



# PRESS RELEASE

215 SYCAMORE STREET  
MUSCATINE, IA 52761  
PH. (563) 264-1550

**For more information contact:**

Kevin Jenison  
Communication Manager  
Public Information Officer  
Muscatine City Hall  
(563) 264-1550  
[kjenison@muscatineiowa.gov](mailto:kjenison@muscatineiowa.gov)

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## **PREVENTING HOME FIRES AS WEATHER TURNS COLDER**

*Heating equipment leading cause of fires in homes across United States*

**MUSCATINE, Iowa** – Many people turn to additional heating equipment as the weather turns colder, and the potential for property and/or personal loss due to fire also increases unless adequate precautions are taken.

No one ever wants a fire but fires do happen, and the weather compounds the loss during this time of year.



**Preventing House Fires**

A January 2021 report by the National Fire Prevention Association states that space heaters were most often responsible for home heating equipment fires, accounting for more than two in five fires as well as the vast majority of deaths (31 percent) and injuries (80 percent) in home fires caused by heating equipment.



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Fireplaces or chimneys were involved in approximately three in 10 fires caused by heating equipment, but these were mostly confined fires that did not extend beyond the chimney. Other leading types of heating equipment involved in home heating equipment fires included central heating systems and water heats (one in 10 heating equipment fires).

Victims of fires have to deal with being displaced by the fire, deal with the cold during the fire, and deal with everything freezing up after the fire.

"The water we use turns to ice very quickly and can build up making it hard to recover items that were in the fire," Mike Hartman, Assistant Fire Chief and Muscatine Fire Marshal, said. "The loss of utilities for the larger fires means that anything left in the home will freeze up including pipes, plumbing, appliances, and personal items."

Loss can be averted or limited by following a few safety tips during these cold winter months.

## **When using a space heater:**

- Purchase a heater with the seal of a qualified testing laboratory (i.e., UL listed and labeled).
- Choose a heater with a thermostat and overheat protection.
- Make sure heater has an auto shut-off to turn the heater off if it tips over.
- Place the heater on a solid, flat surface.



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- Keep space heaters out of the way of foot traffic and NEVER block an exit.



- Plug the heater directly into the wall outlet. Never use an extension cord or power strips.
- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Maintain a three-foot kid-free zone around home fireplaces and space heaters.
- Remember to turn portable

heaters off when leaving a room or going to bed.

## Other safety tips:

- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters, and central heating equipment according to local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys inspected and cleaned every year by a qualified professional.
- Always use the appropriate type of fuel, as specified by the manufacturer, for fuel-burning space heaters.
- Ensure that the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop embers from flying into the room.
- Make sure that ashes are cool before placing them in a bin for removal.
- Dispose of ashes in a safe area outdoors and away from any combustible material.

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