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News Release
Heat Your Home Safely This Fall and Winter

News release prepared by:
Captain Ron Lubke

With the predicted early arrival of the season's first cold snap, the Missoula Rural Fire District (MRFD) would like to remind the public to stay safe as they heat their homes this fall and winter. Safety must be your top priority since heating is the second leading cause of home fires. Here are some suggestions to keep your home warm and safe.

- Have your fireplaces, wood stoves and pellet stoves inspected before you begin using them each year. Have the chimney cleaned to remove creosote, which can ignite and start a chimney fire.
- Keep anything that can burn 3-feet away from space heaters, fireplaces, wood stoves, pellet stoves and radiators.
- The openings around fireplaces and wood stoves can get hot enough to burn skin, so keep children and pets far away from them. When you're finished with your fire, make sure it is out before you leave home or fall asleep. When you clean up, place the ashes inside a metal can with a lid. Store the can outside, away from the home, and other combustible items until the ashes are completely cold.
- Use a tempered glass or metal screen over the fireplace opening to keep sparks inside. Burn only clean dry wood in fireplaces and wood or wood pellets in wood stoves.
- Never use gasoline to start a fire. There is no safe way to start a fire with gasoline.
- Only use portable space heaters that have been listed by a testing laboratory such as UL (look for the laboratory's label). These heaters should have an automatic shut-off switch so that if they are tipped over, they will turn off on their own. Plug portable electric heaters directly into the wall outlet; don't use extension cords or power strips.
- Turn space heaters off when you leave the room or before falling asleep. Never leave space heaters on unattended.
- Make sure any heating appliances such as furnaces or boilers are inspected and operating properly. If heating appliances are equipped with filters, check with the manufacture's recommendations on how often filters should be changed or cleaned and then be sure to change them as needed.
- Have carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home and make sure they are working.
- Always have working smoke detectors in your home. Smoke detectors should be on every level of the home, inside every bedroom and outside every sleeping area.

MRFD wants everyone to stay warm this fall and winter. Following these tips will help ensure that this winter is a safe one.

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For additional heating safety information or for media inquiries, please contact MRFD at 406-549-6172.