

Alternative Heating Safety

Every winter firefighters respond to thousands of home fires caused by heating equipment. Yet, these types of fires can almost always be prevented by homeowners and renters who use alternative heat sources carefully and responsibly. Those using alternative sources to heat their homes must maintain proper use and maintenance.

Tips for safe alternative heating

- According to NFPA, between 2004 and 2008, the leading factor contributing to home heating fires was failure to properly clean creosote, an oily deposit that easily catches fire, from solid-fueled heating equipment such as chimneys.
- Regular cleaning and annual inspections by a professional chimney sweep will help keep a fireplace free from obstructions and creosote.
- Among fatal home heating fires, the leading factor contributing to the ignition of the fires was heating equipment stationed too close to flammable materials.
- Keep all flammable materials, such as draperies, blankets, clothing, bedding, mattresses, upholstered furniture, etc. at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Use only paper or kindling wood, not a flammable liquid, to start a fire.
- Use only dry, seasoned wood in a fireplace or wood stove to avoid the buildup of creosote. Do not use artificial logs in wood stoves.
- If using a gas fireplace, ensure the fireplace vents properly and that there is a functioning carbon monoxide detector in the room.
- Keep fire extinguishers on hand and know how to use them.

Space heater safety

- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory and is legal for use in your community.
- Use the proper grade of fuel for your liquid-fueled space heater and never use gasoline in any heater not approved for gasoline use.
- Refuel space heaters only in a well ventilated area and when the equipment is cool.
- Plug power cords only into outlets with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- Turn off space heaters whenever the room they are in is unoccupied.
- Turn off space heaters when you go to bed each night to avoid knocking them over in the dark.

Resources for Help With Heating Your Home

Alternative heating doesn't have to be a last resort for those who are unable to afford their gas or electric heating bills.

Customers who are having difficulty paying their utility bills to contact their utility companies as soon as possible to see what payment options may be available. For further help with the burden of heating your home, visit

<http://www.ildceo.net/dceo/Bureaus/Energy+Assistance/Illinois+LIHEAP/>.