

# Home Heating Fire Safety

A Fire Safety Message from the  
New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control

Guidelines to help prevent fires from home heating equipment.

Heating equipment is among the leading causes of home fires nationally and in New York State. Very often heating related fires are the result of a lack of maintenance or simple acts of carelessness. Following the guidelines below will help to ensure that you reduce the possibility of experiencing a heating related fire.

## ① Fire Prevention

To prevent fires, keep furnishings and other **combustibles 36 inches from all heating sources**. A heating source too close to combustibles is the leading cause of fires due to home heating. Store matches and other fire starting appliances out of the reach of children. Fires started by children often have tragic results.

## ② Follow Proper Maintenance

Proper maintenance and an annual inspection of heat pumps, furnaces, space heaters, wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, chimneys and chimney connections by qualified specialists can prevent fires and save lives. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for installation, venting, fueling, maintenance and repair. Review the owner's manual to make sure you remember the operating and safety features.

- **Space Heaters** – When using portable heaters, do not place them where it is possible for small children or pets to fall against them or to receive a contact burn. Avoid the use of extension cords with electric heaters. Always turn off space heaters before leaving the room or going to bed.
- **Fuel Burning Appliances** – When taking a heater out of storage in the fall, install batteries and inspect the shut off mechanism and wick for proper operation. Fill the tank with fresh fuel. Let the heater cool down before refueling. Adding fuel to a hot heater can start a dangerous fire.
- **Wood Burning Appliances and Fireplaces** – Do not burn trash in the wood stove or fireplace. Burn only well-seasoned hardwoods. Be sure the fire you build fits your fireplace or stove, don't overload it. Be sure wood stoves are installed at least 36 inches away from the wall. Keep combustible materials well away from the fireplace, stove and chimney. Keep the area around them clean. Always use a fireplace screen to prevent sparks from leaving the fireplace and starting a fire. Never leave a fire unattended.
- **Chimneys** - Creosote accumulation is the leading cause of chimney fires. A chimney that is dirty, blocked or is in disrepair can inhibit proper venting of smoke up the flue and can also cause a chimney fire. Nearly all residential fires originating in the chimney are preventable. An annual chimney inspection by a qualified chimney sweep can prevent fire or carbon monoxide poisoning.
- **Ashes** – Keep wood stoves and fireplaces free of excess ash buildup. Excessive ash buildup prevents good circulation of air needed for combustion. When removing ashes, use a metal container with a tight-fitting cover. Always place ashes in an outside location away from structures. Ashes that seem cool may contain a smoldering charcoal that can start a fire.

③ **Be Prepared** – No matter how careful you are with home heating, you and your family should be prepared in case fire strikes.

- **Install Smoke Detectors** – Place smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside each sleeping area. Test your smoke detectors regularly and replace dead batteries immediately.
- **Make and practice a home escape plan.**

*"Prevention Through Education"*

