



MIKE CHANEY
Commissioner of Insurance
State Fire Marshal

LEE HARRELL
Deputy Commissioner

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
Mississippi Insurance Department

1001 Woolfolk Building (39201)
Post Office Box 79
Jackson, Mississippi 39205-0079
(601) 359-3569
www.doi.state.ms.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mike Chaney, Commissioner of Insurance/State Fire Marshal
Mississippi Insurance Department
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For additional information, please contact
Donna J. Cromeans, Public Relations Director 601-359-3569

Chaney Stresses Heating Fire Safety During Icy Weather

Jackson – The large area of freezing rain and sleet forecast for the northern part of the state creates the potential for deadly heating fires. Mississippians are strongly urged to take extreme precautions in the heating methods they use.

“These are the months when we see a spike in fire related deaths in the state and too many of these deaths and fires are caused by faulty heating equipment or people using ill-advised methods to stay warm,” said Mississippi Insurance Commissioner and State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney. “Two of the most important things for people to remember are to exercise good common sense in finding heat sources and to make sure the smoke alarms in their homes are functioning properly.”

The State Fire Marshal Division of the Mississippi Insurance Department recommends the following cold weather 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, people, and anything else combustible at least 3 feet away from all heating equipment especially space heaters.
- Inspect the 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 gas range to heat living spaces. Kerosene is a poor choice for heating as it will give off poisonous fumes.

If, in the event of a power outage and a fireplace must be used as a heating source additional tips include:

- Have 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.
- Keep all flammable materials at least 36 inches away from the fire place

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!!!**

For more information concerning fire safety contact the State Fire Marshal Division of the MID.

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