



For Immediate Release

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Heating Safety Can be the Difference Between Life and Death

Jackson – The last fire death investigated by the State Fire Marshal’s office in 2014 occurred on New Year’s Eve, and the cause is suspected to be heating related. With extreme cold temperatures forecasted for the state this week, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney urges all Mississippians to start the new year by practicing heating and fire safety.

“Properly using heating sources to stay warm during cold weather and having working smoke alarms in your home is literally the difference between life and death,” is the message Mississippi State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney has repeated over and over.

It is a message that he will continue to repeat in order to protect lives in Mississippi

“Everyone must use extra precaution when using space heaters or alternative methods as heating sources. Space heating poses a much higher risk of fire, death and injury than central heating, and it cannot be stressed enough that using a stove to heat a home is extremely dangerous,” Chaney said.

“Every home should have a working smoke alarm. Working smoke alarms can cut the risk of people dying in home fires in half,” he added.

Fire safety education and preventing fire deaths continue to be priority goals of the State Fire Marshal's office.

As you prepare for this week's cold weather, the State Fire Marshal's office offers these heating safety tips:

- Have a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- Supervise children when a fireplace, fire pit, or other space heater is being used. Use a sturdy, metal screen to prevent contact burns, which are even more common than flame burns.
- All heaters need space. Keep things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment, according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
 - Have a qualified professional install the equipment.
 - Make sure all fuel-burning vented equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning. CO is created when fuels burn incompletely. CO poisoning can cause illness and even death. Make sure the venting for exhaust is kept clear and unobstructed. This includes removal of snow and ice around the outlet to the outside.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide alarms to avoid risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.

Portable electric space heaters

- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Use and purchase portable space heaters with an automatic shut off so if they're tipped over, they will shut off.
- Place space heater on solid, flat surface.
- Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord.

- Inspect for cracked or damaged, broken plugs or loose connections. Replace before using.

Fuel burning space heaters

- Always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer.
- When refueling, allow the appliance to cool and refuel outside or in a well-ventilated area.
- When using the heater, open a window to ensure proper ventilation.
- In portable kerosene or other liquid-fueled space heaters, always use the proper grade of the proper fuel.
- All new unvented gas-fired space heaters have an oxygen depletion sensor that detects a reduced level of oxygen in the area where the heater is operating and shuts off the heater before a hazardous level of carbon monoxide accumulates. If you have an older heater without this feature, replace it.
- If the pilot light of your gas heater goes out, allow 5 minutes or more for the gas to go away before trying again, do not allow gas to accumulate, and light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot to avoid risk of flashback.
- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and window. Call a gas service professional.

Wood burning stoves

- Install the stove, chimney connectors and chimneys following manufacturer's instructions, or have a professional do the installation.
- Wood stoves should bear the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- In wood stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood pellets.
- Start the fire with newspaper or kindling, never with a flammable liquid, such as lighter fluid, kerosene or gasoline.
- Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire.

- Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a tightly covered metal container, and keep the ash container at least 10 feet away from the home and any other nearby buildings. Douse and saturate with water.

Also, be a good neighbor. Check with the elderly or relatives and friends who may need additional assistance to ensure their safety. If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets.

Should a fire break out in the home, have an emergency evacuation plan for the family to follow and have a designated meeting place for all family members. Once everyone is outside the burning home, call 911 and **DO NOT RE-ENTER THE HOME UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!!!**

For more fire safety information and tips visit a special State Fire Marshal Heating Fire Safety page on the Mississippi Insurance Department website at www.mid.ms.gov