



Office of Emergency Services

NEWS RELEASE

West Virginia Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety

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For immediate release: January 11, 2005

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Power Outages and Furnace Damage Increase Fire Risk

Charleston, W.Va. - Power outages and furnace damage bring serious danger as people try to cope with heat loss. Using alternate heating sources increases the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning and fire.

“We encourage flood-affected residents who are without power or heat to be prepared for the approaching cold weather,” said Stephen S. Kappa, director of the West Virginia Office of Emergency Services. “Chapters of the American Red Cross are offering flood victims assistance including vouchers for electric space heaters.”

Kappa advises citizens to check on disabled or elderly family and neighbors at this cold time of year. They are especially vulnerable.

Caution should be exercised when using kerosene heaters or electric heaters.

- Before using an alternate heating source, smoke detectors and their batteries should be checked. All batteries should be replaced with new ones at least once a year.
- Families should keep fire extinguishers on hand and make sure everyone in the house knows how to use them. Use at least one carbon monoxide alarm with an audible warning signal near sleeping areas and outside individual bedrooms.
- Make sure your alternative heaters have 'tip switches.' These 'tip switches' are designed to automatically turn off the heater in the event they tip over.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and guidelines when using generators or other alternative heaters. A running generator is not safe indoors. Never connect a generator to another power source such as power lines. The reverse flow of electricity or 'backfeed' can electrocute an unsuspecting utility worker.
- Only use the type of fuel recommended by the manufacturer and follow suggested guidelines. Never refill a fuel heater while it is operating or still hot. Refuel heaters only outdoors.
- Maintain ventilation when using kerosene heaters to avoid a build-up of toxic fumes and always refuel outside. Keep all heaters at least three feet from flammable objects.
- Do not use the kitchen oven range to heat your home. In addition to being a fire hazard, it can be a source of toxic fumes.