



NEWS & INFORMATION

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Make safety top priority when heating your home this winter

With Iowa's winter heating season having arrived, the Iowa Utilities Board (IUB) reminds all Iowans to make health and safety their top priority when heating and lighting their residences this winter.

Winter in Iowa often brings storms and power outages. If a power outage occurs, check to see if any neighbors are out as well. If so, promptly call your electric utility to report the outage. Watch for and avoid contact with downed wires. If your neighbors have lights, check your own circuit breaker panel. If everything appears to be in order, then call your utility to report your outage.

It is good to have working flashlights or other battery powered lighting for use during an electric outage. Use extreme caution whenever burning candles for light, keep them away from flammable materials such as curtains, and don't leave them unattended.

Supplemental home heating methods also require safety precautions. So, first adjust the thermostat while dressing in layers with extra sweaters, socks, and blankets. Set a goal of lowering your thermostat enough to effectively manage the internal temperature without reducing your comfort level to a point where it might adversely impact anyone's health. If constantly changing your thermostat is inconvenient, consider a programmable thermostat for maximum comfort and efficiency.

Wood-burning fireplaces and devices, candles, and portable fire pits are all fire hazards. According to the National Fire Protection Association, electric and kerosene heaters cause the most home fires during the winter when more fires occur. Burning candles and overloading electrical circuits also cause many winter fires.

Always ensure adequate venting if you use a fireplace or wood burning stove in your home. Never leave open burning fireplaces unattended. Take into account that most gas and kerosene heaters, stoves, and grills are not intended for indoor use because of the ventilation that they require. **NEVER** use a gas stove or oven for space heating.

Electric space heaters can help compensate for a cooler inside temperature and can be efficient when used on a limited basis to heat small, localized areas. However, they can be dangerous and a fire hazard, causing injury or death. Always place a space heater

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away from any combustible objects or materials and shut it off if you leave the room or are at risk of falling asleep. Try to avoid using extension cords for portable heaters. If you do use them, properly grounded and insulated heavy-duty (Underwriter's Laboratory listed) electrical cords are safest. Newer space heaters are often best because of added safety features.

Whenever using electric space heaters at home:

- Use only those with a UL label.
- Remove lint and dust from them regularly.
- Keep them well away from papers, curtains, furniture, and other flammable items.
- Set them only on a non-flammable level surface, away from foot traffic.
- Turn them off whenever you are not in the room, sleeping, or may fall asleep.
- Supervise children and pets in the vicinity.
- Check for frayed cords before each use and for overheating cords periodically.
- Make sure open-faced heaters have a proper screen and grate in place.
- Avoid using extension cords. If you do, properly grounded and insulated heavy-duty electrical cords are safest. **NEVER** hide an extension cord under furniture, rugs, or drapes.
- Use new electric heaters that have shut-off features and heating element guards.

Other safe actions that can save energy and money include:

- Changing furnace filters often.
- Having heating systems serviced annually by a qualified professional.
- Receiving a professional energy assessment (see if your utility offers this service).
- Weatherizing exterior walls as well as around windows and doors.
- Upgrading insulation in the attic, walls and floors, basement, or crawl spaces.
- Replacing inefficient windows.
- Replacing old or inefficient furnaces.

Replacement windows and furnaces should be Energy Star certified. Many utilities offer free energy assessments of homes and businesses and/or cash rebates to customers for various energy efficiency investments. Contact your local gas or electric utility for more information or assistance in taking wise steps to be energy efficient and stay safe this winter.

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