



Together, we can save a life

## **PRAIRIEWINDS CHAPTER**

SERVING LINCOLN, LYON  
PIPESTONE, YELLOW MEDICINE  
COUNTIES



### **PRESS RELEASE FROM THE AMERICAN RED CROSS**

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### **HOME HEATING SAFETY**

Yep – they're out there again: snow and cold.

That means it's time to be sure you're heating your home safely this fall and winter. Here are some sobering facts:

Each year fires claim nearly 4000 lives, injure over 20,000 people and cause billions of dollars in damages. People who live in rural areas are more than twice as likely to die in a fire than those living in mid-large sized cities or suburban areas.

Why? Because people in rural areas get "creative" in how they heat their homes due to the economy, high costs of heating resources and/or carelessness when using wood stoves, portable space heaters and kerosene heaters as well as fireplaces.

This week our **"BE SAFE"** article will begin discussing all of these various ways to heat your home.

#### **Wood Stoves:**

Wood stoves are responsible for over 4000 residential fires each year. Much of this is because any or all of the following were not done: Carefully follow the manufacturer's installation and maintenance instructions. Look for solid construction such as plate steel or cast iron metal. Check for cracks and inspect legs, hinges and door seals for smooth joints and seams. Use only seasoned wood for fuel, not green wood, artificial logs or trash of any kind. Inspect and clean your pipes and chimneys annually and check monthly for damage or obstructions. Be sure to keep combustible objects at least three feet away from the stove.

#### **Electric space heaters:**

Buy only heaters that have been evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Check to make sure it has a thermostat control mechanism and will switch off automatically if the heater falls over. Heaters should never be used as dryers or tables for storage. Keep clothes and combustible materials at least three feet away from each heater. Always unplug the heater when it's not being used.

**Kerosene heaters:**

Again, buy only heaters that have been evaluated by a nationally recognized laboratory such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Check with your local fire department on the legality of kerosene heater use in your community. Never fill your heater with gasoline or camp stove fuel: both flare up easily. Only use crystal clear K-1 kerosene. Never overfill any portable heater. Use the kerosene heater in a well ventilated room.

**Fireplaces:**

Fireplaces regularly build up creosote in their chimneys. They need to be cleaned out frequently and inspected for obstructions and cracks to prevent deadly chimney and roof fires. Check to make sure the damper is open before starting any fire. Never burn trash, paper or green wood. These materials will cause heavy creosote buildup and are difficult to control. Use a screen heavy enough to stop rolling logs and big enough to cover the entire opening of the fireplace and to catch flying sparks. Don't wear loose-fitting clothes near any open flame. Make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the house or going to bed. Store cooled ashes in a tightly sealed metal container outside the home.

**Final notes:**

NEVER leave any of these heating sources unattended; ALWAYS ensure that a working smoke alarm is close by and ALWAYS have an escape plan for your family should you need one.

Join us next week when we will continue to talk about home heating safety.

This information is sponsored by the Marshall Independent and brought to you by the American Red Cross – Prairie Winds Chapter serving Lincoln, Lyon, Pipestone and Yellow Medicine Counties.

If you have any questions or need further information on the topic covered in this article, please contact the local Chapter at 507-532-5565 or go online to <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov> for additional information from FEMA and the U.S. Fire Administration.