

St. Louis Fire Department



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THE ST. LOUIS FIRE DEPARTMENT CANVASSES DOOR-TO-DOOR TO ADDRESS ALTERNATIVE HEATING SAFETY

ST. LOUIS, MO (March 3, 2007) — The St. Louis Fire Department will be canvassing neighborhoods today to address the hazards of alternative home heating. Every year in the United States, space heaters are associated with 2,400 fires, resulting in 80 deaths, 240 injuries, and \$48.2 million in property loss.

The St. Louis Fire Department has been speaking out on the dangers of alternative heating for several years. With a number of recent fires being attributed to the use of space heaters and a change to colder temperatures for the next few days, they do not feel that their message is reaching the right audience. “We have learned through experience that the best way to reach our target audience is to go out into the neighborhoods door-to-door,” said Fire Chief Sherman George. “We believe that our messages carry more weight when it comes from the firefighters that are protecting the citizens in their neighborhoods,” he further stated.

The St. Louis Fire Department will follow up today’s canvass with a two-day smoke alarm blitz for the spring change your clock; change your battery program next weekend.

If residents of St. Louis are unclear about any fire safety related information, or what fire prevention programs the St. Louis Fire Department offers, they may call (314) 289-1905 for additional information, or visit the web-site at <http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/fire>

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Alternative Heating Safety Tips



The winter season is just around the corner. Over the past few years, the increase in heating costs has forced some of our citizens to resort to using space heaters to warm their homes. The use and/or misuse of space heaters increase the chance for a fire in the home. These fires have resulted in numerous injuries and fatalities all across America, and the City of St. Louis is no exception.

In order to keep your family safe through the winter months, while using space heaters, you need to remember the following safety tips:

Kerosene Heaters

- Read and follow the procedures in the owner's manual before you attempt to operate or service the unit.
- Learn the safety and maintenance procedures necessary to safely operate the heating unit.
- **Always** use water clear K-1 grade kerosene.
- **Never** use gasoline or any other volatile fuels in the unit.
- Keep anything that may burn at least three feet away from the unit.
- **Never** refuel the heater indoors, when it is hot, or in use.
- Do not fill the fuel tank past the full mark. **(The space above the full mark is there to allow for the expansion of the fuel when it is operated).**
- Always provide adequate ventilation for the unit. **(Burning kerosene consumes oxygen, and produces carbon monoxide and other dangerous gases which may cause you to suffocate or have other respiratory problems).**

Electric Heaters

- Buy only **UL (Underwriter's Laboratory)** certified heaters.
- Check to make sure it has a thermostat control mechanism.
- Check to make sure it will shut off automatically if the heater falls over.
- **Never** dry clothes or store objects on top of the heater.
- **Never** use extension cords with electric heaters.
- Keep anything that may burn at least three feet away from the heater.
- **Never** allow children to play with or around any type of space heater.
- Never place anything inside the grill on the front of the heater.

Fireplaces

- Make sure the chimney is cleaned and inspected before lighting a fire in the fireplace.

- **(The cleaning should be done at least once per year).**
- Make sure the damper is open before starting a fire.
- Use a metal mesh screen in front of the fireplace opening.

Fireplaces continued

- Leave glass doors open while burning a fire.
- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use only seasoned hardwood in your fireplace.
- Never leave a fire in a fireplace unattended.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a covered metal container outside your home.

If a fire should occur in your home remember to:

- **Alert everyone in the house to the fire.**
- **Get out as quickly as possible.**
- **Call 911 from your neighbor's house, or a cell phone.**
- **Never break any windows, this will cause the fire to spread rapidly, and endanger anyone left inside the house.**
- **When the fire department arrives, tell them if anyone is left in the building.**
- **Never go back into a burning building for any reason.**

As always remember to have a working smoke alarm installed on every level of your home. Also, remember to practice a home escape plan frequently with your family.

For more information on fire safety, please contact us at:

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<http://stlouis.missouri.org/citygov/fire>