

SAFETY CORNER

Public Safety Newsletter

TOPIC: Fire and Health Hazards During the Winter Months

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Wintertime in the Midwest can be one of the busiest times for personnel in the fire service. From people using higher quantities of gas and natural gas to the small things like making sure your exhaust vent is cleared, during the cold months you have to be careful and keep a watchful eye on things.

Often time's people will use space heaters in the winter to keep warm. Making sure the unit is at least 3 feet away (or follow manufacturer's recommendations) from the wall and other objects is important. Also make sure that if your heater tips over it will automatically shut off.

Another common thing found is overloading power strips. With the holidays people may plug in multiple lights, heaters, computers, and TVs to one power strip. Doing so could and has in the past resulted in electrical fires that could be devastating.

It is said that roughly 30% of people heat their homes with fireplaces or wood burners. These are great sources of heat but have to be respected. With an open flame anything can happen. Make sure your family knows where the fire extinguishers are located and understand how to use them. Try to have and know fire escape plans as well as a meeting place if a fire does happen. Also, you should make sure that your chimney stays clean and clear of obstructions to reduce the risk of a chimney fire.

Carbon Monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas. Carbon Monoxide poisoning is very dangerous and it can cause anything from vomiting to death. You should have at least one smoke detector per floor and a CO alarm that meets the UL near every occupied sleeping area. One other common thing you see in the winter is the sewer exhaust vent pipe that becomes blocked with ice. This can fill your house with poisonous gas and cause serious problems for you and your family.

So make sure you know the safety hazards that come with winter and how to prevent them from happening. Keep warm and safe this winter.

Sincerely,
Luke Ruml
Firefighter

If you would like to learn about certain topics please email cindy@mittchelldps.com and reference Safety Corner.

