

Fire & Carbon Monoxide Safety Warnings

Fire Marshal Issues Storm Fire & CO Safety Warnings

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan issued fire safety warnings due to the approaching storm which is likely to cause power outages. "Start your storm preparations by making sure your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are working and stock up on battery-operated candles and flashlights in case the power goes out," he said.

Emergency Calls

This is a good time to charge up cell phones, laptops and other electronics. Many people may lose the ability to make emergency calls when cell phone batteries and the battery-backup for fiber optic telephone/cable/Internet services become depleted.

Prevent Fires from Alternative Lighting, Heating and Cooking

"It can be difficult and frustrating to be without light, heat or the ability to cook for an extended period of time, but it is critical to stay safe and not make a bad situation worse," said Coan. "After storms, we often see many fires from woodstoves being overloaded, improper disposal of ashes, candles, and improper re-fueling of generators."

Wood, Coal and Pellet Stoves

"Prevent serious fires from the improper disposal of ashes from fireplaces, wood and pellet stoves," said Coan. "A single ember can remain hot for days, so put ashes in a metal container with a lid away from the house, the garage, the deck," he added. Already this heating season, many fires started with ashes put into plastic bags, cardboard boxes, and plastic trash bins, in the garage, under the deck or even in the family room.

"Don't overload your woodstove as they are not designed to replace central heating systems. An overloaded woodstove can easily start a chimney fire by taking advantage of creosote build-up or minor cracks in the flue, or causing a breakdown in the chimney liner," said Coan. Heating appliances are the leading cause of carbon monoxide in the home and the risk increases when they are working harder. For more information go to www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe.

Use Flashlights and Battery-Operated Candles

Use flashlights and battery-operated candles for safety. If you must use flame candles, remember to burn them inside a one-foot circle of safety free of anything that can burn. Place them on a non-combustible surface or in the sink; blow them out when you leave the room or go to bed; and use jar candles or place a globe over stick candles. Keep pets and children away from candles.

Cooking Safety

Don't use your oven for heat and don't bring a hibachi or gas grill inside to cook, doing so can cause carbon monoxide poisoning," he said. "Use propane or charcoal grills outdoors, at least ten feet away from the house to prevent fires and carbon monoxide poisoning," he added. "Using them inside the garage, even with the door open poses a serious risk of CO poisoning," Coan said.

Generator Safety

"During the February 2013 blizzard, fire departments responded to a record number of CO calls, many from home generator use," said Coan.

- Place the generator outdoors facing away from doors, windows and vents. Never use a generator inside – even the garage.
- Plug appliances directly into the generator or use a heavy-duty, outdoor rated extension cord.
- Let the generator cool before refueling.
- Have an electrician install an appropriate transfer switch; never plug a generator directly into a wall outlet to avoid “backfeeding” which can electrocute utility workers. (It might be too late for this today!)
- Transport gasoline safely in an approved container in the trunk of your car (max. 7 gallons).
- Store gasoline in a shed or detached garage away from the house; never store gasoline in the home or an attached garage.

Clear Snow from Furnace and Dryer Vents

Keep outside furnace, hot water and dryer vents clear of drifting snow to prevent flue gases from backing up into the home and creating a carbon monoxide hazard.

Prevent Freezing Pipes

“Let hot and cold water faucets drip a trickle to prevent pipes from freezing, and open cupboards under sinks to let heat circulate around the pipes,” said Coan.

Be a Good Neighbor

Check on elderly neighbors and see if they need extra supplies before the storm.

For more information on safety go to www.mass.gov/keepwarmkeepsafe.