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Surviving the State of Emergency

Candles left burning unattended, overused chimneys and fireplaces, space heaters used too close to flammable items and improper disposal of ashes from woodstoves have caused fires at homes affected by Thursday night’s ice storm.

“Extra caution is needed now as people cope with this enduring state of emergency,” according to State Fire Marshal Stephen Coan.

Coan said, “As people try to keep warm, we also want people to keep safe.”

He suggests these tips to help safeguard yourself, your family, and your home from potential hazards created by last week’s storm:

Storing & Transporting Gasoline Safely

Fire chiefs across the state are concerned that people using generators handle gasoline safely and properly.

- Gasoline should never be stored inside the home as there are so many possible ignition sources. Gasoline vapors will travel and find a heat source.
- All gasoline must be stored in approved containers designed to hold gasoline safely (look for the mark of a national testing laboratory such as UL).
- Store gasoline outside, away from the house.

Generator Safety

There have been storm related carbon monoxide incidents so far from generator exhaust fumes getting inside homes.

- Always use a generator or other fuel-powered machines outside of the home, away from doors and windows. Carbon monoxide fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.

Heating Safety – Dispose of Ashes Safely

With power out for such an extended period of time, fireplaces and woodstoves have been used continuously for days.

- Keep anything that can burn three feet away from the fireplace or wood, coal or pellet stoves.
- Use a screen in front of the fireplace.
- Dispose of ashes from woodstoves and fireplaces in a metal container with a lid, away from the house or deck.

Unvented Kerosene Heaters Illegal

Due to the severe risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, as well as fire, it is illegal to use unvented kerosene heaters and construction salamanders inside homes. These are designed for use on construction sites where the flow of air is significantly greater.

Candle Safety

If the power is still out, try to use flashlights and battery operated candles instead of traditional candles for light; however when using lighted candles:

- Burn candles inside a one-foot circle of safety free of anything that can burn.
- Extinguish after use; never leave candles burning unattended.
- Use a sturdy metal, glass or ceramic candleholder or saucer.
- Keep lit candles out of reach of children and pets.

Cooking Safety

- Use charcoal or LP-gas grills outdoors; never bring a gas or charcoal grill inside due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Stoves and ovens cannot do the job of heating systems and can easily overheat and cause a fire when overworked.
- Opening the door of the gas oven pours carbon monoxide into the home.

Preventing Frozen Pipes

- Let the water drip from faucets. Running water – even at a trickle – helps prevent pipes from freezing because the temperature of the water running through it will be above freezing.
- If you have some heat inside the home, open kitchen and bathroom cabinet doors, but be sure to move harmful chemicals and cleaners out of reach of children.

When the Power Comes Back

- If pipes have already frozen, use a heating pad, a hair dryer or wrap pipes in towels soaked in hot water.
- Any open flame inside the home poses a risk of fire.
- Be sure to keep the faucet open so the water has somewhere to go as it melts.
- Keep combustibles off electric stovetops; you never know when the power will be restored.
- If your cellar is still flooded, be cautious restoring heat and appliances.

Assume All Downed Wires Are Live

Assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. Keep pets and people well away from them and take a moment to explain to children just how deadly these wires are.