



Winter Safety



Keep Fire Hydrants Clear of Snow - An accessible and properly functioning fire hydrant is a vital part of any firefighting operation. Please avoid piling snow on or around fire hydrants. If possible, especially during very heavy snow falls, take a few extra minutes to 'adopt' your nearest fire hydrant by clearing the snow from around the hydrant. This improves firefighter's ability to quickly locate and access the hydrant in an emergency.

Keep Roads Clear for Emergency Vehicles - Operating an emergency vehicle such as a fire truck or an ambulance is a complex job under perfect weather conditions that becomes even more challenging under the current weather conditions. Please exercise extra caution when driving and yield the right of way to emergency vehicles responding to alarms. It's also important to avoid blocking access to snow emergency streets and other key thoroughfares. The same applies to the fire lanes or fire zones in commercial parking lots.

Make Sure That The Address On Your Home is Visible From the Street - While you are out clearing the driveway and the walk, you also need to clear off the markings on the home or business, so firefighters can quickly reach you in an emergency.

Avoid Fires and Injuries by Practicing Basic Winter Safety - The old adage, 'an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure' is particularly applicable during the winter months. Many winter emergencies can be avoided by following some basic safety tips such as:

Heating Systems:

Heating systems need to be checked each year to make sure they are running safely and efficiently. Make sure your system is checked BEFORE the heating season is in full swing. If there is a problem, you'll want to find out in advance so you can avoid an emergency situation. If you heat with oil, you should have the furnace cleaned once a year, and the oil supply plumbing checked to assure it is not leaking. If you heat with gas, you need to make sure all gas connections are tight and the pilot light is operating properly. Remember, GAS IS EXPLOSIVE! All maintenance and repairs should be done by qualified personnel.

Space Heaters:

Use space heaters for a limited time each day and never connect to an outlet with an extension cord. When not in

use, be sure to unplug the unit and let it cool down if you will be storing the unit. Keep a window ajar or the door

open in a room where an un-vented heater is in use. Never use heaters to dry clothing or other combustibles.

Chimneys and Flues:

Chimneys and flues are not just for fireplaces. Most home heating systems require chimneys and flues to vent. Making sure they are unobstructed and in good condition can help prevent a deadly backup of carbon monoxide gas in your home. All chimneys and flues should be checked to assure that there are no obstructions, clogs, bird nests, or mechanical damage to moving parts. Any of these scenarios can lead to a build-up of deadly carbon monoxide inside your house. Recently, a grandmother, mother, and small child were killed in Staten Island due to a faulty heating system.

Fireplaces:

Before using the fireplace for the first time in a season make sure the flue is open and unobstructed. If there are any obstructions, remove them. If not removed, these obstructions will cause carbon monoxide to back up into your home. Never leave a fireplace unattended. Fireproof mats or material should be used next to your fireplace and stoves. Chimneys and vents should be inspected and cleaned annually (see above). Don't burn newspapers or other trash in a fireplace because they burn too hot and can ignite a chimney fire and never use charcoal in the house. Charcoal produces massive amounts of carbon monoxide. A small bucket or pot of water left handy near the heating device can be used to douse any small embers that pop out onto rugs or other combustible surfaces.

Coal and Wood Burning Stoves:

Use coal only if specifically approved by the stove manufacturer. Gasoline or other flammable liquids should never be used to start a wood fire since it might explode or flare up.

Smoke Alarms and Carbon Monoxide Detectors:

Test your home smoke alarms at least once per month. Do this by pressing the test button on the unit. If your detectors are battery operated, check the batteries often to make sure the units are operational. If you do not have one already installed, install a carbon monoxide detector to detect production of potentially lethal carbon monoxide by gas fireplaces, gas stoves, barbecues, gas furnaces.

Personal Health and Safety:

In the cold weather, monitor young children, elderly family and neighbors, as well as the sick, who are particularly susceptible to the dangers of the cold. Don't venture out in extremely cold weather unless absolutely necessary. If you must go out, be sure to dress in layers with a water- and windproof outer layer. A hat is a must as 40% of body heat is lost through the head. Don't smoke or consume alcohol before going out, because these substances alter your body's circulatory system, making you colder instead of warming your body. Exercise caution when shoveling snow – overexertion can sometimes lead to tragedy.

If you have a fire or smoke emergency with your fireplace or other heating device, follow these rules:

Do not try to fight a large fire yourself!

Call the Fire Dept! Get out of the house!

If you smell gas, or detect a gas leak, Call the Fire Dept!

We will notify Keyspan for you when we arrive.

Note on Propane: DO NOT USE PROPANE DEVICES INDOORS!

Propane has the same explosive power as some military ordnance does. A propane BBQ tank ignited inside a house in Port Washington several years ago, and blew the roof a half mile out into Port Washington Harbor. If we all follow these common sense rules, and maintain our heating systems, we can have a safe and warm winter.