

Fully Involved November 2011

Fire Risk Increased By Cheaper Heating Solutions

As the winter months approach and temperatures drop our heating bills correspondingly increase. In response to this pinch on our wallets we look at ways to be more energy and cost efficient. As we sort through our options of lowering the room temperature and using alternate heating methods we must be cognizant that these options can carry both significant advantages, and life threatening risks.

Data provide by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) shows a big jump in heating equipment fires in December, January and February. The NFPA recently reported that heating equipment was the second leading cause of fires and fire related deaths in America. The present danger makes the following of safety notices, and manufactures instructions essential in the use of heating devices.

At the time that your house was built there were several building/fire codes and regulations that were followed in an effort to protect your safety. These codes were applied to and inspected for in initial home heating sources such as furnaces and stoves. Approved and inspected heating sources are the most safe and carry far less risk than heating sources that are installed after initial construction and without inspection. Common risks involved in these devices include poorly maintained and/or poorly cleaned heating elements and the storage of combustibles within three feet of a heating element. It is critical to follow the manufacturer's recommendations on proper maintenance and operation of the individual heating devices.

The Fire District commonly encounters alternate heating devices such as wood stoves, pellet stoves, and portable space heaters. These sources all carry the risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning inside the home. This risk can be reduced through the use of Co detectors. W

While the Fire District has distributed, installed and checked thousands of smoke detectors within our response area it should be made clear that smoke detectors cannot detect and protect you from CO. CO is a tasteless and odorless gas that is a product of burning. Outside of using a detector the only way to detect CO is through signs and systems that CO poisoning causes. These include headache, sleepiness and nausea. It is essential that homes with wood, pellet, or even gas fire places install a CO detector. These devices can be purchased at your local hardware store for under \$30 and, just like a smoke detector, can save your life.

While we are on the subject of smoke and CO Detectors, please set this article down and check yours....Don't worry I will wait. In addition to installing smoke and CO detectors

you should have your stove cleaned and serviced annually to ensure proper operation. Local stove and chimney cleaning services offer this service, and they can be found in the phone book. Failure to clean our stoves significantly increases the risk of stove and chimney fires that can cause costly damage.

Portable space heaters can be very cost effective, especially if utilized in one room at a time. These heaters must be cleaned, and used in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. Most heaters will require isolation of at least three feet from combustible material such as furniture, drapes/curtains, and walls. All newer space heaters come with "tip protection" which will automatically turn the heater should they get tipped over. An easy way to test this is to place your heater on a non-combustible surface and tip it over. The heater should instantly shut off. If the heater does not have this feature it is highly recommended that it is immediately replaced.

I hope that this gives you a taste of the risks involved, and how to make your home, and family safer during these cold winter months. At Fire District 2 we would like to wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season. If you have any questions on this or any other service that we offer please contact us at 360-275-6711 or visit us on the web at www.mcfld2.com. We would be happy to inspect (without cost) any in home heating source for the protection of your safety.

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