

CITY OF MUSCATINE



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CAUTION URGED IN USING PORTABLE HEATING DEVICES

Muscatine Fire Department Offers Winter Fire & Carbon Monoxide Safety Tips

MUSCATINE, Iowa – As temperatures drop, many households rely on space heaters, fireplaces, and other heating devices to stay warm. While these tools provide comfort, improper use can create serious fire and safety hazards. The Muscatine Fire Department, in partnership with the National Fire Protection Association, urges residents to follow essential precautions to keep homes and families safe this winter.

Fire Safety Tips

Winter brings higher risks of home fires due to heating, cooking, decorations, and candles. Fire Chief Mike Hartman emphasizes the importance of safe heating practices:

“Space heaters can be lifesavers during the cold months, but they also account for a significant number of home fires each year. Using them safely is key to protecting your home and loved ones.”

Space Heaters

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- Keep at least 3 feet away from anything flammable, including curtains, furniture, and bedding.
- Place on a flat, stable surface; never on furniture or near water.
- Never leave heaters unattended; turn off when leaving a room or sleeping.
- Plug directly into a wall outlet; avoid extension cords or power strips.
- Inspect regularly for frayed cords or damage.
- Use heaters with automatic shut-off if tipped over or overheating.

Fireplaces & Wood-Burning Stoves

- Maintain 3 feet of clearance from combustible materials.
- Check chimneys or flues annually for blockages, creosote buildup, or damage.
- Burn properly seasoned hardwoods (oak, maple, beech, ash).
- Avoid burning trash or wrapping paper.
- Use a fireplace screen or glass door and never leave fires unattended.
- Ensure adequate ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide buildup.

Carbon Monoxide Awareness

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas produced when fuels do not burn completely. CO poisoning incidents increase in winter due to heating equipment.

Safety measures include:

- Install carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home.
- Check batteries at least twice a year and replace detectors every 10 years.

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- Never use unvented fuel-burning devices indoors unless detectors are present.

General Winter Safety

- Keep a fire extinguisher accessible in kitchens, garages, and key rooms.
- Practice candle safety: keep flames away from flammable items, out of reach of children, and extinguish before leaving the room.
- Kitchen safety: Never leave stovetops or ovens unattended; use timers and ventilation to reduce CO risks.

Fire Chief Hartman adds:

“There is a common theme in space heater fires—they are often left unattended. Paying attention and following simple safety steps can prevent tragedies in your home.”

For more information on home fire safety, visit [National Fire Protection Association](#).