



The Tennessee State Fire Marshal's Office

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Be Winter Weather Wise and Make Fire Safety a Priority

NASHVILLE, TN – The wave of harsh winter weather rolling through the Volunteer State is leaving a trail of destruction in its wake that includes home fires, frozen pipes, and power outages. The State Fire Marshal's Office wants to remind Tennesseans how crucial it is to keep fire safety in mind during the winter months.

“The brutally cold conditions we have experienced this week can drastically increase fire risks during what is already a peak season for residential fires,” said State Fire Marshal and Commerce & Insurance Commissioner Julie Mix McPeak. “It is crucial to make fire safety a priority in and around our homes to avoid the devastation that can accompany frigid temperatures.”

The State Fire Marshal's Office offers these tips to ward off winter fire hazards:

Electrical Safety

- If your home has sustained flood or water damage, and you can safely get to the main breaker or fuse box, turn off the power.
- Assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. This includes cable TV feeds.
- Exposed outlets and wiring could present a fire and life safety hazard.
- Appliances that emit smoke or sparks should be repaired or replaced.
- Have a licensed electrician check your home for damage.

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.

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Heating Safety

- Turn portable alternative heaters (such as space heaters or kerosene heaters) off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Portable heaters need their space. Keep anything that can burn (including you!) at least three feet away.
- Make sure your portable 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.
- Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks from igniting nearby carpets, furniture or other items that can catch fire.
- If you utilize fuel-burning appliances, install and maintain a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home.

Additional Tips

- Always use a flashlight – not a candle – for emergency lighting.
- 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.
- If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of snow, ice and debris for easy access by the fire department.
- Notify your local fire marshal's office if your home or building's fire sprinkler system has been impaired.
- 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 once a year.
- Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home (including the basement) and inside and outside of sleeping areas. Test your smoke alarms monthly.
- Develop a home fire escape plan with two ways out of every room and a designated outside meeting place. Practice the plan with everyone in your home.

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