



THE  
CONCORD GROUP  
INSURANCE COMPANIES

Tips

# Stay Warm, Stay Safe



It doesn't seem dangerous but it may be...

**H**igh cost fuels and utilities have caused many of us to search for alternative sources of home heating. However, alternative heat sources are a major contributing factor in home fires.

Use these tips to help you Stay Warm and Stay Safe.

**Wood & Pellet Stoves** - Choose a UL listed stove and have it professionally installed. If in doubt about clearance, keep 36" from combustible materials. Never use a stove in an unlined chimney, inspect it annually and the stove needs to have it's own dedicated flue.

**Fireplaces** - Using a lot of paper to build a roaring fire seems nice, but it could ignite creosote in the chimney. Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the opening. Don't burn charcoal indoors - it can give off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide. Never close your damper with hot ashes in the fireplace. It will help the fire heat up again and force toxic carbon monoxide into the house! Avoid breaking a synthetic log apart to quicken the fire or using more than one at a time. They often burn unevenly, releasing higher levels of carbon monoxide.

**Kerosene Space Heaters** - Inspect exhaust parts for carbon buildup and be sure you know where the emergency shut off is in case it tips over. Use only the appropriate fuel in your heater and don't fill the heater while it is operating or hot.

**Electric Space Heaters** - Never use an extension cord! The cord can overheat and start a fire.

## Furnace Heating

- Inspect the walls and ceiling near the furnace and along the chimney line. If it's hot or discolored, additional pipe insulation or clearance may be required.
- Check the flue pipes and pipe seams. Are they well supported and free of holes and cracks?
- Is the chimney solid? No cracks or loose bricks? All unused flue openings should be sealed with solid masonry.
- If you have a power vent, it's especially important to have your furnace cleaned twice a year. The power vent is susceptible to puff backs and blockages.

The information contained in this document is for discussion and awareness. Always consult a licensed professional contractor when installing or servicing a heating appliance.



## Other Fire Safety Tips

- Avoid **discarding hot ashes** inside or near your home. Place them in a metal container outside and well away from the house.
- It's **dangerous to use a range or an oven** as a supplemental heating device. Not only is it a safety hazard, it can be a source of potentially toxic gases.
- **Frozen water pipes?** Don't try to thaw them with a blow torch or other open flame. The pipe could conduct the heat and ignite the wall structure.
- Is there a **fire hydrant** near your home? You can help the fire department by keeping the hydrant clear of snow.

## Most Importantly

Be sure every level of your home has a **working smoke detector** and be sure to check and clean it on a monthly basis. Batteries should be replaced at seasonal time changes (spring and fall) each year.

AND, you should have a **carbon monoxide detector** to alert you if there is harmful carbon monoxide in the air.