



Winter Safety Tips From Public Works

The Alberta winter months are conventionally the worst time of year for fires in the home. With the arrival of winter and colder weather, we all bring out heaters and electrical blankets and spend more time in the kitchen cooking up hearty winter meals. In 2009, the two most common causes of winter house fires were cooking that was left unattended and electrical fires caused by heating appliances. There are some simple steps all households can take to help protect their families and homes from fire this winter.

- Never leave cooking unattended on the stove or in the oven. Supervise children at all time in the kitchen. Keep a fire blanket and extinguisher near the stove.
- Check heaters, electric blankets and other winter electrical appliances, for any faults such as frayed electrical cords, before using them. Don't leave heating appliances on all day.
- Maintain a gap of no less than one metre between flammable objects and a heat source such as electrical or combustible heaters.
- If you have a fireplace, Ensure your chimney was cleaned and is in good working order, use a fireplace screen and make sure the flue is operating correctly before igniting a fire. Never leave children unsupervised around open fires.
- Clean the lint filters in your clothes dryer after each use and never leave a dryer operating when you're out of the house. Clean the lint filter at the rear of the dryer every few months.
- Have at least one working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of the home and make sure it is working by testing them monthly and changing the batteries at least once a year.
- Develop a home escape plan and rehearse it with all members of the household.

A winter home safety kit should be prepared. It can be as simple as a large cardboard box. It should be in an easily accessible location and every family member should know where it is kept. Larger items can be stored nearby. Among the emergency items there should be:

- Flashlights or battery lanterns with extra batteries. Don't use candles if you can avoid it. They are a fire hazard.
- A battery-powered radio, and battery-powered clock.
- A cell phone.
- A supply of bottled water (one gallon per person per day is recommended).
- Non-perishable food that doesn't need to be cooked and a hand-operated can opener.
- A first aid kit and necessary prescription medications.
- Extra blankets and sleeping bags.
- Useful items as you think of them such as; a screwdriver, scissors, duct tape, paper plates, plastic utensils, water-proof matches and household bleach.
- Special needs for family members: baby diapers and formula, soothers. hearing aid batteries, etc.
- Pet needs: several days' supply of food and water and bowls, fresh litter, newspaper, and medications the pet may be taking.
- A snow shovel and rock salt to melt ice on sidewalks and driveways.
- Sand to prevent slips and falls on icy surfaces.
- Extra cash in the event of a power failure for the banks ATM will not function.
- You should have an alternate heat source if possible: an electric space heater, a wood-burning stove or fireplace, a gas fireplace, or a propane heater with enough fuel to last several days.
- Items to keep the family entertained: books, board games, decks of cards, and puzzles.