

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUFFOLK FIRE & RESCUE WANTS TO KEEP EVERYONE SAFE AND WARM THIS WINTER

SUFFOLK, VA (January 7, 2015) As the temperature outside drops, families take to the indoors to keep safe and warm. What they may not realize is that turning up the heat can increase the risk of home heating fires.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), half of all home-heating fires occur during the winter months. On average, NFPA research shows that heating equipment is involved in more than 62,550 reported U.S. home structure fires per year with an associated loss of more than 516 civilian deaths, more than 1,595 civilian injuries and roughly \$924 million in direct property damage per year.

“While these numbers are frightening, nearly all of these fires are preventable,” said Captain Chuck Chapin, Acting Fire Marshal. “We can reduce the number of home heating fires in our community by taking some simple precautions and using heating equipment properly.”

The Suffolk Fire Prevention Bureau recommends some simple home heating safety tips so residents can help keep our community safe and warm this winter:

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home so that when one sounds, they all sound. Test smoke alarms at least once a month.
- Be sure your home has both photoelectric and ionization smoke alarms or combination ionization and photoelectric alarms, also known as dual sensor smoke alarms.
- Practice your home fire escape drill.
- Have your chimney inspected each year by a qualified professional and cleaned if necessary.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Dispose of ashes in a metal container.
- Space heaters need space. Keep all things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Turn portable heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Plug power cords only into outlets with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- Inspect for cracked or broken plugs or loose connections. Replace before using.

- Install and maintain a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

- Never use an oven to heat your home.

If you have any additional questions, contact the Suffolk Fire Prevention Bureau at 757-514-4550.

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