



# MISSOULA RURAL

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## FIRE DISTRICT

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### **Press Release**

### **Heat Your Home Safely**

Press release prepared by:  
Peter V. Giardino  
Deputy Fire Marshal

Winter is upon us! the Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) would like to remind the public to stay safe as they heat their homes this fall and winter. Safety must be your top priority since heating is the second leading cause of home fires. Here are some suggestions to keep your home safe and warm.

- Have your fireplace and wood stoves inspected before you begin using them each year. Have the chimney cleaned to remove creosote, which can ignite and start a chimney fire.

*Contact the Missoula Rural Fire District @ 406-549-6172 to reserve a chimney brush at no cost.*

- Keep anything that can burn 3 feet away from space heaters, fireplaces, wood stoves, and radiators. Remember that skin burns too. Make sure that people, especially children, and pets stay 3 feet away.
- When you're finished with your fire, put it out before you leave home or fall asleep. When you clean up, place the ashes inside a metal can with a lid. Store the can outside, away from the home, until the ashes are completely cold.
- Use a tempered glass or metal screen over fireplace openings to keep sparks inside. Burn only clean dry wood in fireplaces and wood or wood pellets in wood stoves.
- **Never use gasoline to start a fire. There is no safe way to start a fire with gasoline.**
- Only use portable space heaters that have been listed by a testing laboratory such as UL (look for the laboratory's label). These heaters should have an automatic shut-off switch. If they are tipped over, they will automatically turn off. Plug portable electric heaters directly into the wall outlet; don't use an extension cord or power strip.
- Turn space heaters off when you leave the room or before falling asleep. Never leave space heaters unattended while in use.



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Heating is the second leading cause of fire deaths for people ages 65 and over. If you care for an older adult, plan for this increased risk.

- Check space heaters throughout the season.
- Make sure that bedding, throws, and clothing are kept at least 3 feet away.
- Verify that fixed heating equipment is inspected every season and professionally cleaned when necessary.
- Talk with older adults to make sure that they understand their risk of burns and fire.
- Plan for emergencies. Older adults may move more slowly or have trouble hearing a smoke alarm because of hearing loss. Make a home fire escape plan around their abilities.
- Keep the telephone, hearing aids, and eyeglasses next to the bed.
- If someone in your care uses a cane or wheelchair, decide who will help them get out in an emergency.

MRFD wants everyone to stay safe and warm this fall and winter. For additional fire safety information, please visit our website at [mrfdfire.org](http://mrfdfire.org) or contact us at 406-549-6172.