



# Public Service Announcement

## Houston Fire Department

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# THE HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT URGES CITIZENS TO USE SAFETY WHEN USING HEATING DEVICES

The National Weather Service (NWS) and National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) are warning of winter weather throughout the region over the next few days. The Houston Fire Department urges citizens to be careful and follow some simple safety tips when using space heaters, fireplaces and other supplemental heating sources. Any shift away from the exclusive use of central heating presents an increased possibility for fire.

Citizens should always keep in mind that: Space Heaters Need Space. The Houston Fire Department recommends the following safety tips when using supplemental heating sources:

- Make sure you have a working smoke alarm.
- Never leave children unattended in a room with a space heater - Children knock over space heaters especially if they are placed on top of wobbly tables or stools and near where the children play. Children may also stick paper or toys in the grates of the space heaters especially gas space heaters.
- Keep all combustible materials, including yourself at least 3 feet from the heater
- Open face heaters should have a screen
- Provide ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning
- Vented Gas / Fired Heating Appliances Tips - Central heating units, floor furnaces, recessed wall heaters, and vented space heaters.

Inspect annually by a qualified service technician.

- Do not use these type units without a proper vent pipe. Vent pipes must exhaust to the outside!
- If your flame is not blue, it is not burning properly. It is producing Carbon Monoxide, which can't be seen, smelled or tasted. Turn it off.
- Use flexible metal tubing with threaded ends to connect the heater to the gas valve. There should be a cutoff valve for the heater at the wall. Never use a rubber hose to connect a space heater to the gas valve!
- Use soapy water to check all connections and valves for leaks. NEVER use a match to test for a gas leak!
- Look for the American Gas Association label and follow the manufacturer's recommendations for proper usage.

#### Electric Heaters Tips

- Never overload outlets or breakers
- Don't use extension cords for the heater. If the cord is hot to the touch, turn off the heater and unplug it!
- Electric heaters permanently installed in the wall or ceiling should have lint and dust removed regularly. Lint and dust will burn!
- Fireplace safety from the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA)

According to the NFPA While fireplaces often conjure up images of warmth and comfort, they also represent a source of home heating fires. Creosote - a sticky, oily, combustible substance created when wood does not burn completely - rises into the chimney as a liquid and deposits on the chimney walls, and plays a role in nearly one-fourth (23%) of all home heating fires each year.

Just like a space heater, keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from a fireplace, and create a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires.

- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room
- Never leave a fireplace fire unattended, particularly when children are present.
- Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container, and kept at a safe distance from your home.

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