

St. Lucie County Fire District News Release

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St. Lucie County Fire District Urges Residents to Stay Warm AND Safe

Cold Weather Increases Use of Space Heaters and Potential Dangers

St. Lucie County, FL – With the cold temperatures expected over the next few days, the St. Lucie County Fire District is urging families to stay warm, but also stay safe.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), nearly half of all home-heating fires occur during the winter months. Space heaters, whether portable or stationary, accounted for one-third (32%) of home heating fires and four out of five (82%) of home heating fire deaths.

Some simple steps can prevent most heating related fires from happening.

Safety tips

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable heater.
- Only use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- For fuel burning space heaters, always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room and burn only dry, seasoned wood. Allow ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from the home.

- For wood burning stoves, install chimney connectors and chimneys following manufacturer's instructions or have a professional do the installation.
- Make sure all fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.
- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and windows. Call a gas service person.
- Test smoke alarms at least monthly.