



WHITE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT
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DICKIE HOWARD, FIRE CHIEF

December 26, 2007

Mr. Chism:

Now that the colder weather has caught up with us, I would like to share the following safety facts and tips with our community regarding space heaters and chimney fires.

FACTS:

- Heating equipment was directly involved in 62,200 reported home structure fires in 2005. There were 670 civilian deaths, 1,550 civilian injuries, and \$909 million in property damage. In fact, heating equipment fires accounted for 16% of all reported home fires and 22% of home fire deaths.
- Space heaters, whether portable or stationary, accounted for 32% of home heating fires and 73% of home heating fire deaths in 2005.
- Excluding small confined fires, heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding, is by far the leading factor contributing to home heating fires and/or deaths.
- Chimneys and chimney connectors accounted for the largest share (36%) of home heating fires in 2005. Failure to clean a chimney accounted for 64% of chimney fires.
- Peak months for home heating fires are December, January, and February; accounting for nearly half of all home heating fires.

TIPS:

- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory.
- Install your FIXED heater according to the manufacturer's instruction or applicable codes or better yet, have a professional do the installation.
- Plug your electric-powered space heater into an outlet with sufficient capacity and NEVER into an extension cord. Don't forget to TURN OFF the unit when no one is at home.
- Use the proper fuel for your liquid fueled space heater, and NEVER use gasoline in any heater not approved for gasoline use. Refuel only in a well-ventilated area and when the equipment is cool.
- In your fireplace or wood stove, use only dry, seasoned wood to avoid the build-up of creosote (build up inside the chimney). DO NOT use a flammable liquid to start your fire. DO NOT use artificial logs in wood stoves. Make sure your fireplace has a

sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Always allow the fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which should be kept a safe distance from your home.

- DO NOT use your oven to heat your home

And as always, remember to test your smoke alarms to make sure they are working. If you need a smoke alarm OR a 9 volt battery for your alarm, please contact the White County Fire Department at 706-865-3855 during regular business hours.

Yours in Fire Safety,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "D. Howard", is written over a horizontal line.