

# City of Bristol Tennessee

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## **Winter Weather Events Can Increase Number of Fire Incidence**

When severe winter weather events move into the area, it brings with it greater opportunity for residential structure fires. Bristol Fire Department's Assist Chief, Jack Spurgeon stated, "Home fire incidence is collectively highest in the three winter months of January, February and March. Cooking and heating are the leading causes of these fires. The risk of fire also increases with the use of electric space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves. And with weather events such as ice storms those numbers tend to peak."

An estimated 900 portable heater fires in residential buildings are reported to U.S. fire departments each year causing seventy deaths and \$53 million in property loss. Over half of home portable heater fires occur because they are too close to items that can burn and at least a third originate in bedrooms. In these fires, bedding, such as blankets, sheets and comforters, is the leading item first ignited.

Spurgeon continued, "All heating equipment needs space. Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away. Keep close supervision of children whenever a wood stove or space heater is being used. Have a three-foot "kid-free" zone around open fires and space heaters."

If you are using a space heater, plug the heater directly into an outlet; never plug it into a power strip or extension cord. Kerosene heaters should only have K-1 crystal clear Kerosene fueling them and any refueling should be done outside after the unit cools. One of the greatest causes of fire in relation to fireplaces is the ash residue. Keep ash containers at least 10 feet from your home or nearby structures. Never dump ash directly into trash receptacles. Always douse and saturate the ashes with water.

For more information or safety tips on winter heating, please contact Asst. Chief Spurgeon at 423-989-5701 or e-mail [jspurgeon@bristoltn.org](mailto:jspurgeon@bristoltn.org).

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