

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUFFOLK FIRE & RESCUE PROVIDES SAFETY TIPS IN DEALING WITH WINTER WEATHER

SUFFOLK, VA (January 19, 2016) With temperatures below freezing expected over the next several days, Suffolk Fire & Rescue would like to remind citizens that there is an increased risk for home fires when the weather turns frigid. However, many of these fires are preventable and citizens can reduce their risks of becoming a fire casualty by identifying potential hazards and following simple safety tips.

Acting Fire Marshal Charles Chapin advises "Cold weather such as this brings with it a unique set of circumstances that can enhance the possibility of residential fires. The use of candles, heating sources and makeshift cooking methods can significantly increase the chances of a fire occurring. By following some basic safety tips, you can protect yourself and your family when dealing with winter weather."

Heating Safety

- Use kerosene heaters and space heaters according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Alternative heaters need their space. Keep anything combustible at least three feet away.

- Make sure your alternative heaters have 'tip switches.' These 'tip switches' are designed to automatically turn off the heater in the event they tip over.
- Do not use the kitchen oven range to heat your home. In addition to being a fire hazard, it can be a source of toxic fumes.
- Never refill a space heater while it is operating or still hot.
- Refuel heaters only outdoors.
- Make sure wood stoves are properly installed, and at least three feet away from combustible materials. Ensure they have the proper floor support and adequate ventilation.

Generator Safety

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines when using generators.
- Use a generator or other fuel-powered machines outside the home. CO fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.
- Use the appropriate sized and type power cords to carry the electric load. Overloaded cords can overheat and cause fires.
- Never run cords under rugs or carpets where heat might build up or damage to a cord may go unnoticed.
- Never connect generators to another power source such as power lines. The reverse flow of electricity or 'backfeed' can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.

Additional Tips

- Be careful when using candles. Keep the flame away from combustible objects and out of the reach of children.
- If the power goes out, make certain that all electrical appliances, such as stoves, electric space heaters and hair dryers, are in the OFF position.
- Make certain that your home's smoke alarms are in proper working order.
- Some smoke alarms may be dependent on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a back-up battery and install a new battery at least twice a year.

- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home and inside and outside of sleeping areas.
- All smoke alarms should be tested monthly. All batteries should be replaced with new ones at least twice a year.

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