



Washington State Patrol

STATE FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

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*****For Immediate Release*****

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Government and Media Relations

State Fire Marshal's Office
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Central Heating Systems

Olympia – Central heating systems provide comfort and warmth to homes and businesses; however, these systems pose potential fire hazards if not properly maintained and operated. According to a 2021 United States Fire Administration (USFA) report, heating system fires were the second leading cause of home fires, resulting in 190 deaths and \$442 million in property damage. Last year in Washington State, there were 192 reported fires and over \$12 million in losses resulting from central heating system fires.

Central heating systems come in various forms, including gas and oil-fired, electric, and heat pumps. Proper maintenance and usage are important for preventing fire incidents.

The State Fire Marshal's Office suggest these fire safety tips when using central heating systems:

- Furnaces should be inspected, cleaned, and serviced every year by a licensed professional to ensure safe and reliable operation.
- Replace or clean filters regularly to ensure proper airflow and to prevent overheating.
- Keep vents and flues unobstructed to ensure proper ventilation and prevent the buildup of carbon monoxide.
- If the pilot light of your gas furnace goes out, allow five minutes or more for the gas to clear, then follow the manufacturer's instructions for relighting the pilot.
- Install and maintain smoke alarms in every sleeping area and on every level of the building.
- Install and maintain a carbon monoxide detector and regularly check for gas leaks. If you smell gas, turn off the system if possible, and exit the area immediately. Upon exiting, call 911.
- If using portable heaters in lieu of central heating, keep a three-foot radius clear of children, pets, and combustible objects. Ensure the portable heater is equipped with automatic shut off should it get tipped over. Turn off portable heaters and unplug them when leaving the room or going to bed.

For more information, please contact the State Fire Marshal's Office at (360) 596-3929.

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The State Fire Marshal's Office is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State. These services include public education, licensing and certification of the fire sprinkler, fireworks, and cigarette industries, data collection and analysis, fire and life safety inspections for state facilities, plan review of school construction projects, all-risk mobilization of statewide fire service resources, hazardous materials training, and the training and certification of firefighters.

www.wsp.wa.gov/state-fire-marshals-office/