

# THE CARBON VALLEY Consumer Report

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## Home Heating Season

With the closing of summer and the onset of cool nights and crisp mornings, many start to think about home heating. In this month's safety article I will focus on fires caused by home heating appliances as well as a few basic Fire Prevention tips.

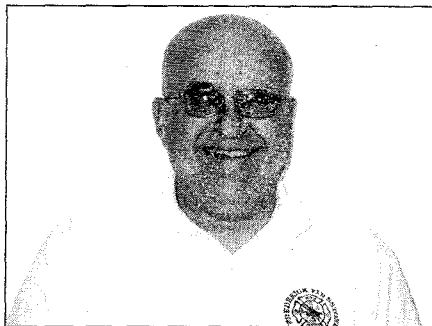
According to the National Fire Protection Association:

- In 2003, 80% of fires in the United States occurred in the home, resulting in 3,925 fire deaths.
- In the U.S., someone dies from a home fire roughly every 134 minutes.
- Roughly half of all home fire deaths in the U.S. resulted from fires that were reported between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. But only one-quarter of home fires occur between those hours.
- Although children five and under make up about 9% of the country's population, they accounted for 17% of the home fire deaths.
- Smoking was the leading cause of home fire deaths overall, but in the months of December, January and February; smoking and heating equipment caused similar amounts of fire deaths.
- Every 20 seconds, a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the nation.

### FIREPLACE

Remember, you're deliberately bringing fire into your home; respect it.

- Use a fireplace screen to prevent sparks from leaving the fireplace.
- Don't store newspapers, kindling, or matches near the fireplace or have an exposed rug or wooden floor right in front of the fireplace.
- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned by a professional prior to the start of every heating season in order to identify and remove combustible build-up.
- Install a chimney spark arrester to prevent roof fires.
- When lighting a gas fireplace, strike your match before turning on the gas.



### FURNACE/SPACE HEATERS

Used improperly, a space heater can be the most dangerous appliance in your house.

- Install and maintain heating equipment correctly. Have your furnace inspected by a professional prior to the start of every heating season.
- Don't store newspapers, rags, or other combustible materials near a furnace, hot water heater, space heater, etc.
- Don't leave space heaters operating when you are not in the room.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that might burn, including the wall.
- Don't use extension cords with electrical space heaters. The high amount of current they require could melt the cord and start a fire.
- When lighting a gas space heater, strike your match first, then turn on the gas.
- Never use a gas range as a substitute for a furnace or space heater.

### SMOKE DETECTORS

Smoke is responsible for three out of every four deaths.

- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home and outside of sleeping areas.
- Test every detector at least once a month. [See your instruction book for the location of the test button.]
- Keep smoke detectors dust free. Replace batteries with new ones at least once a year, or sooner if the detector makes a chirping sound.
- If you have a smoke detector directly wired into your electrical system, be sure that the signal light is blinking periodically. This tells you that the alarm is active.
- Inexpensive smoke detectors are available for the hearing impaired.

### FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

They remain your best defense if you're near a fire when it begins.

- Fire extinguishers should be mounted in the kitchen, garage, and workshop.
- Purchase an ABC type extinguisher for extinguishing all types of fires.
- Learn how to use your fire extinguisher before there is an emergency.
- Remember; use an extinguisher on small fires only. If there is a large fire, get out immediately and call 9-1-1 from another location.

### THINKING AHEAD: YOUR EXIT PLAN

As with other things, the best motto is, "Be Prepared."

- Prepare a floor plan of your home showing at least two ways out of each room.
- Sleep with your bedroom door closed. In the event of fire, it helps to hold back heat and smoke. But if a door feels hot, do not open it; escape through another door or window.
- Easy-to-use window escape ladders are available through many catalogues and outlet stores.
- Agree on a fixed location out-of-doors where family members are to gather as a meeting place and for a head count.
- Stay together away from the fire. Call 9-1-1 from another location. Make certain that no one goes back inside of the burning building.
- Check corridors and stairways to make sure they are free of obstructions and combustibles.

For further information please contact the Frederick-Firestone Fire Protection District at 303-833-2742 or visit us at: [www.ffd.us](http://www.ffd.us)