



# MISSISSIPPI

## STATE FIRE MARSHALL

**MIKE CHANEY**  
State Fire Marshal

### PRESS RELEASE

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## **Heating equipment to blame for 8 fire deaths in 2018**

**Jackson, MS** – With lows expected to dip into the 40s in the coming days, now is the time to check heating equipment to make sure it's safe to use.

Commissioner of Insurance and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney says, "Having your heating equipment checked and using it as it is intended greatly cuts the risk of a fire in your home. Too many fires and fire deaths are caused by faulty heating equipment or people using ill-advised methods to stay warm."

So far in 2018, there have been 65 fire deaths investigated by the State Fire Marshal's Office. Of those, 8 were in some way caused by heating equipment in the early, cool months of 2018, from January to April. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reports that half of home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January, and February.

In 2017, there were 57 fire deaths investigated and, of those, 9 were caused by heating equipment or improper heating. The cause of heating-related fires is often

space heaters.

“As days remain mild and nights grow cooler, many Mississippians, especially the elderly, who are more susceptible to the cold, are beginning to turn on and use space heaters,” Chaney said.

A 2010 NFPA report shows the leading factor in home heating fire deaths was heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattresses, or bedding. Home heating fires peak during 6:00 to 8:00 p.m., and associated deaths peak during 2:00 to 4:00 a.m.

The State Fire Marshal’s Office recommends the following heating fire safety tips:

- 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 or in areas where children may be without adult supervision.
- Do not leave space heaters on when you are away from home.
- 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.
- Have a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.
- Burn only approved materials in a fireplace or wood-burning stove; never burn paper or trash in a fireplace or wood burning stove.
- 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 don't go back inside the home under any circumstances.

For more fire safety information and tips visit the Fire Preparedness page of the Mississippi Insurance Department website at [www.mid.ms.gov](http://www.mid.ms.gov). You can also follow the Mississippi State Fire Marshal on Twitter at [twitter.com/msfiresafe](https://twitter.com/msfiresafe). Heating safety tips are also available on the MID YouTube page/FireSafety playlist at <http://www.youtube.com/user/msinsurancedept>.