

The Moreno Valley Fire Department wants to remind residents about the importance of fire safety during the winter season. As temperatures drop during the winter months many City residents will use different methods to heat their homes. Alarming, home heating fires are the second leading cause of residential structure fires nationwide, just behind cooking.

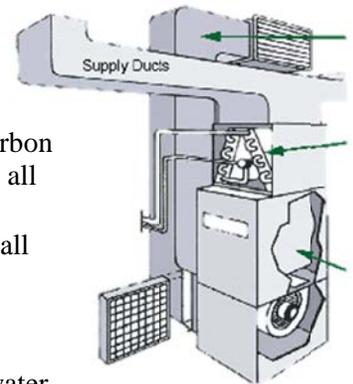
In a nationwide study conducted by the National Fire Protection Association in 2011, heating equipment was involved in approximately 53,600 home structure fires, 400 civilian deaths, 1,520 civilian injuries, and \$893 million in direct property damage. This study included fires associated with chimneys and chimney connectors, space heaters, central heating, fireplaces, water heaters and heat tape. Based on 2007 through 2011 annual averages show that:



- Space heaters, whether portable or stationary, accounted for one-third (33%) of home heating fires and four out of five (81%) of home heating fire deaths.
- The leading factor contributing to home heating fires (28%) was failure to clean principally creosote from solid-fueled heating equipment, primarily chimneys.
- Placing things that can burn too close to heating equipment or placing heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding was the leading factor contributing to ignition in fatal home heating fires and accounted for more than half (53%) of home heating fire deaths.
- Half (50%) of all home heating fires occurred in December, January and February.

## The Moreno Valley Fire Department offers the following home heating safety tips:

- Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from heating equipment.
- Have a three-foot “kid-free zone” around open fires and space heaters.
- Never use your oven to heat your home.
- ***Do not use a barbeque to heat your house*** as an odorless gas known as carbon monoxide is emitted when the barbeque is lit. This gas can potentially kill all occupants inside the home.
- Inspect all heating equipment annually and its highly recommended to install carbon monoxide alarms in a central location outside each sleeping area.
- Only use heating equipment that has the label of an independent testing laboratory and is legal for use in your community.
- Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters, or central heating equipment according to local codes and manufacturer’s instructions.
- Turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.
- Plug your electric-powered space heater into an outlet with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- For fuel burning space heaters, always use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer and refuel in a well-ventilated area while the equipment is cool.



## The Moreno Valley Fire Department offers the following chimney maintenance and fire prevention tips:

The maintenance of your chimney will make a big difference in the safety and operation of your fireplace. Chimney fires are common and highly dangerous, mainly caused by creosote build-up.

- Maintain a safe perimeter. Keep all objects at least 15 feet from the top of your chimney.
- Instruct your family on safe fireplace, furnace and stove practices.
- Retrofit a chimney cap on your existing chimney if you don't have one now. Caps keep leaves and animals out of your chimney that could create dangerous obstructions.
- Use appropriate fuel. Green wood, dismantled furniture and other questionable fuels should always be avoided. Use your fireplace or other fuel burning feature in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If you have doubts about a particular fuel, err on the side of caution.
- Build fires correctly. Add fuel or place fire-logs in the back of the grate and support them so they don't slip. Use kindling, and never add materials of a questionable nature, even small ones. Burning substances that don't flare up can still release colorless and odorless toxic gasses into your home or the environment.
- Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room.
- Clear the hearth or surrounding areas. Never keep old rags, newspaper, furniture or other objects near your stove, furnace or fireplace. If there's an open flame or high heat, be sure to maintain a safe zone of 36 inches or more.
- Don't leave fires unattended. Stay safe by developing good fire maintenance habits. Never leave a room where there's an open flame, even a candle. You never know what will happen.
- Have yearly maintenance and inspections on your chimney by a qualified professional.



## The Moreno Valley Fire Department offers the following smoke alarm safety tips:

Smoke alarms save lives. Almost two-thirds of home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or no working smoke alarms. When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast and you need smoke alarms to give you time to get out.

