heaters evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory, such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), and check with your local fire department on the legality of kerosene heater use in your community. Never fill your heater with gasoline or camp stove fuel; both flare-up easily. Only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene. Never overfill any portable heater. Use the kerosene heater in a well ventilated room.

Fireplaces

Fireplaces regularly build up creosote in their chimneys. They need to be cleaned out frequently and chimneys should be inspected for obstructions and cracks to prevent deadly chimney and roof fires. Check to make sure the damper is open before starting any fire. Never burn trash, paper or green wood in your fireplace. These materials cause heavy creosote buildup and are difficult to control. Use a screen heavy enough to stop rolling logs and big enough to cover the entire opening of the fireplace to catch flying sparks. Don't wear loose-fitting clothes near any open flame. Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed. Store cooled ashes in a tightly sealed metal container outside the home.

Finally, having a working smoke alarm dramatically increases your chances of surviving a fire. And remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

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