

# ST. TAMMANY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT # 1

1358 Corporate Square Drive  
Slidell, LA 70458  
(985) 649-3665



**Fire Chief – Chris Kaufmann**

**For Immediate Release**

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## **“Heat Your Home Safely as Cold Weather Sets In”**

**“Know the risks and how to avoid them”**

Home heating remains one of the leading causes of fires in the home. St. Tammany Fire District #1 suggests the following for safe heating:

- Maintain a 3 feet (or 1 meter) separation between things that can burn and heating equipment.
- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory and is legal for use in your community. (Some communities do not permit portable kerosene heaters, for example.)
- Install your stationary (fixed) space heater according to manufacturer’s instructions or applicable codes or better yet, have it installed by a professional.
- Plug your electric-powered space heater into an outlet with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord.
- In your fireplace or wood stove, use only dry, seasoned wood to avoid the build-up of creosote, an oily deposit that easily catches fire and accounts for most chimney fires and the largest share of home heating fires generally. Use only paper or kindling wood, not a flammable liquid, to start the fire. Do not use artificial logs in wood stoves.
- Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container, which is kept a safe distance from your home.
- Turn off space heaters whenever the room they are in is unoccupied or under circumstances when manufacturer’s instructions say they should be turned off. Portable space heaters are so easy to knock over in the dark that they should be turned off when you go to bed, but make sure your primary heating equipment for bedrooms is sufficient to avoid risks to residents from severe cold.

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- Do not use your oven to heat your home.
- Make sure fuel-burning equipment is vented to the outside, that the venting is kept clear and unobstructed, and that the exit point is properly sealed around the vent, all of which is to make sure **deadly carbon monoxide** does not build up in the home.
- Inspect all heating equipment annually, and clean as necessary. Test smoke alarms monthly; install a **carbon monoxide alarm** in a central location outside each sleeping area.

## Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be confused with flu symptoms, food poisoning and other illnesses. Some symptoms include shortness of breath, nausea, dizziness, light headedness or headaches.

St. Tammany Fire District #1 suggests the following safety tips to avoid the dangers of carbon monoxide.

- Install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms (listed by an independent testing laboratory) inside your home to provide early warning of accumulating CO. CO alarms should be installed in a central location outside each separate sleeping area. If bedrooms are spaced apart, each area will need a CO alarm.
- Test CO alarms at least once a month and replace alarms according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- CO alarms are not substitutes for smoke alarms. Know the difference between the sound of smoke alarms and CO alarms.
- Have fuel-burning heating equipment (fireplaces, furnaces, water heaters, wood and coal stoves, space or portable heaters) and chimneys inspected by a professional every year before cold weather sets in.
- When using a fireplace, open the flue for adequate ventilation.
- Never use your oven or grill to heat your home.
- When buying an existing home, have a qualified technician evaluate the integrity of the heating and cooking systems, as well as the sealed spaces between the garage and house.
- If you need to warm a vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Do not run a vehicle, generator, or other fueled engine or motor indoors, even if garage doors are open.

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## **Central Heating Equipment**

When using your central heating unit for the first time of the cold season, don't turn it on when you're ready for bed. Sometime during the day, turn it on then off to allow any accumulated dust to burn off of the heating elements. This may be indicated by a burning smell which should dissipate. If the smell becomes stronger or smoke is visible call 911. It is also recommended to have a certified professional inspect the unit annually.

## **Candle Safety Tips**

Candles may be pretty to look at but they are a cause of home fires — and home fire deaths. Remember, a candle is an open flame, which means that it can easily ignite anything that can burn.

- Blow out all candles when you leave the room or go to bed. Avoid the use of candles in the bedroom and other areas where people may fall asleep.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn.

## **If you do burn candles, make sure that you...**

- Use candle holders that are sturdy, and won't tip over easily.
- Put candle holders on a sturdy, uncluttered surface.
- Light candles carefully. Keep your hair and any loose clothing away from the flame.
- Don't burn a candle all the way down — put it out before it gets too close to the holder or container.
- Never use a candle if oxygen is used in the home.

## **“Working Smoke Alarms Save Lives”**

For more information about St. Tammany Fire Protection District #1 visit us at [www.slidellfire.org](http://www.slidellfire.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#) - *St. Tammany Fire District #1* and [Twitter](#) - *@SlidellFire\_PIO*

Chad Duffaut  
Chief of Fire Prevention/PIO  
[cduffaut@slidellfire.org](mailto:cduffaut@slidellfire.org)  
Cell: (985) 960-0976

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