



# Marion County Board of County Commissioners Marion County Fire Rescue

2631 SE Third St.  
Ocala, FL 34471

[www.marioncountyfl.org/firerescue.htm](http://www.marioncountyfl.org/firerescue.htm)



Contact: Miranda Iglesias, Public Information Officer, Marion County Fire Rescue  
Office: 352-291-8094 ▪ Pager: 352-898-3570 ▪ E-mail: [miranda.iglesias@marioncountyfl.org](mailto:miranda.iglesias@marioncountyfl.org)

## **HOT HAZARDS TO AVOID THIS WINTER**

Immediate Release

**MARION COUNTY, Fla.** (Dec. 18, 2009) – A chill is in the air and bringing more than crisp cool nights this winter. As temperatures drop this weekend, Marion County Fire Rescue warns citizens to take precautions before firing up their heating devices.

According to the National Fire Protection Association, most home heating fires start when citizens leave heaters (space, portable and fixed (including wood stoves)) unattended, especially at night while sleeping. Keeping combustibles too close to heating sources also significantly increases the risk of experiencing a home fire. Centralized heating systems cause a portion of reported heating fires, but equipment malfunctions are typically to blame.

To prevent house fires from heating sources this winter, Marion firefighters recommend citizens follow these safety tips:

### **Fireplace and Chimney Safety**

- Use only seasonal woods.
- Build smaller, hotter fires that burn more evenly and cause less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, wrapping paper, Christmas trees or trash. These items can ignite chimney fires.
- Keep the area around a fireplace clean and free from flammables like stockings, rugs and other home furnishings.
- Hire a licensed and insured professional chimney sweeper to clean and inspect your chimney and fireplace.

### **Space Heater Safety**

- Turn off space heaters when you are not in the room and when you go to sleep.
- Keep space heaters at least three feet away from combustibles, children and pets.
- Place space heaters on a flat, level surface where they can't fall, break open or ignite combustibles.
- Don't use extension cords unless absolutely necessary.
- Check cords and wires periodically to ensure that they have not frayed or eroded.
- Purchase space heaters that consumer safety watchdogs such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) have approved.
- Purchase space heaters that automatically shut off should the heater tip over.

### **Centralized Heating Systems Safety**

- Hire a licensed and insured professional to inspect the system annually and service as needed.
- Keep units away from combustibles, especially when stored in a closet.
- When buying a new unit, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing lab and hire a qualified technician to install the unit properly.
- Clean or replace furnace filters annually.

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