

Warm Wishes: Space Heater Safety Tips

For many people, the holiday season falls during the coldest months of the year. To help stay warm, you may opt to use additional heating equipment throughout the house. Though effective, these devices can increase the risk of fire in your home. According to a report by the National Fire Protection Association, space heaters are one of the leading causes of home fire deaths, responsible for an estimated 412 in 2010. In addition, it is estimated that heating equipment was involved in 57,100 reported U.S. home structure fires resulting in 1,062 civilian injuries and over \$477 million in direct property damage.

The leading factors contributing to ignition in home heating equipment fires were failure to clean the device, the heat source being too close to combustibles, and a mechanical failure or malfunction of the equipment. With proper installation, use and maintenance you can reduce your risk of property loss, injury or death resulting from the use of heating equipment.

Gas-fueled heating devices pose additional danger, as they are the primary heating source responsible for non-fire carbon monoxide poisonings. Carbon monoxide is odorless, invisible and potentially deadly. Be sure to continue testing your carbon monoxide alarms and smoke alarms each month to help keep you and your loved ones safe.

More Safe Heating Tips:

- ❖ All heaters need space. Keep things that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- ❖ Make sure you use only equipment that displays a label indicating it has undergone independent testing by a nationally recognized testing laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL), Intertek (ETL), or Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
- ❖ Make sure all fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. Also be sure to remove snow or fallen leaves around the outlet to the outside to ensure proper venting of exhaust.
- ❖ Test all smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms before using additional heating equipment.
- ❖ Plug portable space heaters directly into an outlet; do not use an extension cord.

Visit www.esfi.org for more information about carbon monoxide alarms.

