

~Heating your Home Safely

Whether primarily heating their homes with oil, gas or electricity, many families are struggling to meet the challenge of record-high energy costs this winter. While the projected rise in heating costs this winter could be devastating for many wallets, increased use of alternative heating equipment – like pellet stoves, wood stoves and space heaters – could have an even more devastating effect on the already serious home heating fire problem.

As a leading cause of home fires, heating is a concern for every community every winter. This year, with the projected increase in use of alternative heating equipment, families need to be especially vigilant to use all heating appliances properly.

Alternative heating sources are not inherently a greater fire risk; with caution they can be used safely. That's why Louisville Fire Department is encouraging residents using pellet stoves, wood stoves, space heaters or any other non-traditional home heating equipment this winter to follow this advice:

Portable electric space heaters

- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Use and purchase portable space heaters with an auto shut off so if they're tipped over they will shut off.
- Place space heater on solid, flat surface at least 3 feet away from anything that can burn.

Fuel-burning space heaters

- Always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer.
- When refueling, allow the appliance to cool and refuel outside or in a well-ventilated area.
- If the pilot light of your gas heater goes out, allow 5 minutes or more for the gas to go away before trying again, do not allow gas to accumulate, and light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot to avoid risk of flashback.

Wood and pellet-burning stoves

- Wood stoves should bear the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- In wood stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood pellets.
- Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire.

At best, not heeding this advice could result in superficial property damage. At worst, you could lose loved ones who may be unable to escape the rapid course of a preventable fire, as well as the comfort and safety you've always felt in your home. And, please install a carbon monoxide alarm in your home to protect your family from this silent killer. Please join us in ensuring that our community is safe from heating fires this winter.