

CITY OF MUSCATINE



COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION
215 SYCAMORE STREET
MUSCATINE, IA 52761
PH. (563) 264-1550 Ext. 166

For more information contact:

Kevin Jenison
Communication Manager
Public Information Officer
City of Muscatine, Iowa
(563) 264-1550 Ext. 166
kjenison@muscataineiowa.gov

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USE SECONDARY HOME HEATING EQUIPMENT SAFELY

Muscatine Fire Department Emphasizes Home Heating Safety Ahead of Extreme Cold

MUSCATINE, Iowa – As some of the coldest temperatures of the season are expected to impact the Muscatine area this weekend, the Muscatine Fire Department is urging residents to take extra precautions with home heating, electrical systems, and cooking practices. The department is highlighting key safety recommendations to help prevent fires and protect families during the winter months.



According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), heating equipment remains one of the leading causes of home fire deaths in the United States. Between 2018 and 2022, fire

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departments nationwide responded to an estimated average of 40,997 home fires involving heating equipment each year, resulting in an average of 470 civilian deaths annually.

"When temperatures drop, we know residents rely more heavily on heating equipment, and that's exactly when the risk of home fires increases," said Muscatine Fire Battalion Chief Gary Ronzheimer. "Simple precautions — like keeping space heaters clear of anything that can burn and ensuring smoke alarms are working — can make all the difference."

NFPA data shows that heating equipment is the leading cause of U.S. home fires during December and January. Cooking remains the top cause of home fires year-round, while electrical issues rank third, with nearly 30 percent of electrical fires occurring between November and February. More than one-third of Christmas tree-related home fires occur in January.

"We see the same patterns every winter: space heaters placed too close to furniture, chimneys that haven't been cleaned, or overloaded electrical outlets," said Fire Chief Mike Hartman. "These are preventable hazards. Taking a few minutes to check your equipment and follow safety guidelines can prevent a tragedy."

Heating Fire Trends (2018–2022 Averages)

- Space heaters and heating stoves accounted for 46 percent of home heating fires and were responsible for 76 percent of related deaths and 72 percent of injuries.
- Kitchen and cooking areas were the most common origin point for heating-related fires (18 percent).
- Fireplaces and chimneys, though involved in only eight percent of heating-related fires, caused 27 percent of direct property damage.

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- Nearly half of all heating fires occurred between December and February.

Heating Safety: Staying Warm and Safe

- Keep flammable items at least three feet from furnaces, fireplaces, wood stoves, and space heaters.
- Maintain a three-foot kid-free zone around open flames and heating devices.
- Never use an oven to heat your home.
- Have stationary heating equipment installed by a qualified professional.
- Schedule annual inspections for heating equipment and chimneys.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving a room or going to bed.
- Use only manufacturer-approved fuel for fuel-burning heaters.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen and dispose of ashes safely in a metal container kept away from the home.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms; if you smell gas, leave immediately and contact emergency services.

Electrical Safety

- Plug only one heat-producing appliance into an outlet at a time.
- Ensure cords are not placed under rugs or across doorways.
- Use extension cords only temporarily; add outlets if needed.
- Contact a qualified electrician if you notice blown fuses, tripped breakers, warm outlets, burning odors, flickering lights, or sparks.

Cooking Safety

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- Stay attentive while cooking and never leave food unattended.
- Keep combustible materials three feet away from cooking equipment.
- Turn pot handles inward to prevent spills.
- Keep a lid nearby to smother small grease fires.
- Maintain a three-foot kid- and pet-free zone around cooking areas.

"Our goal is to keep every household in Muscatine safe this winter," Chief Hartman added. "We encourage everyone to review these safety tips and share them with family, friends, and neighbors."

Visit the Muscatine Fire Department Facebook page for more [PREVENTION TIPS](#).

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