MEDIA ALERT

For Immediate Release

December 06, 2013
Joplin Fire Department

Joplin Fire Department wishes to remind citizens to be alert to the potential dangers of home heating fires with the upcoming extreme cold weather.

Facts about home heating fires

- In 2011, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 53,600 reported U.S. home structure fires, with associated losses of 400 civilian deaths, 1,520 civilian injuries, and $893 million in direct property damage. These fires accounted for 14% of all reported home fires.
- Space heaters, whether portable or stationary, accounted for one-third (33%) of home heating fires and four out of five (81%) of home heating fire deaths.
- The leading factor contributing to home heating fires (28%) was failure to clean, principally creosote from solid-fueled heating equipment, primarily chimneys.
- Placing things that can burn too close to heating equipment or placing heating equipment too close to things that can burn, such as upholstered furniture, clothing, mattress, or bedding, was the leading factor contributing to ignition in fatal home heating fires and accounted for more than half (53%) of home heating fire deaths.
- Half (50%) of all home heating fires occurred in December, January and February.

Stop a winter fire, before it starts:

- Make sure wood stoves are properly installed away from combustible surfaces, have good floor supports, and have proper ventilation so that the smoke can exit the home safely. Never use flammable liquids (such as gasoline) to start a fire or keep one going.
- **Make sure your space heaters have an emergency shut off in case they tip over. ONLY use the fuel recommended by the manufacturer. Never refill a space heater while it is on or still hot. Refuel heaters outside, away from the house.**
- Space heaters are not designed to heat a home or entire room on their own, they are intended to augment the homes heating system
- Kerosene heaters are not allowed in many areas - check before you use one.
- Have your furnace and chimney professionally inspected every year and cleaned, if necessary. Chimney tar build-up is a common cause of chimney fires.

- Use a glass or metal screen in front of your fireplace to stop sparks from setting nearby carpets or furniture on fire.
- Never thaw frozen pipes with a blow torch or other open flame. Use hot water or a laboratory tested device, such as a hair dryer.
- Dispose of hot ashes in covered metal containers and place the containers away from the house.
- Never use the stove or oven to heat your home.

Watch this short video to learn how you can prevent portable heater fires in your home this winter. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AMQ1ASnmNU

During this time of extremely low temperatures, it is important to be aware the potential for portable heater fires, and, how to prevent them.

Additionally, to prevent the freezing of water piping and the potential serious water damage to your home, citizens are reminded to allow a water faucet to drip slowing during periods of extreme or prolonged cold.

Mitch Randles

Fire Chief

Joplin Fire Department