

MEDIA RELEASE
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SUFFOLK FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE OFFERS HEATING SAFETY TIPS

SUFFOLK, VA (November 3, 2009) Cooler temperatures bring falling leaves, brisk morning walks and thoughts of the holidays. But falling temperatures also bring hidden hazards. Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fire deaths. Almost half of home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January, and February. Some simple steps can prevent most heating-related fires from happening. The Suffolk Fire Marshal's Office is offering tips to help you stay warm and safe in the cooler weather:

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable heater.
- Only use heating equipment that has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the 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.
- For fuel burning space heaters, always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room and burn only dry, seasoned wood. Allow ashes to cool before disposing in

a tightly covered metal container, which is kept at least 10 feet away from the home and any other nearby buildings. Douse and saturate with water.

- 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.
- Test smoke alarms and CO alarms at least monthly .

If you have any questions on this topic, please contact the Suffolk Fire Marshal's Office at 757-514- 7540.

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