

## **JANUARY: Week 2 – Winter Weather**

**Overview:** The threat of winter fires is real. Fifteen percent of all fire deaths occur in January making it the deadliest month. Additionally, the 2nd week of January is nearly twice as deadly as the rest of the year. Use these national statistics to help citizens understand the severity and prevalence of winter fires:

- Although at its peak in December, residential building fire incidence is collectively highest in the 3 winter months of January, February, and March.
- 890 people die in winter home fires each year.
- \$2 billion in property loss occurs from winter home fires.
- 67% of winter fires occur in one- and two-family homes.
- Winter home fires account for only 8% of the total number of fires in the U.S. but result in 30% of all fire deaths.
- Cooking is the leading cause of all winter home fires.
- 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. is the most common time for winter home fires.



Use of generators and alternative heating sources not only cause an increased fire hazard, they pose the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning. It is important to make sure carbon monoxide and smoke alarms are working properly to avoid injury or death.

**Resources:** The following resources are available:

- Winter fire safety outreach materials from USFA
  - <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/prevention/outreach/winter.html>
- “Put A Freeze on Winter Fires” infographic
  - <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/By-topic/Holidays/Put-a-freeze-on-winter-fires/2018/WinterFreezeInfographic.ashx>
- “Be Fire Smart” infographic
  - <https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/By-topic/Holidays/Put-a-freeze-on-winter-fires/2019/PutAFreezeElectricalInfographic.ashx>
- Home fires involving heating equipment
  - <http://www.nfpa.org/news-and-research/fire-statistics-and-reports/fire-statistics/fire-causes/appliances-and-equipment/heating-equipment>
- “Home heating advice from NFPA – Put a Freeze on Winter Fires” YouTube video
  - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqjQfteHPCK>

**Media Tools:** Use the following pre-written media releases and social media posts in your efforts to promote winter weather safety:

- **Twitter**
  - Stay warm, stay safe! January is one of the deadliest months for home fires in TN. Safety tips here: <http://ow.ly/W26oD>

- Half of home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January, & February. Stay safe: <http://ow.ly/W26oD>
- Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fire deaths. Please review @NFPA's safety information: <http://ow.ly/W26zO> #WinterSafety

- **Facebook**

- Stay warm, stay safe! Keep any combustible material at least 3 feet from any heating equipment. Also have heating equipment & chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional. <http://ow.ly/W266z> #WinterSafety
- Half of home heating equipment fires are reported during the months of December, January, & February. Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fire deaths. Find more tips here: <http://ow.ly/W26zO>
- Did you know that heating equipment is involved in 1 in every 6 reported home fires (and 1 in every 5 home fire deaths)? For more info, go to [https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/Heating\\_Safety.ashx?la=en](https://www.nfpa.org/-/media/Files/Public-Education/Resources/Safety-tip-sheets/Heating_Safety.ashx?la=en)

**Educator Tip:** Help spread the word about the deadliness of fires in the winter months, especially these facts:

- Heating and cooking are the leading causes of fatal fires in January (40%).
- There are 24 home fires every day in January, one per hour.
- In January, there is an increase in the number of fire deaths in mobile or manufactured homes. 23% of all fire deaths in January occur in mobile or manufactured homes compared to 16% for all months.

Also, help by sharing this YouTube video on social media, about the deadliness of winter fires: <https://youtu.be/UDQH3BlrA9k>

**NFPA/SFMO Messaging:**

Some types of fire related hazards present during and after a winter storm:

1. Alternative heating devices used incorrectly create fire hazards.
2. Damaged or downed utility lines can present a fire and life safety hazard.
3. Water damaged appliances and utilities can be electrically charged.
4. Frozen water pipes can burst and cause safety hazards.
5. Leaking gas lines, damaged or leaking gas propane containers, and leaking vehicle gas tanks may explode or ignite.
6. Generators are often used during power outages. Generators that are not properly used and maintained can be hazardous.
7. Look for combustible liquids like gasoline, lighter fluid, and paint thinner that may have spilled. Thoroughly clean the spill and place containers in a well-ventilated area.
8. If your home has sustained flood or water damage, and you can safely get to the main breaker or fuse box, turn off the power.
9. Assume all wires on the ground are electrically charged. This includes cable TV feeds.
10. Exposed outlets and wiring could present a fire and life safety hazard.
11. Appliances that emit smoke or sparks should be repaired or replaced.
12. Have a licensed electrician check your home for damage.

13. Smell and listen for leaky gas connections. If you believe there is a gas leak, immediately leave the house and leave the door(s) open.
14. Never strike a match. Any size flame can spark an explosion.
15. Before turning the gas back on, have the gas system checked by a professional.
16. Some smoke alarms may be dependent on your home's electrical service and could be inoperative during a power outage.
17. Check to see if your smoke alarm uses a backup battery and install a new battery at least once a year.
18. Smoke alarms should be installed on every level of your home.
19. All smoke alarms should be tested monthly. If you do not have a 10-year alarm, batteries should be replaced with new ones at least once a year.
20. If there is a fire hydrant near your home, keep it clear of debris for easy access by the fire department.