



ALTERNATIVE HEATING

The most popular forms of alternative-heating equipment (space heaters and fireplaces/chimneys) caused 452 deaths in home heating equipment fires in the United States between 2016 and 2020, according to the National Fire Protection Association. Space heaters alone accounted for 88% of these deaths. Nearly half of the home heating fires during this period occurred during the winter months of December, January and February.

During the colder times of the year, alternative-heating sources such as space heaters and fireplaces should always be the last option used. If they cannot be avoided, caution and proper safety should be practiced.

Remember, never use home appliances, such as ovens, as an alternative-heating source. Doing so can cause carbon monoxide poisoning.

QUICK TIPS

- Keep at least a three-foot perimeter around space heaters at all times.
- Plug electrical space heaters directly into wall outlets, not multi-socket power strips.
- Have chimneys regularly cleaned and inspected by a certified professional.
- Keep the fireplace damper open while hot ashes are still in the fireplace. Closing it can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Extinguish fireplace fires before going to bed or leaving home.

ALTERNATIVE-HEATING SAFETY TIPS

SPACE HEATERS

Space heaters can easily become a major fire hazard. Avoid using them whenever possible, but if they become necessary, make sure to:

- Keep space heaters far away from loose or flammable objects, such as clothing, curtains, bedding and furniture.
- Keep at least a three-foot perimeter around space heaters at all times. This distance reduces the chances of nearby flammable items catching on fire.

- Purchase space heaters that come equipped with tip-over safety switches.
- Never leave space heaters turned on in unoccupied rooms, and never go to sleep or leave your home with a space heater turned on.
- Plug electrical space heaters directly into wall outlets, not multi-socket power strips. Only keep one space heater plugged into each electrical outlet.
- Refuel kerosene space heaters outside your home in a well-ventilated area and when they are cooled down.
- Only use the manufacturer's specified gas type for gasoline-powered space heaters.

FIREPLACES

Fireplaces, commonly found in living rooms, can make a room warm and cozy, but not properly maintaining them can increase the risk of fires and carbon monoxide poisoning. Always remember to:

- Have the chimney regularly cleaned and inspected by a certified professional.
- Provide proper ventilation for gas fireplaces and keep a working carbon monoxide detector nearby.
- Use only dry, seasoned firewood to prevent buildup of creosote (a flammable tar deposited from wood smoke).
- Use a sturdy screen to prevent sparks and embers from flying out of the fireplace.
- Keep the fireplace damper open while hot ashes are still in the fireplace. Closing it can lead to carbon monoxide poisoning.
- Do not use flammable liquid to start fires in fireplaces or wood stoves.
- Keep a fire extinguisher nearby in case the fire gets out of control.
- Extinguish fireplace fires before going to bed or leaving home.