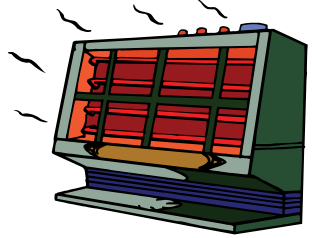


Heating Safety



Most home-heating fires involve portable heaters and space heaters, with room gas heaters and kerosene heaters accounting for the highest fatality risk. But all heating systems—including fireplaces—can be dangerous if they're not used and maintained properly.

Before buying any heating equipment, check with your local fire department to make sure what you're buying conforms to local building and fire codes. When shopping for portable or space heaters, look for automatic shut-off safety features.

All portable heating equipment should bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory, indicating that the heater has met basic safety standards.

Inspect all heating equipment annually, and clean as necessary.

Vents and Chimneys

All fueled heaters must be vented to prevent dangerous carbon-monoxide build-up in your home. Creosote and carbon deposits, caused by inefficient combustion in fireplaces and wood stoves, can coat chimney flues and pose a fire hazard. Have your chimney inspected by a professional before each heating season and have it cleaned, if necessary. Unusually high concentrations of chimney deposits could mean your fireplace or wood stove is not burning efficiently and should be inspected for safety. If you use a wood stove, have the flue and chimney connection inspected and cleaned regularly. Consider installing a spark arrester on top of any chimney that vents a solid-fuel stove or fireplace. Check with your local fire department for more instructions on installing heaters and vents.



Space Heaters

When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory and is legal for use in your community. Keep all combustible materials away from portable and space heaters. Place all space heaters at least three feet (one meter) away from furniture, walls, curtains, or anything else that burns. Plug your electric-powered space heater into an outlet with sufficient capacity and **never** into an extension cord. Turn off space heaters whenever the room they are in is unoccupied or under circumstances when manufacturer's instructions say they should be turned off. Portable space heaters are so easy to knock over in the dark that they should be turned off when you go to bed.

Liquid-Fuel Safety

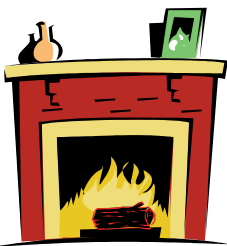
Use the proper grade of fuel for your liquid-fueled space heater. Never use a substitute or lower-grade fuel and never use gasoline in any heater not approved for gasoline use. Refuel your heater outdoors in an area away from structures where spills won't present a fire hazard. Refuel only when the equipment is cool, adding fuel to a hot heater can cause the fumes to ignite.

Gas-Fueled Heaters

Make sure fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside, that the venting is kept clear and unobstructed, and that the exit point is properly sealed around the vent. Never install unvented gas heaters in bedrooms or bathrooms. Carbon monoxide can build up to dangerous levels in any small, enclosed space.

Wood or Coal Stoves

To protect the floor under wood or coal stoves from heat and stray embers, put down approved protection or a floor protector listed with a testing lab. Install wood and coal stoves at least three feet (one meter) away from walls and furniture, unless the stove is listed for a lesser clearance. Use only dry, seasoned wood in a fireplace or wood stove to avoid the build-up of creosote, an oily deposit that easily catches fire and accounts for most chimney fires and the largest share of home heating fires. Use only paper or kindling wood, not a flammable liquid, to start the fire. Do not use artificial logs in wood stoves.



Fireplaces

When you use your fireplace, protect your home from sparks by using a fire screen made of sturdy metal or heat-tempered glass. Burn only seasoned wood—never rubbish—in your fireplace. Add wood carefully; sparks can escape into the room while the screen is open. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from your home. Be sure dampers are in working order, and never leave fires unattended—especially in an area used by children or pets.

For more information about heating safety, visit our website at www.in.gov/dhs.

