

Cold-Weather Safety Tips

Supplemental Heating Devices

- Use and maintain supplemental heating devices in accordance with manufacturer recommendations.
- Do not leave heating devices unattended or turned on while you are sleeping.
- Provide all heating devices with at least three feet of clear space, away from beds, drapes, furniture and other combustible materials.
- Examine gas lines for punctures or splits. Check the connectors and valves for leaks.

Heat-Producing Appliances

- Leave space for air to circulate around other heat-producing equipment, such as copy machines, coffee makers and computers. Keep appliances away from anything that might catch fire. Do not stack books or papers on top of computer monitors.
- Designate someone to turn off or unplug all appliances at the end of each workday at work.

Chimneys and Fireplaces

- Clean and maintain chimneys fireplaces and furnaces on a regular basis. Most fires in wood stoves, fireplaces and chimneys occur because of a lack of regular cleaning, leading to the buildup of creosote (the residue of unburned fuel).
- Keep sparks and embers inside the fireplace with fire screens made of heat-tempered glass or sturdy metal.
- Burn dry, well-seasoned hard wood because it's the most efficient fuel.

Smoke and CO Alarms

- If you don't have smoke alarms, install them. If you do, maintain them according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Install CO alarms in your home to provide you with an early warning if CO is accumulating. Heating equipment that burns fuel is a potential source of carbon monoxide, an odorless, colorless, poisonous gas that is created when fuel burns incompletely.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms weekly to be sure they are working properly. Change the batteries in all alarms at least once a year.

General Fire-Prevention and Safety Practices

- Have a family escape plan with a meeting place. Once you exit your home, DO NOT return. Too many people lose their lives going back into a burning home.
- If you use candles, make sure you use them in a safe environment in a fireproof container and away from children. Do not leave them unattended. If possible, consider using flameless, battery-operated candles.
- Consider getting a residential fire sprinkler installed. According to statistics, the risk of death by fire is reduced by 82 percent when smoke detectors are accompanied with residential fire sprinklers.

IAFC On Scene: November 15, 200, by **Brian A. Crawford** Assistant to the Fire Chief of the Shreveport (La.) Fire Department