

In 2002, US Fire Departments reported that 43% of all home heating fires and 11% of associated deaths were due to fireplace and chimney fires. Fixed and portable space heaters, including wood stoves caused 25% of the heating fires but 74% of all deaths.

ARE YOUR HEATING SOURCES SAFE?

HELPFUL TIPS

- **Watch for Creosote Build-Up**
Creosote is highly combustible. It is black or brown, and can be flaky and tar-like, or shiny and hardened. Signs of creosote can be found if you have a warped damper, cracked or collapsed flue, or cracks in exterior masonry or damaged roofing material.
- **Inspect all Supplemental Heating Sources Once a Year**
A qualified technician should inspect all new installations per the Massachusetts State Building Code. If you did not install the heating source and there is no written documentation of a technical inspection, it is recommended that you hire a qualified technician. When purchasing a new home, keep in mind that not all home inspectors are specialized in supplemental heating sources.
- **Check Flue Pipes**
Flue pipes should be checked for corrosion at least once a year. Solid fuel heating appliances cannot share a common flue with chimney flues used by other solid fuel, fossil fuel or gas fired appliances.
- **Remove all Flammable Household Items**
Drapes, furniture, newspapers and books are a few of many flammable household items that should be kept away from the source of heat.
- **Store Ashes Properly**
All ashes should be stored in a covered metal container and kept outdoors on a cement or brick slab.
- **Smoke Alarms**
Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms in a central location and outside sleeping areas. Keep a fire extinguisher handy. Test periodically.
- **Annual Professional Inspections are Critical**
- **Never leave children or pets unattended near the heat source**
- **Follow Manufacturers' Instructions**

PORTABLE & FIXED SPACE HEATERS

- **Purchase a Tested Heater**
Heater should be tested and labeled by a nationally recognized consumer testing company.
- **Place on a Level Surface**
Heaters should be placed so that they cannot be bumped or knocked over; they should be at least 36 inches from flammable materials like drapes and furniture.

- **Stay Near Space Heaters**
Never leave space heaters unattended or running while you sleep. Keep space heaters away from water and never use near a sink or in the bathroom.
- **Remember Never To Use Unvented Kerosene Heaters**
Sale and use of unvented kerosene heaters is illegal in Massachusetts.

FIREPLACES & WOOD BURNING STOVES

- **Use a Sturdy Fireplace Screen**
Be sure that the fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks and flying embers.
- **Start Fires Properly**
Fires should be started with clean newspaper and dry kindling. NEVER start with gasoline, kerosene, charcoal started or propane torch. Do not burn wet or green (unseasoned) logs.
- **Check Damper**
The damper should be open before lighting a fire and not closed until the fire has died out and the embers are cold.
- **Build Small Hot Fires**
Smoldering fires are not safe or efficient.
- **Install Stovepipe Thermometers**
These thermometers help monitor flue temperatures.
- **Inspect and Clean Chimney Annually**
Chimney fires can be avoided by inspection and cleaning by a chimney sweep.

PELLET STOVES

- **Choose a Product Specific for Pellet Stoves** A PL Vent pipe, labeled as tested to UL 641 is the right choice. Do not use a dryer vent, gas appliance (Type B) vent, PVC (plastic) pipe or a single wall stove pipe.
- **Place and Vent Correctly**
Floor protection, electrical requirements and venting layouts are key.
- **Maintain Your Pellet Stove:**
 - **Burn Pot** - check daily and clean periodically to keep air inlets open.
 - **Ash Drawer** - empty before starting a new fire and occasionally interrupt stove operations.
 - **Heat Exchanger** - use professional services unless you have the rod that scrapes the tubes.
 - **Ash Trap** - use professional services.
 - **Glass** - clean with glass cleaner when glass is completely cool. Clean professionally once a year.