

# FIRE SAFETY

## Don't Fall Into The Same Fire Traps This Winter

(NAPSA)—Fall and winter are the most dangerous time of year for home fire safety. Home fires and fire death rates peak during this time of year because of increased use of alternative heating systems such as space heaters and fireplaces. According to the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA), heating equipment has resulted in 49,200 home fires, 388 deaths, 1,445 injuries and \$515 million in property damage.

Additionally, increased use of electrical power to support holiday lights and improperly caring for live Christmas trees also contributes to higher fire and fire death rates. The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) estimates that fires during the holiday season injure 2,000 people and cause more than \$500 million in damage.

As residents begin to winterize their homes this fall, it is vitally important that they consider placing fire extinguishers on every level of the home and examining those already in place to assure quality performance. Furthermore, the NFPA states that residential fire extinguishers should be replaced every 12 years as well.

"Residential fire extinguishers can be an important resource in a fire response plan because they provide homeowners with a means of containing fires before they get out of control," said Roy Marshall, executive director of The Residential Fire Safety Institute. "Current household penetration for fire extinguishers is 76 percent, however, it is crucial to get penetration closer to 100 per-



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cent as with smoke detectors."

About 30 percent of home fires start in the kitchen—more than any other place in the home—and more than 50 percent of home fire deaths occur in sleeping areas, according to NFPA. To help reduce the risk of personal injury and to control property damage, fire extinguishers should be placed in kitchens, bedrooms and in other areas such as hallways and garages for quick access.

Fire extinguishers should be inspected regularly to ensure that they are properly charged and available when needed. Those that have low pressure, are damaged or corroded, or haven't been used within 12 years should be replaced with a multipurpose fire extinguisher.

There are three fire extinguisher ratings—A, B and C—and each has an intended use. Extinguishers with an A rating work against fires involving com-

bustible materials such as wood, cloth or paper; a B rating indicates effectiveness against fires caused by flammable liquids such as grease; and C is intended for use in electrical fires. Because time is of the essence when battling a home fire, it may be safer to install fire extinguishers with an A-B-C rating throughout your home to be sure of your extinguisher's ability to put out or contain a fire. The Kidde Full Home Fire Extinguisher has an A-B-C rating and is available at hardware and home centers nationwide and costs about \$10.

In addition to proper fire extinguisher placement, families can stay safe when the cold weather arrives by:

- Making sure that heating equipment is inspected and cleaned by a professional;
- Keeping space and kerosene heaters at least three feet away from anything that can burn. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, 300 people die each year in fires started by heaters;
- Using the oven and range for food preparation only and not as a heating source for the home;
- Refilling the stand of a live Christmas tree with water often. Also, inspecting holiday lights before putting them up is recommended; and
- Developing a fire escape plan that the entire family is familiar with. Fire extinguishers are one element of a fire response plan but the primary element is a safe escape.