



# Prevention of Fires Caused by Home Heating Sources<sup>1</sup>

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University Extension<sup>2</sup>

Nationwide, a residential fire occurs every 67 seconds.

There were about 472,000 fires in residential properties in 1992, resulting in 3,750 fire deaths.

## FURNACE MAINTENANCE

- Check the filter once a month, change it when necessary, or at least twice a year.
- Do Not store combustible material near the furnace.
- Have the furnace inspected once a year and tested for leaks. Make sure the furnace is vented to the outdoors. Inspect the chimney for debris that could plug it.

## ELECTRIC HEATERS AND KEROSENE HEATERS

- Before buying a kerosene heater, make sure the local building and fire codes permit its use in residential structures. Also check your insurance policy to see if such use will affect the policy.
- Buy an approved heater that has been tested by the Underwriter's Laboratories.
- Read the owner's manual before operating the heater. Maintain the heater according to the manual.
- Do Not put heaters where people walk. Keep the heater 3 feet from combustible material such as draperies or furniture.

- Teach children to avoid the heater. The surface of some heaters can exceed 500 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Do Not leave a heater on when no one is at home or when you are asleep.
- For kerosene heaters, only use K1 kerosene. It has a .04 percent sulphur content by weight. Do Not use any other type of fuel. K2 kerosene is not recommended because it has a higher sulphur content, and improper use can pose a fire or explosion hazard. Only fill the heater when it is cool.
- Do Not use flammable solvents, aerosol sprays or lacquers near heaters.
- Do Not use the heater in the same room where flammable liquids are stored or in dusty environments.
- Do provide adequate ventilation for kerosene heaters. Follow the manufacturer's directions. If there are none, open a window 1 square inch for each 1,000 BTU's of the heater's rating. Refer to MU guidesheet 1999, "Unvented portable kerosene heaters - safety considerations."
- Regardless of the type of heating system you have, install and maintain smoke detectors on each level of the house. Refer to MU guidesheet 1906, "Selecting and Using a Fire Extinguisher;" and MU guidesheet 1907, "Residential Fire Detection."

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2. University Extension, University of Missouri-Columbia, Agricultural Engineering Department.

## **WOOD STOVE MAINTENANCE**

- Select a good stove and have it properly installed.
- Locate the stove out of traffic and away from furniture and draperies.
- Do Not store combustible materials near the stove.
- Prevent creosote build up.
  - Do Not use wet or unseasoned wood.
  - Maintain a briskly burning fire.
  - Maintain a flue temperature above 250 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Inspect stove pipes and chimney flues each year before using the stove. Look for:
  - Cracked flue liners.
  - Broken or missing bricks.
  - Heavy creosote deposits.
  - Foreign material and bird nests.
- Thoroughly clean the flue and stovepipe of any soot or residues.
- Repair any damage before using.
- Frequently check the stovepipe and chimney for creosote buildup during the heating season.
- Properly dispose of wood ashes by storing them in a non-combustible metal container with a tight lid. Place the closed container on a non-combustible floor or on the ground, well away from all combustible materials.
- Warn children not to touch the stove or stand too close to it.
- For more information, see MU guidesheet 1731, "Wood Stove Maintenance and Operation;" and MU guidesheet 1735, "Cleaning Stovepipes and Chimneys."