



City of Kerrville
701 Main Street
Kerrville, Texas 78028
(830) 257-8000
www.kerrvilletx.gov

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Stuart Cunyus, Public Information Officer
(830) 258-1116
stuart.cunyus@kerrvilletx.gov

Kerrville Fire Department Offers Winter Safety Tips

Kerrville (Nov. 17, 2017) – With the cold winter weather upon us, the Kerrville Fire Department would like to remind homeowners about the fire dangers often associated with holiday decorations and heating and cooking equipment. Improper use of equipment, including portable or stationary space heaters, wood burning stoves and fireplaces, can be incredibly dangerous, and their misuse is a leading cause of U.S. home fire deaths.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), half of all home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January and February. From 2009 to 2013, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 56,000 reported U.S. home structure fires, with associated losses of 470 civilian deaths, 1,490 civilian injuries and \$1 billion in direct property damage. These fires accounted for 16 percent of all reported home fires.

Additionally, some holiday decorations can lead to an increased risk of fire. Between 2010 and 2014, U.S. Fire Departments responded to an average of 210 home fires that

started with Christmas trees per year. These fires caused an average of six deaths, 16 injuries and \$16.2 million in direct property damage annually. December is also the peak time of year for home candle fires. Homeowners are advised to keep a close watch on any burning candles and trees covered with holiday lights, as a third of all Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems.

During the colder months there is also an increased risk of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Often called the invisible killer, carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas created when fuels (such as gasoline, wood, coal, propane and oil) burn incompletely. In the home, heating and cooking equipment that burn fuel can be sources of carbon monoxide.

According to a 2012 NFPA report, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 80,100 non-fire CO incidents in which carbon monoxide was found, or an average of nine such calls per hour in 2010. Some heating equipment requires proper installation to reduce the risk of fire injuries. When installing wood burning stoves or gas heaters, NFPA recommends following the manufacturer's instructions or having a professional perform the installation.

Installing and maintaining CO alarms can also help reduce the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. If you smell gas in your gas heater or another appliance, do not light it. Leave the home immediately and call the fire department or gas company.

Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires. Five dangers associated with deep frying a turkey include:

- Turkey fryers can easily tip over, spilling hot oil across a large area.

- An overfilled cooking pot will cause oil to spill over when the turkey is placed inside.
- A partially frozen turkey will cause hot oil to spatter.
- Turkey fryers can easily overheat and cause a fire.
- The pot, lid and handles of a turkey fryer can get dangerously hot and cause burn injuries.

Statistics to Share

Based on 2010-2104 annual averages:

- Unattended cooking is the leading factor in home fires.
- Two-thirds of home cooking fires started when food or other cooking materials caught fire.
- Clothing was the item first ignited in less than one percent of these fires, but these incidents accounted for 18 percent of the cooking fire deaths.
- Ranges accounted for the largest share (62 percent) of home cooking fire incidents.
- More than half (55 percent) of reported non-fatal home cooking fire injuries occurred when the victims tried to fight the fire themselves.
- Frying poses the greatest risk of fire.

To ensure a safe and cozy winter this year, The Kerrville Fire Department offers some easy tips to follow:

- Use your oven to cook food only. Never use it to heat your home.

- Hire a qualified professional to clean and inspect heating equipment and chimneys every year.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Keep anything that can burn, including Christmas trees, at least three feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove or portable space heater.
- Place a sturdy screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks from flying into the room, and burn only dry, seasoned wood. Allow ashes to cool before disposing of them in a metal container, and ensure that they are kept a safe distance from the home.
- If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open. Make sure the exhaust pipe of a running vehicle is not covered with snow.
- Gas or charcoal grills can produce CO and should only be used outside.
- Test smoke alarms and CO alarms monthly. Properly maintained alarms can save lives in the event of a fire.

The Kerrville Fire Department hopes these tips will help everyone have a safe and happy holiday season. For additional safety tips, contact Fire Marshal Chris Lee at (830) 257-8449 or visit the city's website at www.kerrvilletx.gov.

###