



Home Heating Safety

A Factsheet on Safely Heating Your Home

Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January and February. Two out of three reported home heating fires and associated deaths and injuries involved portable and fixed space heaters and related equipment, such as fireplaces and chimneys.

Baseboard Heaters

Baseboard heaters are very efficient, but they can be a serious fire hazard if used carelessly. Common sense can prevent a baseboard heater fire. Any time a flammable object comes in contact with a heater, a fire could result.

Checklist for Baseboard Heaters

- ☐ Check baseboard heaters often and remove objects that have fallen on top or near the heater.
- ☐ Keep all furniture a safe distance from your heaters. Never block the flow of heat.
- ☐ Never permit electrical cords to drape across heaters.
- ☐ Always hire an experienced electrician to do any necessary repair work on your baseboard heaters.

Portable Heaters

Portable models heat up rapidly, and like baseboard heaters, they can easily ignite any flammable item left nearby.

When shopping for a portable heater, choose a model with 1) temperature control, 2) an automatic shut-off device, and 3) a seal of approval from an independent testing laboratory, indicating that it has met basic safety standards.

Checklist for Portable Heaters

- ☐ Keep portable heaters three foot away from anything that can burn.
- ☐ Always place portable heaters on flat surfaces.
- ☐ Always turn the heater off when you leave the room or go to sleep.
- ☐ Avoid using household extension cords with portable heaters. If you must use an extension cord, make certain that it is a heavy-duty cord.

Fireplaces & Woodstoves

If you use a fireplace to heat your home have your chimney inspected by a professional and if necessary cleaned before each heating season. Creosote can build up along the inside of the chimney and pose a fire hazard.

Checklist for Fireplaces & Woodstoves

- ☐ Always use a firescreen to contain sparks.
- ☐ Never burn rubbish.
- ☐ Make certain anything flammable is kept a safe distance away from the fireplace.
- ☐ Never leave fires unattended, especially in areas used by children or pets.
- ☐ Clean out the ashes when cool and place in a metal container.

Just in Case

- ☐ If a fire occurs in your home, a working smoke alarm can save your life.
- ☐ Make certain smoke alarms are installed on every level of your home and outside every sleeping area. Test your smoke alarms monthly and change the batteries at least once a year.
- ☐ Everyone in your home should know what to do in the event of a fire. Plan and practice a home escape plan.
- ☐ Make sure everyone knows at least two ways out of every sleeping area. Decide upon a place outside of the home, where everyone will meet in the event of fire. Make certain everyone understands that once they have left a burning building they should never go back inside. Call 911 from a safe phone.

For More Information

Contact:

Seattle Fire Department
fireinfo@seattle.gov
www.seattle.gov/fire