

Heating Sources

Colder weather means it is time to turn on your heating devices. Unfortunately, our heating sources are the leading cause of home fires during the colder months. With proper precautions you'll be safe and warm this season.

Space Heaters

It is only natural to want to stay toasty warm on long winter nights and one way we do that is by using space heaters to add a little extra heat. As handy as space heaters are, they can be a hazard if improperly used so it is important to follow the manufacturer's instructions and always remember to stay safe while you stay warm.

- Only purchase or use electric space heaters that have been certified by a recognized regulatory body such as Canadian Standards Association (CSA).
- Never leave an operating space heater unattended and always turn off space heaters before leaving a room or going to sleep.
- Supervise children and pets at all times when a portable space heater is in use.
- Use proper fuel in kerosene space heaters.
- When using a space heater that burns fuel such as kerosene or propane, always ensure that it is approved for indoor use.
- Never use space heaters to dry flammable items such as clothing or blankets.
- Keep all flammable objects at least one metre from space heaters.
- If you use an extension cord make sure it is the right size a gauge to carry the electrical load being drawn by the space heater.
- Never use an electrical space heater in a wet area or any areas that can be exposed to water.

Chimney and Furnace Maintenance

When winter approaches, it is the time to make sure your chimney is in good working order for the long heating season ahead. A build-up of creosote can easily cause a fire, while chimneys blocked by birds or squirrels' nests can cause deadly carbon monoxide gas to enter your home. Your fire department urges you to have your chimney professionally cleaned each year, and inspected for blockages, cracks or corrosion.

- Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide alarm near your bedrooms and on each floor.
 - Know the symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning: headache, fatigue, nausea, dizziness, and shortness of breath.
- When possible, burn seasoned woods (dryness of the wood is more important than hard wood versus soft wood).
- Do not burn cardboard boxes or trash, as they can spark a chimney fire.
- Install stovepipe thermometers, which help monitor flue temperatures where wood stoves are in use, then adjust burning practices as needed.
- Have your heating system tuned up and cleaned each year. If you heat your home with a wood stove, have the chimney connection and flue checked each year and make sure the stove is placed on an approved board to protect your floor from heat. Also confirm your fire screen is securely in place.

- Do not use gas appliances such as ovens, ranges, or clothes dryers to heat your home.
- Smaller, hotter fires will burn more completely and produce less smoke than larger fires.
- If you use a kerosene heater, never use gasoline, which can cause a fire or explosion. Use only water-clear 1-K grade kerosene. Never refuel the heater inside your home or when it is hot or in operation. Do not fill the tank above the Full mark. Keep a door open to the rest of the house or open a window slightly to reduce the risk of carbon monoxide build-up.

Choosing a Heating Contractor

Hire only heating contractors who are registered with the Fuels Safety Program of TSSA and confirm their registration by calling TSSA at 1-877-682-TSSA (8772).

- Avoid "fly-by-nighters", especially strangers who show up at your door offering "special" deals. Always ask the heating contractor to provide identification.
- Ask friends or your fuel supplier for a recommendation.
 - Obtain at least three written estimates outlining the type of work to be done, who will be doing the work, and the start date and completion date
- Determine whether repairs are covered by a warranty or maintenance plan.
- Flashlights are a preferred lighting source during a power outage.
- Solar lights offer a cheap lighting source as they do not require batteries like flashlights, are rechargeable, and do not pose a fire risk like candles.

Air Tight Is Too Tight!

Just like you need oxygen to operate properly, so do the fuel burning sources in your home. Carbon monoxide is produced when they don't get the oxygen they need to completely burn fuel such as wood, natural gas, propane or kerosene. Make sure your home has adequate air supply for you and your fuel burning appliances.

- If your home is tightly sealed to make it energy efficient, consider investing in an air exchange system. Professionally installed, these change the air inside your home, usually every 24 hours, with a fresh supply without wasting heat.
- When renovating or building, consider installing heating systems and appliances, such as fireplaces, that have a direct feed of air for combustion so they do not draw air from inside the home. The combustion chambers are sealed so they are safer and more efficient.
- Be mindful that the air you exhaust from your home has to be replaced. Powerful exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens or hearth wood burning fireplaces can quickly vent large amounts of air. Some can actually create a negative pressure inside your home resulting in a back draft which will draw exhaust fumes back into the house.
- What's the simplest way to ensure there is enough fresh air to go around? Open a window.