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The cold snap last week probably won't be the last one we experience this winter. The Burleson Fire Marshal's office wants you to be smart when it comes to heating your home safely in the winter.

Did you know that 50 percent of home heating fire deaths happen between December and February, and between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. as well as midnight-2 a.m.?

According to the National Fire Protection Association, heating equipment accounted for 14 percent of all reported home fires in 2011 and 16 percent of home fire deaths. Between 2007 and 2011, the leading factor contributing to home heating fires was failure to clean (principally creosote from solid-fueled heating equipment) chimneys. The leading factor leading to home heating fire deaths was heating equipment that was too close to things that burn, including upholstered furniture, clothing, mattresses or bedding. Stationary or portable space heaters were to blame in more than 80 percent of those reported deaths.

You can make a difference in those statistics.

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Make sure your alternative heaters have 'tip switches.' These 'tip switches' are designed to automatically turn off the heater in the event they tip over.
- Have a three-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- Don't overload power cords.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufacturer's instructions.
- Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.

- Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.
- Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- If the power goes out in your home, do not use a generator or any other fuel-powered machines inside your home. CO fumes are odorless and can quickly overwhelm you indoors.
- Never connect generators to another power source such as power lines. The reverse flow of electricity or 'backfeed' can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.
- Always use a flashlight – not a candle – for emergency lighting.
- Some smoke alarms may be dependent on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a back-up battery and install a new battery at least once a year.
- If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of snow, ice and debris for easy access by the fire department.

For more tips about heating your home safely, go to the FEMA website, [www.usfa.fema.gov/winter/](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/winter/) or call the Burleson Fire Marshal's office at 817-426-9174.