



Office of Commissioner of Insurance

NEWS RELEASE

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HUDGENS OFFERS COLD WEATHER HEATING TIPS

Atlanta, GA - With colder weather in the forecast, Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner Ralph Hudgens wants to remind Georgians of some heating tips to help keep their homes and families safe this winter.

"Year after year we've seen the rate of fires and fire deaths in Georgia accelerate during the winter months," Commissioner Hudgens said. "Many of these fires are caused by careless use of home heating equipment, particularly portable space heaters." Hudgens offers the following home heating safety tips:

- Heating equipment is one of the leading causes of home fires in Georgia. Remember to keep portable space heaters 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, 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.
- 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. If you already have smoke alarms, don't forget to replace the batteries annually.
- 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.

So far this year, 72 people have died in residential fires in Georgia. Six of those deaths were directly related to a heating source placed too close to bedding, clothes or furniture.