



# NEWS

## R E L E A S E

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For Immediate Release  
November 14, 2011

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## HUDGENS OFFERS HOME HEATING SAFETY TIPS

**Atlanta** – With nighttime lows beginning to drop below freezing, Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph T. Hudgens wants to remind Georgians of some heating tips to help keep their homes safe this winter.

“Unfortunately, the number of home fires tends to go up as the temperature drops,” Hudgens said. “So, while you’re keeping warm, please also keep fire safety in mind.”

- Heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fires in Georgia. Portable space heaters, open fireplaces and wood stoves can be dangerous if misused. Keep them away from curtains, draperies, and other flammable material. Make sure heaters have adequate ventilation, and always follow the manufacturer's operating instructions.
- Have your home heating unit checked annually to be sure it is working efficiently and safely. Make sure all fuel-burning appliances and fireplaces are properly vented. If you suspect a gas leak in your home, leave immediately and call the gas company from elsewhere.
- If you use kerosene space heaters, besides being well vented, make sure each heater has an automatic shut-off in case it tips over. Use only K-1 kerosene in a space heater; gasoline can cause an explosion. Wait until the heater has cooled and take it outside before refueling. It is highly recommended to have a carbon monoxide detector in the area, since CO<sub>2</sub> is a silent killer.
- Install an adequate number of smoke alarms. Most fatal fires start between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m., while the family is asleep. The advance warning of a smoke alarm may mean the difference between life and death. Nine out of 10 fire victims are already dead before the fire department is even called, mainly from smoke and toxic gases. Georgia law now requires a smoke alarm in every home. If you already have smoke alarms, do not forget to replace the batteries every six months and the actual smoke alarm should be replaced every ten years.
- Each household should have a well-rehearsed family escape plan. All rooms, especially bedrooms, should have two escape routes. Have a predetermined meeting place outside the house so you can be sure everyone is out safely.

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