

Home Heating Safety

It's a cold winter night. You decide to use a space heater, or perhaps light a fire in the fireplace, to save on the heating bill. Comfortable from its warmth as bedtime approaches you think, "What harm could it cause to leave it on overnight?"

Think again. While these heating devices may help you feel cozy and warm, they can become extremely dangerous if not used properly. Home heating equipment was involved in an estimated 62,000 home fires in 2005, according to the non-profit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The cost of these fires is more than just property damage. The cost includes roughly 700 lives and roughly 1,500 injuries.

Home heating fires are largely preventable when you know the rules. The Conover Fire Department's goal is to reduce the number of home-heating fires in our community. But we need your help. We are urging families to use extra caution this winter when heating your home.

The majority of heating fire deaths are caused by space heaters! Most heating fires are caused by creosote build-up in the chimney.

To help keep our community safe and warm this season, the Conover Fire Department recommends that you follow these guidelines:

- Space heaters need space. Keep all things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Turn portable heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Plug power cords only into outlets with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- Inspect for cracked, frayed or broken plugs or loose connections. Replace before using.
- Have your chimney inspected each year and cleaned if necessary.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a metal container.
- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. For the best protection interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home — when one sounds, they all sound. Test smoke alarms at least once a month.
- Install and maintain a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area.
- Never use an oven to heat your home.

With simple precautions, help us meet our goal of decreasing home-heating fires this winter.

