



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

MARY ELIZABETH HEFFERNAN
SECRETARY

P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121

www.mass.gov/dfs

STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

For Immediate Release: October 31, 2011
 Contact: Jennifer Mieth, (978) 567-3381

Fire Marshal Issues Cold Weather Fire Safety Warning

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan issued a fire safety warning for people who are still without power and heat this Halloween. “This early season storm has caused extended widespread power outages that are likely to continue for several days yet,” said Coan. “It is important to take steps to stay safe and prevent fires and carbon monoxide poisoning,” he added.

Make Sure Smoke Alarms and CO Alarms are Working

One of the simplest steps for safety you can take is to make sure your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are working. “With this extended power outage the battery-back-ups in hard-wired smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are going to need to be replaced today in many cases in order to continue to provide protection. Many people may lose the ability to make emergency calls as cell phone batteries and the battery-backup for fiber optic telephone/cable/Internet services in most cases are already depleted,” said Fire Marshal Coan.

“I would urge people without lights and heat to consider staying with friends and family that do or go to an emergency shelter for a short while,” Coan said. “We have already had several instances of carbon monoxide poisoning from using generators incorrectly.” Use generators outside. Handle gasoline safely and only used approved containers.

Prevent Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

“Carbon monoxide poisoning is great risk at times like these. Heating appliances are the leading cause of carbon monoxide in the home and the risk increases as they are working harder,” said Coan. “Don’t use your oven for heat and don’t bring a hibachi or gas grill inside to cook, doing so can cause carbon monoxide poisoning,” he said.

Wood, Coal and Pellet Stoves

“Prevent serious fires from the improper disposal of ashes from fireplaces, wood and pellet stoves,” said Coan. “A single ember can remain hot for days, so put ashes in a metal

container with a lid away from the house, the garage, the deck,” he added. Several recent fires started with ashes put into plastic bags, cardboard boxes, and plastic trash bins, in the garage, under the deck or even in the family room.

“Don’t over fire your woodstove as they are not designed to replace central heating systems. An overtaxed woodstove can easily start a chimney fire taking advantage of creosote build-up or minor cracks in the flue or causing a breakdown in the chimney liner,” said Coan.

Use Flashlights and Battery-Operated Candles

Use flashlights and battery-operated candles for safety. If you must use flame candles, remember to burn them inside a one-foot circle of safety free of anything that can burn. Place them on a non-combustible surface or in the sink; blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed; and use jar candles or place a globe over stick candles. Keep pets and children away from candles.

Prevent Freezing Pipes

“Let water drip a trickle to prevent pipes from freezing and open cupboards under sinks to let heat circulate around the pipes,” said Coan.

Trick-or-Treat

Trick-or-treating has been postponed in many communities for safety reasons. Check with your community first before going out tonight.

For more information on safety go to www.mass.gov/dfs click on fire safety topics then Storm Safety or <http://www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe>.