



Here Comes The Cold... And Some Winter Safety Tips From Kosco

Winter is here, and with it the rain, snow, and ice. Keep your family safe and warm with these indoor and outdoor safety tips. According to the United States Fire Administration, more than one-fifth of residential fires are related to the use of supplemental room heaters.

- 1) Install smoke alarms in every sleeping area and on each level of your home. Test smoke alarms once a month and change batteries at least once a year (check them when you change your clocks in fall and spring).
- 2) If you use kerosene heaters, use only kerosene for fuel—never use gasoline. Add fuel outdoors and only when the heater is cool. Always keep a window slightly open when the heater is running. Be sure to follow the operating instructions provided by the manufacturer of your heating equipment.
- 3) Never fill the fuel tank of a kerosene heater beyond the full mark. As the fuel warms, it expands and could spill and cause a fire.
- 4) Keep kerosene stored outside in a sealed blue container labeled "Kerosene."
- 5) If your space heater is meant to be vented, be sure that the heater and flue are professionally installed according to local codes. Vented systems require regular maintenance and inspections. Be aware that older gas-fired space heaters may not be equipped with the safety devices required by current voluntary standards, such as an oxygen depletion sensor or a pilot safety valve that will turn off the gas to the heater if the pilot light should go out. If the pilot light on your heater should go out, use the following safety tips:
 - a. Light the match before you turn on the gas to the pilot. This avoids the risk of a flashback, which could occur if you allow gas to accumulate before you are ready to light the pilot.
 - b. IF YOU SMELL GAS, DO NOT ATTEMPT TO LIGHT THE APPLIANCE. Turn off all controls and open a window or door and leave the area. Then call a gas service person. Do not touch any electrical switches.
 - c. Remember that LP (propane) gas, unlike natural gas supplied from the gas utility distribution pipes, is heavier than air. If you believe a leak has occurred, go to a neighbor's phone to call your gas distributor or fire department. Do not operate any electrical switches or telephones in the building where the leak has occurred because a spark could cause an explosion.
- 6) Never use your cooking stove to heat your home.
- 7) Inspect and clean your stovepipe and chimney on a regular basis and check monthly for damage or obstructions. Be sure to keep combustible objects away from the stove. Be sure to check with your local fire department and check local codes before having your stove installed.
- 8) Give your children a snack before going outdoors. It gives them energy. Bring them indoors for breaks about once an hour to warm up and drink fluids.

- 9) Be sure to get your furnace serviced annually, so it will provide you with maximum heating efficiency and reduce the likelihood of a breakdown during the winter's coldest days.
- 10) Along with fire, another potential danger of home heating is carbon monoxide poisoning. If you have any appliances or equipment that burn fuel such as propane or natural gas, fuel oil, kerosene, wood, coal, pellets, etc., you should install a carbon monoxide detector that meets the requirements of the current UL standard 2034 or the IAS 6-96 standard in the hallway near every separate sleeping area of the home.
- 11) Keep at least one dry-powder operative, ABC-type fire extinguisher in the home at all times.
- 12) Never use heaters to dry clothes or shoes.
- 13) Remember: children and elderly lose body heat quickly, especially very young children. Check on them often when they are playing outdoors. Replace wet clothes with ones that are warm and dry. If you see white patches of skin on their hands, feet, or face, bring them indoors right away. This is the first sign of frostbite.
- 14) If you use a fireplace or wood stove, have your chimney checked and cleaned by a professional once a year. Use a fireplace screen, and burn only untreated wood. Make sure your wood stove has a fireproof stove board under it to protect the floor from heat.
- 15) Bundle Up Your Home – Hidden gaps and cracks in a home can add up to as much airflow as an open window. The more heat that escapes, the more cold air enters, causing your system to work harder and use more energy. Home Sealing can improve your home “envelope” – the outer walls, ceiling, windows and floors -- and can save up to 10 percent in energy costs. Start by sealing air leaks and adding insulation—pay special attention to your attic and basement, where the biggest gaps and cracks are often found. If replacing windows, choose ENERGY STAR qualified ones.

Kosco would like to offer everyone a happy, safe holiday season!

The key is to stay warm and safe during the cold winter months. These tips are offered to you from Kosco, the area's home comfort and heating leader. Mike Berardi, Manager of Kosco's Dutchess County Office can be reached at 876-2033



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