It's important to have smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home. Interconnect all smoke alarms throughout the home. When one sounds, they all sound.

- Install smoke alarms following manufacturer's instructions high on a wall or on a ceiling. Save manufacturer's instructions for testing and maintenance.
- Test alarms at least monthly by pushing the test button.
- Replace batteries in all smoke alarms at least once a year. If an



- alarm “chirps”, warning the battery is low, replace the battery right away.
- Be sure the smoke alarm has the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Alarms that are hard-wired (and include battery backup) must be installed by a qualified electrician.
- An ionization alarm with a hush button or a photoelectric alarm should be used if the alarm is within 20 feet of a cooking appliance.
- Smoke alarms are available for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. These devices use strobe lights. Vibration devices can be added to these alarms.

## **The Moreno Valley Fire Department offers the following safety cooking tips:**

The holidays are here and many families gather in the kitchen to spend time together, but it can be one of the most hazardous rooms in the house if you don't practice safe cooking behaviors. Cooking equipment, most often a range or stovetop, is the leading cause of reported home fires and home fire injuries in the United States. Cooking equipment is also the leading cause of unreported fires and associated injuries.

### **Practice the following safety cooking behaviors:**

- The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you're cooking.
- Stay alert! To prevent cooking fires, you have to be alert. You won't be if you are sleepy, have been drinking alcohol, or have taken medicine that makes you drowsy.
- Cook only with equipment designed and intended for cooking, and heat your home only with equipment designed and intended for heating. There is additional danger of fire, injury, or death if equipment is used for a purpose for which it was not intended.

### **Important safety information for when using a turkey fryer:**

The delicious deep-fried turkey has quickly grown in popularity but safety experts are concerned that backyard chefs may be sacrificing fire safety for good taste.

If you absolutely must use a turkey fryer, please use the following tips:

- Turkey fryers should always be used outdoors a safe distance from buildings and any other flammable materials.
- Never use turkey fryers in a garage or on a wooden deck.



- Make sure the fryers are used on a flat surface to reduce accidental tipping.
- Never leave the fryer unattended. Most units do not have thermostat controls. If you do not watch the fryer carefully, the oil will continue to heat until it catches fire.
- Never let children or pets near the fryer even if it is not in use. The oil inside the cooking pot can remain dangerously hot hours after use.
- To avoid oil spillover, do not overfill the fryer.
- Use well-insulated potholders or oven mitts when touching pot or lid handles. If possible, wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from oil splatter.
- Make sure the turkey is completely thawed and be careful with marinades. Oil and water do not mix, and water causes oil to spill over causing a fire or even an explosion hazard.
- The National Turkey Federation (NTF) recommends thawing the turkey in the refrigerator approximately 24 hours for every five pounds in weight.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby. Never use water to extinguish a grease fire. If the fire is manageable, use your all-purpose fire extinguisher. If the fire increases, immediately call the fire department for help.

## The importance of fire safety during the holiday season:

The Office of Emergency Management would like to emphasize the importance of fire safety during this holiday season by providing some preparedness and prevention tips. Many residents bring live trees into their houses to celebrate the holiday season, but those live trees tend to dry out over time and can become fire hazards. It is recommended that in addition to watering and caring for your tree, that everyone keeps candles and other sources of ignition well away from their live trees. Other points that may help in ensuring safety are:

- Keep trees securely upright in a stand to ensure that it will not accidentally tip over or be knocked over by children or pets
- Keep your tree away from any and all heat sources. This includes electrical outlets, radiators, space heaters, and fireplaces.
- Make sure natural trees are well watered.
- If you have purchased an artificial tree, please make sure it is labeled “fire retardant”.
- Unplug the tree lights before leaving your home or before going to bed.
- Use a maximum of three strands of tree lights on a single extension cord.
- Dispose of your tree at an appropriate recycling center promptly after the holiday season. Your community may also offer pick-up services from your home—this is also a good option.

