

## NEWS RELEASE



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### **FIRE DISTRICT ENCOURAGES Cold Weather Safety**

Parkville, MO (November 5, 2013) As the first cold weather of the year approaches, many people are turning on their heaters for the first time. Since colder temperatures result in longer operating time for heating equipment, there is more opportunity for that equipment to cause a fire. Southern Platte Fire Protection District Fire Marshal Dean Cull reminds everyone to follow important fire safety tips to avoid a tragedy in your own home.

Cold weather causes a higher fire threat due to increased use of alternative sources for heating and cooking. This coupled with the use of candles around combustible or flammable materials pose an even greater threat for fires and fire deaths. "We do not want you to experience a tragic event during these colder months," Fire Marshal Cull states.

Residential fire deaths typically increase during the colder months from November to February. The majority of home heating fires are from heaters, wood stoves, and fireplaces due to:

- Leaving portable or space heater unattended
- Fueling errors involving liquid or gas-fueled heaters
- Flaws in installation or use of wood stoves, or other heaters
- Placing materials that can burn too close to space and portable heaters
- Lack of regular cleaning of chimneys in fireplaces and wood stoves.

The Southern Platte Fire Protection District suggests the following cold weather safety tips to ensure a safe winter season.

## Entertaining

- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan if they are staying overnight.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.
- Blow out lit candles when you leave the room or go to bed.
- Turn off all lights and decorations before leaving home or going to bed.

## Heating Safety

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from any heating source, such as the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable heater.
- Never use your oven for heating.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Maintain heating equipment and chimneys by having them cleaned and inspected annually by a qualified professional.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room; burn only dry seasoned wood. Allow ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance away from the exterior of the home.
- Make sure all fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Install and maintain carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to avoid the risk of CO poisoning.

- If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not attempt to light the appliance. Turn off all the controls and open doors and windows. Call a gas service person.

Now is a great time to test your smoke alarm and to review your home escape plan with everyone so in the event of a fire, everyone in your house knows how to get out quickly and safely.

Remember that fire safety is your responsibility and your preventive actions may save a life. On behalf of the Southern Platte Fire Protection District, we hope you a have a safe winter.

The Southern Platte Fire Protection District's four stations provide fire suppression, inspections, emergency medical assistance, hazardous-materials response, and public education for more than 37,000 citizens in Platte County, MO. The Southern Platte Fire Protection District, which includes Parkville, Weatherby Lake, and Farley, is one of the fastest-growing areas in the Kansas City metropolitan area. In addition to serving its own District, the department provides automatic-aid assistance to the Kansas City Fire Department and Riverside Public Safety.

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