



Home Heater Safety

Many Texans try to stay warm by using portable heating equipment in their homes.

Unfortunately, many discover that using heaters carelessly can cause serious damage, injuries and even death.

The State Fire Marshal's Office encourages all Texans to learn how to prevent heating fires during the winter. By developing safe habits, you can reduce your risk of needless fire.

Be smart. Don't use your heating equipment carelessly. The State Fire Marshal's Office recommends these guidelines for preventing heater fires:

Keep all heaters at least THREE FEET away from combustible objects, such as walls, curtains, drapes and furniture, especially beds. Use a yardstick or meter stick to measure the distance.

Be sure your heating equipment is in good operating condition. Watch for worn electrical cords, gas leaks or faulty switches. Keep your heating equipment (including ducting) clean. Don't use the heater if it is damaged.

Have your heating equipment, serviced by a qualified expert at least once a year. Check both central systems and portable equipment. Have your fireplace, woodburning stove and chimney inspected and cleaned at least once a year.

Follow all instructions for your heating equipment EXACTLY. Re-read the instructions before starting your heater.

Be sure all heaters, stoves, fireplaces and chimneys are properly installed and insulated. Touch nearby floors and walls. If they are warm or hot, the stove or chimney could be too close and start a fire.

Use only approved heaters and fuels. Check for UL or Factory Mutual labels. Because portable heaters are illegal in some areas, check with your local fire authorities to be sure that portable heaters are allowed in your area.

Wear close-fitting pajamas or night clothes. Avoid loose, billowy gowns or robes. This will reduce the risk of igniting your clothes by contacting heaters or cook stoves. Warn senior citizens and children to stay away from heaters.

Be sure there is adequate ventilation in any area where there is an open flame. The flame in your heater needs fresh air. Keep the central gas heating system ventilation ducts open. Provide ventilation for wood- or gas-fueled heaters by opening a window.

Guidelines originally published by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection