



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Increase in High Desert Structure Fires

If it seems like you're reading about more fires in the High Desert lately, it's because you are. In the last seven days there were 13 structure fires. As it gets colder, especially at night, people are turning to space heaters, wood-burning stoves, and fireplaces to keep their homes warm. While these can be useful, there are a lot of dangers associated with them too.

A risk that is becoming more common are fires caused by Zero Clearance Fireplaces. You've probably seen them in stores and advertised on television. These fireplaces are factory built units made from sheet metal or cast iron. They are also known as pre-fabricated fireplaces because they come ready to install.

Zero clearance fireplaces are so named because they are sufficiently insulated to be installed within close range of combustible materials, such as walls or wood framework, without requiring a masonry foundation. Most are designed to burn gas, but some can burn wood. It is very important that you only burn what they are designed for! Do not put wood in a gas burning fireplace! Ornamental gas logs will let you get the ambiance of a wood fire even if you have a gas fireplace, without the risk of using the wrong type of fuel.

Solids burn up as carbon, commonly called soot, which builds upon itself to close down the interior dimension of your flue. Creosote is an inevitable by-product of burning wood, and is formed when wood smoke condenses on the inside of a cool chimney. If creosote is left unchecked and allowed to build up over a period of time, it can superheat, and turn into 3rd degree creosote. This is the cause of chimney fires.

Since the flue of a Zero Clearance Fireplace is usually an 8" round pipe that runs up the interior of the wooden/brick enclosures, they will clog quicker than a masonry fireplace during use.

In order to avoid a chimney fire, Zero Clearance fireplaces, like all other fireplaces, must be cleaned yearly if used!

Space heaters are another fire risk during the colder months. We want our homes to be comfortable, but a space heater can be dangerous if not used properly. Make sure you set it up 1.5- 3ft away from combustible sources. A few other things to keep in mind when using your space heater:

- Turn heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Use and purchase portable space heaters with an automatic shut off so if they're tipped over they will shut off.
- Place space heater on solid, flat surface.
- Plug power cords directly into outlets and never into an extension cord.
- Inspect for cracked or damaged, broken plugs or loose connections. Replace before using.

Check out <http://goo.gl/MPTth9> for information about how to safely enjoy your fire place, and for more safety tips for your home visit www.sbcfire.org.

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