

January, 2012

HOME HEATING SAFETY
SONOMA COUNTY FIRE PREVENTION OFFICERS (FPOs)

Sonoma County, CA- Residential fires are more prevalent during the winter months than they are in the spring and summer. According to the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), an estimated 108,400 winter residential building fires occur each year in the United States. Heating and cooking are, by far, the leading causes of these fires. To ensure a fire safe winter season, it is important to be more attentive to the use of cooking and heating equipment.

Sonoma County Fire Prevention Officers encourage you to practice the following fire safety steps to keep those home fires safely burning. Remember, fire safety is your personal responsibility.

KEEP FIREPLACES AND WOOD STOVES CLEAN

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Leave glass doors open while burning a fire. Leaving the doors open ensures that the fire receives enough air to ensure complete combustion and keeps creosote from building up in the chimney.
- Close glass doors when the fire is out to keep air from the chimney opening from getting into the room.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces that do not have a glass fireplace door.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise, you may cause creosote build-up that could lead to a chimney fire.

SAFELY BURN FUELS

- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire. Use only seasoned hardwood; soft, moist wood accelerates creosote build-up. Also, never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris in your fireplace or wood stove.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.

SAFELY DISPOSE OF ASHES

- Be extra cautious when discarding ashes! Hot coals, hidden in a pile of ashes and thus well insulated, can stay hot for up to 4 days!
- Never empty ashes into a paper or plastic bag, cardboard box, or other similar container. The only suitable means for ash storage is a metal container with a tight fitting lid as it helps keep air from blowing through and disturbing ashes which can leave hot coals exposed for re-ignition.
- DO NOT store your metal ash container on your deck, in your garage or in any location that may allow heat to transfer from those hot coals to nearby flammable items.

PROTECT THE OUTSIDE OF YOUR HOME

- Stack firewood outdoors at least 30 feet away from your home.
- Keep the roof clear of leaves, pine needles and other debris.
- Cover the chimney with a mesh screen spark arrester and remove any low hanging branches above the chimney, flues or vents.

HAVE A PLAN

- Take a moment to teach your children that fire is a tool, not a toy.

- Have an escape plan and practice it with your family.
- If you suspect a chimney fire, get everyone out of the house immediately and call 9-1-1! If you can do so safely, put out any fire in the stove or fireplace and close the damper.

For more information on home heating fire safety, or other fire safety and prevention information, please contact Corinne Barclay of Sonoma County FPO's at (707) 778-4468.

**SONOMA COUNTY FIRE PREVENTION OFFICERS' WISHES YOU A
HAPPY AND SAFE NEW YEAR!**