

Keep Warm, Keep Safe

When Heating your Home this Winter



Heating causes thousands of residential fires each year. Heating equipment is the #2 cause of home fires in Massachusetts and the #1 source of carbon monoxide (CO).

Smoke and CO Alarms

- Make sure there are working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms on every level, including outside the bedrooms.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly and change batteries twice a year, when you change the clocks.
- Check the manufacturing date on the back of the alarm. Replace smoke alarms after 10 years. Replace CO alarms after 5-7 years (depending on the model).

Be Careful When Using Fireplaces and Solid Fuel Stoves

If you heat your home by burning *solid fuels* (coal, firewood, pellets), be careful before, during and after using these kinds of fuels.

- Have the chimney and flue professionally inspected and cleaned every year.
- Make sure the stove is approved by a national testing agency such as Underwriters Laboratory (UL).
- Get a building permit before installing a stove.
- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away.
- Dispose of the ashes in a **metal** container, with a lid, away from the house, garage, and porch.
- Sparks and embers from a fireplace or woodstove can ignite household materials. Use a screen in front of a fireplace. Keep the door to a woodstove closed when in use.

Space Heaters Need Space

If you must use a space heater, do so safely.

- Do not use space heaters as your #1 heating source.
- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away on all sides.



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- Plug a space heater directly into a wall outlet, not an extension cord or power strip.
- Always turn off when going to bed or leaving the room.
- Portable kerosene and propane heaters are illegal in Massachusetts for home use.

Maintain Gas and Oil Equipment

Well-maintained furnaces and water heaters are safer and more efficient..

- Have your furnace and hot water heater professionally checked every year.
- Do not use or store gasoline or painting supplies inside where they can be ignited by the pilot light.

If you Use Gas Heating Equipment

Gas leaks can be dangerous – if you smell something like rotten eggs or you think there might be a leak,

- Move outdoors.
- Do not smoke or turn on or off electrical switches - sparks can cause an explosion.
- Dial 911 immediately.

If You Use Oil Heating Equipment

- Don't let the tank get completely empty.
- Call for service if the oil burner releases smoke or soot in the house.

Carbon Monoxide: the Silent Killer

Heating equipment is the leading source of carbon monoxide (CO) in the home.

- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home.
- Don't use the gas stove or oven for heat.
- Keep appliance vents and exhaust pipes clear of drifting snow and bushes.

Fuel Assistance

For information on fuel assistance, please call the HEATLINE at 1-800-632-8175 (or for Boston only 617-357-6012) or visit www.mass.gov/dhcd.

For more information go to:
www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe



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