Fully Involved

Hidden dangers within your House…

With the cold weather now upon us heaters are running and wood stoves are fully stocked. At Fire District 2 we have began our annual campaign to keep our citizens safe. Our education efforts include fireplace and heating safety, candle safety, and the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning. Many families are unaware of the dangers that lurk in their own home from everyday routine activities. National statistics show that as temperatures drop, the potential for danger in the home significantly rises. This directly correlates with an increase in injuries and even deaths sustained during this time in the home. Here are some ideas on how you can keep you and your family safe during the holiday season.

Cold days and even colder mornings find most residents turning to wood burning heating devices such as wood stoves and fireplaces. Fireplace related fires account for 36% of all residential house fires in the US every year. While cost efficient as a heating source, fireplaces and woodstoves can also be the most dangerous. To help increase the safety while using these heating sources, have your chimney cleaned every year to reduce creosote buildup. Make sure that your fireplace has the proper recommended clearance from walls and other combustible material. Never store any material around the fireplace including wood, paper, decorations, or pet beds. Always follow manufacture directions on how to properly operate your stove. And of course make sure that you have working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your house that are tested monthly.

Bring on the decorations. It's the holiday season. Many households use candles as a form of holiday cheer. Many house fires start from unattended candles. Candles should be properly maintained and placed in areas that are resistant to tipping or being tampered with. Unattended candles are the most dangerous. Upon leaving your home be sure that all open flames are extinguished. A safe alternative to candles is using battery operated lights. These are easily found, cost effective and can producing the same lighting effect. Candles or any flame producing devices should never be used around children.

With winter, cold weather, and high winds comes power outages. Many houses now have the ability to use emergency back up power generators. While these are great, we caution residents on the proper use and operation of the devices. Having properly installed transfer switches will keep you and the power crews safe. Never run a generator in your house or garage. This will produce lethal levels of carbon monoxide. Make sure that the generator is matched to the number of devices you are running in your house. Most generators will not power an entire house. When using power or extension cords make sure that

they are rated to the appliance you are using. If you feel the cord getting hot unplug the cord and use a heavier duty cord. When cooking it is important to remember that BBQ's also put off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide. BBQ's should always be used in a well ventilated area and never in a house or garage.

Question of the month: What is the lethal level of carbon monoxide and the best way to prevent you family from falling victim to this? The first email or phone call that I receive with the correct answer will receive a gift from Starbucks Coffee.

I hope that this gives you some help on how to prevent holiday related injuries, and keep your family safe. More information can be obtained on Mason County Fire District 2's web page at WWW.MCFD2.COM or by calling 360-275-6711. Mason County Fire District 2 would like to wish you and your family a happy holiday season.

Jeromy Hicks is currently Mason County Fire District 2's community outreach coordinator. With ten plus years of firefighting service including being a paramedic, fire prevention is his passion. Jeromy currently provides assistance with inspections, investigations, and education thought out Mason County. He can be reached at 360-275-6711 ext. 2.