

What Should I Know About Heating My Home or Cabin

Heating Your Lake Home or Cabin

Heating your cabin may be no different than heating an urban home. However, cabin heating sources can vary greatly and safety needs to be the number one priority in any dwelling. You should implement proper energy management practices in your home and cabin to assure a safe, economical, and healthy environment.

Basic Home Heating Recommendations and Safety Tips

All homeowners are strongly encouraged to have:

1. An annual inspection and tune-up of **all** combustion appliances such as furnaces, boilers, and water heaters.
2. Fireplaces, stoves, and chimneys inspected and cleaned annually.
3. A thorough energy audit including a blower door test to determine the overall air tightness and typical operating pressure regimes for the home or cabin.

Fire

Remember: SAFETY should be your first consideration when heating your home or cabin. In your effort to stay warm in the winter, it's important to remember that **heating equipment is the number one cause of home fires** in the United States.

■ Common causes of space heating home fires are: lack of regular cleaning, which leads to creosote build-up in wood-burning devices and associated chimneys and connectors; failing to give space heaters enough room by installing or placing them too close to combustibles; basic flaws in the construction or design of wood burning heating equipment; and fuel spills or leaks involving liquid- or gas-fueled heating equipment.

Smoke alarms double your chance of surviving a fire. Be sure that your home and cabin has properly installed smoke alarms on each floor and outside all sleeping areas. Be safety smart and test the batteries monthly. Alarms should be UL tested.

Always follow safety recommendations when using candles for special occasions or fragrance in the home. Always extinguish the **candles** when you are not in the room and before going to bed.

A combustion safety issue that occurs commonly in homes but is seldom discussed is negative pressure. Any device that exhausts house/cabin air or uses house/cabin air for combustion can create **negative pressure** in the house. Negative pressure caused by the wood burning device can cause dangerous spillage and/or back drafting of furnace and water heaters. Negative pressure caused by exhaust fans can back draft wood stoves, too. Everybody's simple answer here is to have adequate combustion air. The reality is that there is no way to know how much air you need without comprehensive blower door and vent testing.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas often formed in the process of incomplete combustion of organic substances, including fuels. It is dangerous because it interferes with normal oxygen uptake for humans and other living organisms that need oxygen to live. **Those at greatest risk include the unborn, elderly, people with cardiac conditions, and people with respiratory problems including asthma.** Common sources of carbon monoxide in homes and cabins include fuel-burning devices such as furnaces, gas or kerosene space heaters, boilers, gas cooking stoves, water heaters, clothes dryers, fireplaces, charcoal grills, wood stoves, lawn mowers, power generators, camp stoves, motor vehicles, and some power tools with internal combustion engines. Carbon monoxide sensors for the home are available. Many public utility companies offer a home energy checkup free or at a reasonable cost. Contact your public utility company to see if they provide this service. There are other private companies that offer this service as well. Energy conservation is the most cost-effective measure you can take to reduce heating costs while being comfortable. Contact your public utility and energy web sites for more information.

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Wood Burners

- If you have a fireplace, make sure you have your chimney inspected by a professional every winter and cleaned if necessary. A chemical substance called creosote forms when wood burns and can build up in a chimney and cause a fire if not properly cleaned.
- When using an open fireplace or stove, protect your home and family by always using a sturdy screen when burning wood.
- Remember to burn wood only. Never burn paper or pine boughs because they can float out of the chimney and ignite your roof or that of a neighboring house.
- If you purchase a factory-built fireplace, select one listed by an independent testing laboratory. If you own a wood stove, be sure to inspect chimney connections and chimney flues at the beginning of each heating season. They should also be cleaned periodically.
- Follow the same safety rules for wood stoves as you would for space heaters. Burn wood only and be sure the wood stove is placed on an approved stove board to protect your floor from heat and hot coals. Be sure to check with your local fire department and check local codes before having your wood stove installed.
- Remember: SAFETY should be your first consideration when heating your home.

Corn Burners

The combination of high fossil fuel prices and low corn prices has spurred an interest in burning shelled corn to produce heat for heating buildings and for drying grain. Dry shelled corn contains a fair amount of energy and it is relatively easy to handle, so in the short run, it can make sense to use shelled corn as a heating fuel.

Kerosene Heaters

WARNING!!!

Due to poor indoor air quality, moisture, and general safety conditions, consumers are advised to be aware of the dangerous health concerns of, and refrain from the purchase of, "vent free" gas fireplaces or space heaters, including kerosene space heaters. Homeowners should NOT use their gas stoves or ovens for space heaters.