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FASNY: Heat your home safely

It's not too early to begin preparing for the heating season

GUEST EDITORIAL BY THE FIREMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

This year, we saw a short autumn, leaving New Yorkers to feel the cooler weather sooner than normal. As a result, residents have been turning on their heat and curling up next to their fireplaces. The Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) wants to remind everyone to follow some simple tips when preparing their homes for winter.

With more people staying home for longer periods due to the COVID-19 pandemic, New Yorkers may face an increased risk for home fires. Heating is one of the leading causes of fires in the U.S. According to data from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), half of all home heating fires occur in December, January and February. Fire departments across the U.S. responded to an estimated average of 48,530 fires involving heating equipment each

year from 2014-18. These fires resulted in 500 civilian deaths, 1,350 civilian injuries and \$1.1 billion in direct property damage. As of this week, New York state is fifth in the nation in fire deaths for the year with 105.

"Many people continue to work from home, leading to an increased use of heat appliances," FASNY President John P. Farrell said. "Fire departments throughout the state typically see an increase in the number of fires they respond to this time of year, with many caused by improperly operated or poorly maintained equipment."

Space heaters and fireplaces can increase the risk of a home fire when used improperly. Homeowners should check that all their heating equipment is functioning properly, and double-check that their carbon monoxide and smoke detectors have fresh batteries.

"Always make sure your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are operational and have

fresh batteries," Farrell said. "We recommend everyone place carbon monoxide alarms outside of sleeping areas in the home. It is also important that they check the exhaust pipes of their heating units, as they could become blocked with snow or debris. We want all New Yorkers to be fire-safe this winter, and remember: If your smoke or carbon monoxide alarm goes off, get out quickly, stay out and call 911."

Here are some home heating tips from FASNY and the NFPA:

- √ Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- √ Have a 3-foot "kid-free zone" around open fires and space heaters.
- √ Never use your oven to heat your home.
- √ Have a qualified professional install stationary space heating equipment, water heaters or central heating equipment according to the local codes and manufac-

turer's instructions.

√ Have heating equipment and chimneys cleaned and inspected every year by a qualified professional.

√ Remember to turn portable heaters off when leaving the room or going to bed.

√ Always use the right kind of fuel, specified by the manufacturer, for fuel burning space heaters.

√ Make sure the fireplace has a sturdy screen to stop sparks from flying into the room. Ashes should be cool before putting them in a metal container. Keep the container a safe distance away from your home.

√ Test smoke alarms at least once a month.

Founded in 1872, the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) represents the interests of the approximately 85,000 volunteer firefighters and emergency medical personnel in New York. For more information, visit www.fasny.com.

Heart attack deaths more likely during winter holiday season than any other time of year

American Heart Association suggests ways to prepare for heart healthy holidays in order to avoid heart attacks

GUEST EDITORIAL BY THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

Scientific research over time has shown an uptick in cardiac events during the winter holiday season, and more people die from heart attacks between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1 than at any other time of the year.

The American Heart Association, the world's leading nonprofit organization focused on heart and brain health for all, has tips and resources to help you and yours have a happy, healthy holiday season.

"The holidays are a busy, often stressful, time for most of us. Routines are disrupted; we may tend to eat and drink more and exercise and relax less. We also may not be listening to our bodies or paying attention to warning signs, thinking it can wait until after the new

year. All of these can be contributors to increasing the risk for heart attack at this time of the year," said Donald Lloyd-Jones, M.D., Sc.M., FAHA, volunteer president of the American Heart Association; and Eileen M. Foell Professor of Heart Research, professor of preventive medicine, medicine and pediatrics, and chair of the department of preventive medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago. "This may be even more likely for many people who didn't get to be with family and friends last year due to COVID-19 restrictions. It's incredibly important to be aware of these risks. Take a few simple steps that can help keep you heart healthy with much to celebrate in the new year."

Here are some things to be mindful of (a list we recommend

checking twice):

- √ Know the symptoms and take action: Heart attack signs may vary in men and women and it's important to catch them early and call 9-1-1 for help. The sooner medical treatment begins, the better the chances of survival and preventing heart damage.
- √ Celebrate in moderation: 'Tis the season for unhealthy changes in diet and higher alcohol consumption. Eating healthfully during the holidays doesn't have to mean depriving yourself. There are still ways to eat smart. Look for small, healthy changes and swaps you can make so you continue to feel your best while eating and drinking in moderation, and don't forget to watch the sodium.
- √ Plan for peace on earth and goodwill toward yourself: Make time to take care of yourself

during the busy holiday. Reduce stress from family interactions, strained finances, hectic schedules and other stressors that tack on this time of year, including traveling.

√ Keep moving: The American Heart Association recommends at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week, and this number usually drops during the holiday buzz. Get creative with ways to stay active, even if it's going for a family walk or another fun activity you can do with your loved ones.

√ Stick to your meds: Busy holidays can make way for skipping medications, forgetting them when away from home, or not getting refills in a timely manner. Here is a medication chart to help stay on top of it, and be sure to keep tabs on your blood pressure numbers.

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