

CHEN/BATH

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Cozy comfort requires safe stoves, heaters

It's getting to be the time when homeowners are warming to the idea of taking a good look at their home heating equipment.

A beginning-of-season cleanup of all types of heating equipment can go a long way toward keeping your family safe at home.

Fires involving wood and coal burning beating equipment have in-creased sharply in recent years, dou-bling in the years between 1978 and 1982, say experts at the U.S. Consum-er Product Safety Commission. If you have a wood or coal burning stove, check it thoroughly at the beginning of each heating season.

The stove pipe and chimney should also be cleaned at this time. During the heating season, the pipe and chim-ney should be checked frequently for creosote build up. Failure to keep the pipe and chimney pipe clear of creo-sole, a black, tarry substance, can lead to a fire hazard. Also, check the stove for cracks, faulty legs and hinges, and damaged or missing gaskets

It is a good idea to have the entire heating system inspected profession-ally once a year to ensure that all lin-ings and parts of the chimney are in-tact and that the stove is properly adjusted and clean.

Portable electric heaters have also become popular, and, like wood and coal burning stoves, fire is a primary hazard with them. It's estimated that 3,300 fires in 1982 were associated with portable electric heater use. There must be a guard around the heating coil, as a wire grille or other protection is essential to keep fingers or fabrics from touching the hot element. Also, if you have been using an extension cord, make sure it's one marked with a wattage rating at least as high as that on the label of the

heater itself. Before using your electric heater, see that any broken parts are replaced or repaired, and the cords are in good condition

GAS ROOM heaters are also in-GAS ROOM heaters are also in-creasingly popular but can cause car-bon monoxide poisoning if not proper-ly installed or maintained. If you have a vented gas heater be sure it is vented correctly, with a properly sized vent pipe that is free of leaks and blockages. Joints must be tight, and both the heater and the vent pipe must be free of cracks through which carbon monoxide might leak. An under-sized or clogged vent is also hazardous. Both vented and unvented heaters should be kept free of dust by vacu-uming. As an added measure of safety for consumers, unvented gas room heaters manufactured in 1982 and later have a safety shut-off device that will automatically extinguish the heater when the room oxygen falls below the safe level. If you have a kerosene or oll burn-

ing room heater, use only the fuel for which the heater was designed. Never use gasoline. Keep the wick clean and properly adjusted. Inspect these heaters annually to ensure that they are properly adjusted and clean. Before storing, drain the fuel from these heaters and do not store the fuel near living quarters or from year to year. No matter what type of room heat-

er you have been using, always refer to the manufacturer's instructions for proper use, maintenance and storage.

For more information about safe operation of wood and coal burning stoves, kerosene, gas or electric heaters, or to report a product hazard or product-related injury, write to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, D.C. 20207 or call the toll free hotline, 800-638-CPSC



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