

# **TOWN OF NORTH BRANFORD, CT DEPARTMENT OF FIRE SERVICE**

## ***PUBLIC FIRE SAFETY INFORMATION TO OUR COMMUNITY***

### **RE-PRINT OF PRESS RELEASE:**

#### **Rash of Fire Fatalities throughout CT**

In the months of January and February of 2007, the state of Connecticut has seen an alarming increase in fatal fires. “In these two months, there have been 6 separate fatal fires in our state,” stated Jeff Morrissette, State Fire Administrator, “and this is in addition to numerous other fires where individuals are injured.” In fact, three of these fatalities happened in a two-day period with fires in Waterbury, Westbrook and Meriden.

Nationally, a quick check of media reports for just the first 19 days of February reveals 77 house-fire fatalities. Thirty fatalities were single or double fatalities, and 46 deaths resulted from 15 fires and were counted as multiple fatalities (three or more individuals).

Winter is the worst season for fires due to reliance on heating systems and use of supplemental heaters. Another common problem during the winter is Carbon Monoxide incidents, Carbon Monoxide commonly known as CO can be generated from any fuel burning appliance. Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is not detectable by smell or taste. Carbon Monoxide accumulates in the human body over a period of time, so an extended exposure to a small concentration can be as devastating as a high concentration over a short period of time. “In a two day period of February, 13 people were hospitalized in two separate Carbon Monoxide incidents in Ansonia and Newington,” said John Blaschik of the State Fire Marshal’s Office, “Improper use of supplemental heaters and the improper disposal of hot ashes are common causes of winter time fires and other emergencies that often lead to injuries and fatalities.”

The Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association (CFCA) is equally concerned about the rash of fire fatalities and injuries suffered by Connecticut residents. “Local Fire Departments are responsible for providing public fire education to its residents and rising fatality rates have local Chiefs concerned”, stated

Chief Jamie DiPace of the Avon Fire Department and Vice President of the CFCA. “Residents need to be vigilant about fire safety in their homes and workplaces and the effort needs to be a family affair”, stated DiPace.

The Connecticut Commission on Fire Prevention and Control in partnership with the Connecticut State Fire Marshal’s Office and the Connecticut Fire Chiefs Association ask you to follow these simple winter fire safety rules;

- Check smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to be sure they are working properly.
- Have an escape plan with a meeting place, and practice it. Each room in your house should have two ways out.
- Once you exit your home, DO NOT return. Too many people lose their lives going back into a burning home.
- Stoves are not made for heating homes.
- Supplemental heating devices should be used and maintained in accordance with manufacturer recommendations. Keep combustibles clear, at least 3 feet away. Do not leave supplemental heating devices unattended.
- If you are burning wood in your fireplace, make sure your chimneys are properly maintained.
- Be sure to dispose of fireplace ashes in a closed metal container, away from your house. Ashes can retain their heat for hours, even days, and can cause nearby combustibles to ignite.
- Have your entire heating system checked for proper operation annually.
- During winter storm power outages, candles often cause fires. Be sure to burn candles in a sturdy base that won’t tip over and never burn candles unattended.

If everyone follows these safety rules, we can dramatically reduce the incidence of fires in our state and prevent family tragedies.