

WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE
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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

WINTER FIRES-SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HOME

Cheyenne, Wyo. – Wyoming Insurance Commissioner Tom Hirsig wants to alert consumers about winter fires. As Wyoming heads into another long winter season, alternative methods are being used to keep Wyoming households warm. The Department of Insurance receives fire loss reports from insurance companies on a regular basis. The Department has noticed an increase in chimney fires already this year and wants the public to be aware of safety tips that could be useful in the prevention of fires caused by heating elements. You may also want to contact local fire and rescue stations to ask for additional information. Many home heating fires involve portable heaters and space heaters. Room gas heaters and kerosene heaters account for the highest risk of fatalities in home-heating-related fires; however, all heating systems, including fireplaces, can be dangerous if they're not used and maintained properly.

- **Vents & Chimneys**-All fueled heaters must be vented to prevent dangerous carbon monoxide build-up in your home. Creosote and carbon deposits, caused by inefficient combustion in fireplaces and wood stoves, can coat chimney flues and pose a fire hazard. Have your chimney inspected by a professional before each heating season and have it cleaned if necessary. If you use a wood stove, have the flues and chimney connections inspected and cleaned regularly.
- **Give Space Heaters Space**- Keep all combustible materials away from portable and space heaters. Place space heaters at least three feet away from furniture, walls, curtains, or anything else that burns. Turn off space heaters when you leave home or go to bed.
- **Liquid-Fuel Safety**-If your space heater burns a liquid fuel, such as kerosene, let the heater cool down before refueling it. Adding fuel to a hot heater can cause fumes to ignite. Refuel your heaters outdoors where spills won't present a fire hazard and in a well-ventilated area away from structures. Use only fuel recommended by your heater's manufacturer.
- **Gas Fueled Heaters**-Check vents periodically to make sure they aren't blocked. Never install unvented gas heaters in bedrooms or bathrooms. Carbon monoxide can build up to dangerous levels in any small, enclosed space.
- **Wood or Coal Stoves**-Place an approved stove board under wood or coal stoves to protect the floor from heat and stray embers.
- **Fireplaces**-When you use your fireplace, protect your home from sparks by using a fire screen made of sturdy metal or heat-tempered glass.
- **Electric Heaters**-Inspect electric heater cords for cracks or other damage and have an electrician replace frayed, cracked or damaged cords.

- **Central Heating Systems**-Have your furnace, chimneys, and chimney connections inspected and serviced at least once a year by a qualified professional.

There are MANY safety tips when it comes to fires, please contact your local fire and rescue professionals for more information. Have a safe, healthy, warm and wonderful winter season!

For more information about issues dealing with your insurance, please contact the Wyoming Department of Insurance at (307) 777-7401 or toll free in Wyoming at (800) 438-5768 and online at <http://insurance.state.wy.us>.