

Winter Fires

When a member of your community is killed in a home fire, it is important to let others know how they can prevent a similar tragedy. As you continue to report on the fire, the U.S. Fire Administration encourages you to remind your audience that many fire deaths and injuries are preventable.

More than 4,000 Americans die each year in fires and more than 20,000 are injured. Many of them might be alive today if they had only had the information they needed to avoid a disaster. The following life-saving tips could make a big difference to your audience. By incorporating them in your story now, while the moment is still fresh, you could help save a life.

Did you know?

- Eighty-two percent of all fire deaths occur in the home.
- Electrical fires are a special concern during the winter months, which call for more indoor activities and increased use of lighting, heating and appliances.
- Deaths caused by winter fires are particularly preventable.

Following these simple fire safety tips can boost survival rates dramatically. Please share them with your readers because knowledge is the best fire protection.

Winter Fires Life-Saving Tips

- Install a smoke alarm on every level of your home. Test smoke alarm batteries every month and change them at least once a year. Consider installing a 10-year lithium battery-powered smoke alarm, which is sealed so it cannot be tampered with or opened.
- Make sure wood stoves are properly installed, away from combustible surfaces, have the proper floor support and adequate ventilation. Never use flammable liquids (such as gasoline) to start or accelerate fire.
- Make sure your space heaters have an emergency shut off in case they tip over. Kerosene heaters are not permitted in many areas. ONLY use the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Never refill a space heater while it is operating or still hot. Refuel outside, away from the house.
- Have your furnace and chimney professionally inspected annually and cleaned if necessary. Chimney tar build-up is a common cause of chimney fires.
- Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to prevent sparks igniting nearby carpets or furniture.
- Never thaw frozen pipes with a blow torch or other open flame. Use hot water or a UL listed device such as a hand-held dryer.
- Dispose of hot ashes in metal containers placed away from the house.
- Never use the range or oven to heat your home.
- If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of snow for easy access.

For more information on the U.S. Fire Administration's Public Education Campaigns or to speak with a USFA spokesperson, please call 202-842-3600. Also

visit <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/> or <http://www.firesafety.gov/> for additional information on fire safety.