

NEWS RELEASE



Southern Platte Fire Protection District
8795 NW N Highway
Kansas City, MO 64153

CONTACT: Dean Cull, Fire Marshal
(816) 741-2900

Cold Weather Safety Tips

Parkville, MO (January 4, 2010) Cold weather could make for some tragic times if the following Fire Safety tips are not followed:

Southern Platte Fire Protection District's Fire Marshal Dean Cull, urges everyone to follow a few safety tips to help keep your new year off to a good start.

Cold weather and poor economic times causes a higher fire threat due to increased use of alternative sources for heating and cooking. This coupled with the use of candles around combustible or flammable materials pose an even greater threat for fires and fire deaths." We do not want you to experience one of these tragic events during this New Year" Fire Marshal Cull states. As a result of only four (4) structure fires in the U.S. between January 1st and January 4th, 2010 (just four days) there have been 17 fire deaths - 9 adults and 8 children. Three of these fires were caused by alternate heat sources: space heater too close to combustibles, generator refueling with a candle used for light due to a power outage, and a fireplace which caused a fire.

Residential fire deaths typically increase during the colder months from November to February. The majority of home heating fires are from heaters, wood stoves, and fireplaces due to:

- Leaving portable or space heater unattended
- Fueling errors involving liquid or gas-fueled heaters
- Flaws in installation or use of wood stoves, or other heaters
- Placing materials that can burn too close to space and portable heaters
- Lack of regular cleaning of chimneys in fireplaces and wood stoves.

The Southern Platte Fire Protection District suggests the following cold weather safety tips to ensure a safe and happy new year:

Entertaining

- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan if they are staying overnight.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.
- Blow out lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Turn off all lights and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

Heating Safety

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from any heating source, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable heater.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to 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.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room; burn only dry seasoned wood. Allow ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance away from the exterior of the home.
- 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.

Now is a great time to test your smoke alarm and to review your home escape plan with everyone so in the event of a fire, everyone in your house knows how to get out quickly and safely.

Remember that fire safety is your responsibility and your prevention actions may save your life or your family's life. On behalf of the Southern Platte Fire Protection District, we wish you a safe and happy New Year.

The Southern Platte Fire Protection District's four stations provide fire suppression, inspections, emergency medical assistance, hazardous-materials response, and public education for more than 37,000 citizens in Platte County, MO. The Southern Platte Fire Protection District, which includes Parkville, Weatherby Lake, and Farley, is one of the fastest-growing areas in the Kansas City metropolitan area. In addition to serving its own District, the department provides automatic-aid assistance to the Kansas City Fire Department and Riverside Public Safety.

#