

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 8, 2019

MEDIA CONTACT

Beth Reiss

Communications Director

beth.reiss@mid.ms.gov

601-359-2403

Dropping Temperature Could Mean Rising Fire Risk

Heating equipment to blame for 15 fire deaths in 2019

JACKSON, Miss. – Mississippians should check their heating equipment now to make sure it's safe to use, as the temperature may dip into the 30s and 20s across much of the state in coming days. Using the equipment as it is intended and following safety guidelines cuts your risk of fire in your home.

There have been 52 fire deaths in Mississippi so far this year. Fifteen of those deaths were caused by placing flammable material too close to space heaters, plugging heaters into malfunctioning extension cords, or using equipment as a heat source when it was not designed for that purpose.

"We are going to see cold days and nights in the near future and some people may be getting out their space heaters for the first time this year," State Fire Marshal Mike Chaney said. "National reports show 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. "

Every home should have multiple smoke alarms. If you need smoke alarms, ask your local fire department.

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.
- 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 if using a fireplace.
- 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.

###