



Keep Warm Keep Safe Winter safety tip from the Charlton Fire Department

Winter is upon us and it is time to start heating our houses. With the cost of fuel rising a lot of us are looking for ways to save money. While there are many different heating alternatives out there rules still have to be followed in order to keep you and your family safe. Heating is the number 2 cause of fires in Massachusetts causing over 14000 fires in the last 5 years. Improper use or installation of a heating appliance can cause serious injury, death and property loss.

Chimneys should be cleaned and checked by a professional on a yearly basis. Even when a chimney has not been used for years cracks or blockages may have occurred. This could not only allow for fire to spread from your chimney into your home, but carbon monoxide (CO) as well. CO is produced whenever any fuel such as gas, propane, oil, kerosene, wood, pellets or charcoal is burned. You can't see or smell CO but at high levels it can kill a person in minutes. If appliances that burn fuel are maintained and used properly, the amount of CO produced is usually not hazardous. Since 2006 Nicole's law has been in effect requiring the use of CO detectors in all residences.

Solid fuel heating appliance such as pellet stoves, wood stoves, and coal stoves are very popular. Installation should be according to manufactures directions as well as local and state code. All solid fuel appliances require permitting and inspection by the building inspector. Keep all flammables at least 3 feet away from the heating appliance. Ashes from a wood, pellet or coal stove can hold heat or sparks for several days. Ashes should not be disposed of in trash or near other flammable material. Ashes should be removed from the home to the outside and should be stored in a fire proof canister until it has had several days to cool or been submersed in water or snow.

Oil burning heating appliances must be installed and maintained by a licensed oil burner technician. A permit must be obtained from the fire department for the installation of the heating appliance as well as the oil storage tank. Always call for service if smoke or soot is being produced in the house.

Propane and natural gas heating appliance must be installed and maintained by a certified technician. A permit must be obtained from the fire department as well as the plumbing inspector. Do not store gasoline and paint supplies inside where they can be ignited by the pilot light. If you smell gas exit the home immediately and call 911. Do not turn any appliances or switches on or off as this may cause a spark and ignite any gas fumes.

Space heaters need space. If you must use a space heater allow for at least 3 feet between the heater and all flammable materials. They should always be kept in their upright position on a solid surface. Space heater should not be left on when you are asleep or not home. Space heater fires are caused by contact with flammable materials or overheating of the electrical cords or wall sockets. Extension cords should not be used but if an extension cord must be used it should have a rating at least equal to that listed on the heater.

Keep your home safe with a working smoke detector in every bedroom as well as in every level of your home. There should also be a working Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector on every level of your home. Test the detectors at least once a month.

Kerosene heaters are illegal in Massachusetts for residential use. Be aware that the use of unvented Kerosene heaters is illegal in Massachusetts because of the danger of fire and carbon monoxide.

For information on fuel assistance, please call the HEATLINE at 1-800-632-8175 or on-line at www.mass.gov/dhcd .

For further information go to www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe or contact Firefighter Callahan at James.Callahan@townofcharlton.net