



FIRE-SAFE IN TENNESSEE

State Fire Marshal: Are you using portable heaters safely?

NASHVILLE, TN – According to the U.S. Fire Administration, an estimated 900 portable heater fires in homes are reported to U.S. fire departments each year and cause an estimated 70 deaths, 150 injuries and \$53 million in property loss.

“We cannot stress enough the importance of following safety precautions when using portable space heating devices in your home,” said State Fire Marshal Julie Mix McPeak. “Keeping fire safety in mind can help save lives and property.”

Tennessee is not immune to the devastation caused by portable heater fires. Media coverage of fires here includes frequent reports of incidents involving portable heaters during the winter months. Recently, an elderly couple in Hardeman County was killed in an early morning fire linked to a space heater.

According to the Tennessee Fire Incident Reporting System (TFIRS), 3,440 heating fires occurred in Tennessee from 2008-2012. These fires claimed the lives of 41 people, injured 54 and damaged \$37.1 million in property. Space heaters were involved in 78% of all state heating fire deaths. 48% of all space heater fires happened in just three months of the year –December, January, and February.

You can help prevent a portable heater fire in your home this winter by following a few fire safety steps:

- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave a room.
- Keep anything that can burn, including bedding, clothing, curtains, pets and people at least three feet away from portable heaters.
- Only use portable heaters from a recognized testing laboratory and with an automatic shut-off so that if they tip over, they shut off.
- Plug portable heaters directly into outlets and never into an extension cord or power strip.
- Check the cord for fraying, cracking and look for broken wires or signs of overheating in the device itself.
- Never run the heater cord (or any cord) under rugs or carpeting.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, having a working smoke alarm reduces a person's chance of dying in a fire by half. For the best protection, install smoke alarms on every level of your home, outside every sleeping area and in every bedroom, and interconnect them if possible. Test smoke alarms monthly and entirely replace any smoke alarm that is 10 years old or older.

Develop and practice a home fire escape plan with every member of your household. Have two ways out of every room and a designated outside meeting place to gather in the event of an emergency.