

Communications
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Staying Warm in 2008 – Be Vigilant

BARTOW, Fla. (January 2, 2007) – The first official cold snap of 2008 is here. The Polk County Public Safety Department cautions residents on the dangers associated with space heaters, chimneys and other alternative means of space heating.

December, January and February are the peak months fires, accounting for nearly 44% of all home heating fires. Excluding small confined fires, heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding, is by far the leading factor contributing to 27 percent of home heating fires and 53 percent of home heating fire deaths.

Following are tips on the safe operation of heating equipment (NFPA Journal 2007):

- When buying a new heating unit, make sure that a qualified technician installs it or checks it to see that it has been installed properly.
- Have a professional inspect the chimney, chimney connector, and other related equipment of wood or coal stoves and fireplaces every year.
- **DO NOT use your stove to heat your home!**
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn.
- Floors with wood, carpet, linoleum, and other flammable coverings must have a floor protector underneath, in front of, and to the sides and rear of the heat-producing appliance to protect against live embers and sparks that might fall or shoot from the appliance.

- When turning a heating device on or off, follow the manufacturer's instructions. When buying heaters, choose devices with automatic shut-off features.
- ***Turn portable space heaters off every time you leave a room or go to bed.***

Test your smoke alarms and be sure to install a carbon monoxide alarms in a central location outside each sleeping area.

For more information, contact the Polk County Public Safety Communications office at (863) 534-5981 or visit the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) website at www.nfpa.org.