Think Safety First
When Heating your Home this Winter

Heating caused more than 9,893 fires over the past five years and is the number two cause of home fires in Massachusetts. Use your home heating system and space heating appliances wisely and responsibly. That's the way to *Keep Warm and Keep Safe*.

Cover the ABCs of Fire Safety

- Make sure there are working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms on every level including one outside the bedrooms.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly and change batteries twice a year, when you change the clocks.
- Hold home fire drills to practice the home escape plan.
- Practice home fire safety and set a good example for the children.

Be Careful When Using Fireplaces and Solid Fuel Stoves

If you heat your home by burning *solid fuels* (coal, firewood, pellets), be careful before, during and after using these kinds of fuels.

- Have the chimney professionally cleaned every year.
- Make sure the stove is approved by a national testing agency such as Underwriter's Laboratory (UL).
- Get a building permit before installing a stove.
- Keep anything that can burn three feet away.
- Dispose of the ashes in a **metal** container, with a lid, away from the house, garage and porch.

Space Heaters Need Space

Fires caused by space heaters are rare but often deadly. If you must use a space heater, do so safely.

- Do not use space heaters as your #1 heating source.
- Keep anything that can burn three feet away.

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- Use only heavy-duty extension cords.
- Always turn off when going to bed or leaving home.
- Portable kerosene heaters are illegal in MA for home use.

Maintain Natural Gas Equipment

Natural gas is a safe and efficient way to cook, heat our homes and hot water.

- Have your furnace and hot water heater professionally checked every year.
- Do not use or store gasoline or painting supplies inside where they can be ignited by the pilot light.

Gas leaks can be dangerous – if you smell something like rotten eggs or you think there might be a leak,

- Move outdoors.
- Do not smoke or turn on or off electrical switches - sparks can cause an explosion.
- Dial 911 immediately.

Maintain Oil Heating Equipment

Home heating with fuel oil is also safe and efficient.

- Have your furnace professionally cleaned and checked every year.
- Don't let the tank get completely empty.
- Call for service if the oil burner releases smoke or soot in the house.

Carbon Monoxide: the Silent Killer

Heating equipment is the leading source of carbon monoxide (CO) in the home.

- Install carbon monoxide alarms on every level of your home.
- Don't use the gas stove or oven for heat.
- Have furnaces and chimneys checked annually by a professional.
- Keep appliance vents and exhaust pipes clear of drifting snow and bushes.

Fuel Assistance

For information on fuel assistance, please call the HEATLINE at 1-800-632-8175 (or for Boston only 617-357-6012) or on-line at www.mass.gov/dhcd.

For more information go to:
www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe

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