



For Immediate Release

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Heating Safety Precautions Crucial during Extreme Temperatures

Jackson-With a winter storm predicted to hit the state tonight and tomorrow bringing gusty winds, ice and below freezing temperatures, Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney stresses that heating safety should remain a high priority on storm preparation lists. Temperatures over the next couple of days are expected to drop dramatically and remain at or below freezing.

“We continue to see marked increases in fires and fire deaths in the fall and winter months from people looking for ways to stay warm by using alternative heating sources. Using extreme caution when choosing heating sources is not only crucial during extreme temperatures, it could be life saving,” Chaney said.

Also critical to fire safety for any home is the installation and use of working smoke alarms.

“Working smoke alarms can cut the risk of people dying in home fires in half.”

Incidents involving heating equipment remain one of the leading causes of home fires in the nation. A National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) report shows 73% of home heating fire deaths can be attributed to space heaters. The peak time for home heating fires is between 6:00 p.m. and 11:00 p.m., with associated deaths occurring between midnight and 10:00 am.

Fire safety education and preventing fire deaths continue to be priority goals of the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Citizens preparing for the coming winter storm need to follow these extreme cold weather fire safety tips from the State Fire Marshal's Office to protect their homes and families:

- All heating equipment should be UL® approved and cleaned and inspected by a qualified professional prior to being used each year.
- Remember to keep clothes, drapes, and anything else combustible at least 3 feet away from all heating equipment, especially space heaters.
- Inspect the space heater's power cord for damage, fraying or heat. If the cord inspection reveals any of these issues, the heater should be replaced. Proper cleaning is essential and should be done regularly.
- Never use space heaters while you sleep, when you are away from home, or in areas where children may be without adult supervision.
- Always unplug space heaters when they are not in use. The heater should also be equipped with a tip over shut-off switch.
- Use only traditional heating equipment.
- Never use a stove or oven to heat living spaces. Kerosene is a poor choice for heating as it will give off poisonous fumes.
- Have chimney flues cleaned and inspected by qualified personnel.
- Have a spark screen that is age appropriate for all individuals using any area to be heated by a fireplace.
- Burn only approved materials in a fire place or wood burning stove; never burn paper or trash in a fireplace or wood burning stove.

Also, be a good neighbor. Check with the elderly or relatives and friends who may need additional assistance to ensure their safety. If you lose your heat, seal off unused rooms by stuffing towels in the cracks under the doors. At night, cover windows with extra blankets or sheets.

Should a fire break out in the home, have an emergency evacuation plan for the family to follow and have a designated meeting place for all family members. Once everyone is outside the burning home, call 911 and DO NOT RE-ENTER THE HOUSE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!!!

More detailed fire safety information and tips can be found on the special State Fire Marshal Heating Fire Safety page on the Mississippi Insurance Department website at www.mid.ms.gov. Heating safety tips will also be available via the MID and State Fire Marshal Twitter accounts @MSInsuranceDept and @msfiresafe.

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