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Stay Warm and Safe This Winter



Using a wood burning or gas fireplace can provide warmth and a relaxing atmosphere during the cold winter months. But they can also prove dangerous if not maintained and operated properly.

Heating is the second leading cause of home fires behind cooking with an average of more than 45,000 home heating fires occurring the United States each year,

according to the U.S. Fire Administration. Confined fires, fires confined to chimneys, flues or fuel burners, accounted for 84 percent of these fires.

The following safety tips from the Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association (HPBA) can help keep you safe this winter.

Wood Burning Fireplace

- Have your chimney inspected annually and cleaned, as necessary, by a professional chimney sweep to ensure it's clear of obstructions and creosote.
- Have a cap installed at the top of your chimney to avoid the possibility that debris or animals can block the chimney.
- Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in the area of your fireplace. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand.
- Make sure the area around your fireplace (at least two feet) is clear of furniture, books, newspaper and other potentially flammable materials.
- Clean out the ashes from the previous fire. Store ashes in a non-combustible container with a tightly fitting lid and place the container away from the house.
- Never burn garbage, rolled newspapers, charcoal or plastic. Do not use gasoline or any liquid accelerant to help start a fire.
- Do not close the damper until the embers have completely stopped burning.

Peak Time

January is the peak time for home heating fires, accounting for 21 percent of these incidents. The most common time for a home heating fire is from 5:00-9:00 pm.

Gas Fireplace

- Have your gas fireplace installed by a qualified technician. Ensure the technician adjusts the millivolt output, cleans and adjusts the glowing embers and logs for best appearance and cleans the fan and related air circulation passages.
- Install a smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector in the area of your fireplace. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand.

For more safety tips, visit hpba.org.

Radon: Time to Take Action

You can't see it or smell it, but elevated radon levels in your home could be affecting your family's health.

Radon is a naturally occurring, radioactive gas released in rock, soil and water formed from the breakdown of uranium. Radon can enter your home



from surrounding soil and is drawn into a house through foundation cracks and openings such as sump pump lids and plumbing features on the lower levels of homes. It may also be found in your water supply if your home is served by a private well.

Breathing high levels of radon over a prolonged period of time may damage your lung tissue. Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer deaths, behind only smoking, responsible for an estimated 20,000 deaths in the U.S. each year, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Smokers are at an increased risk to develop health problems due to radon exposure.

Testing your home is simple and inexpensive. You can purchase a radon test kit and place the radon detector in the basement or first floor of your home for the time period described on the kit. The kit is then sent to a lab for analysis and the results will be sent back to you within a few weeks.

Radon test kits can be purchased from the American Lung Association by visiting lung.org or by calling 800-LUNG-USA.

The amount of radon in the air is measured in picocuries per liter of air or pCi/L. The EPA recommends radon levels at 4 pCi/L or higher in homes be reduced. If your home has elevated radon levels, you should contact a qualified radon mitigation contractor to help take steps to reduce the level. These steps may include installing ventilation systems, sealing entry routes for radon gas and installing sub-slab depressurization systems.

For more information on radon, visit ct.gov/dph/radon.

Beyond the Labels

We all have them in our homes. From air fresheners to paint to lawn fertilizer, our homes are filled with products to help clean, maintain, work and have some fun. Gaining an understanding of what is in those products as well as the effects they may have on your family is crucial to helping ensure their health and safety.

The National Library of Medicine has created a Household Products Database to provide access to product information and links to manufacturer Safety Data Sheets (SDS). It is available at <https://householdproducts.nlm.nih.gov>.

The database contains over 16,000 consumer brands and includes the chemical ingredients and composition, the manufacturer and their contact information and the acute and chronic effects of the chemical ingredients.



You can search products via an alphabetical listing, manufacturer, ingredients or via quick search by entering the product's name. The database also breaks down products into the following categories:

- Household products-Air fresheners, bleach, cleaners, etc.
- Home maintenance-Caulk, grout, insulation, paint, putty, stain, etc.
- Personal care-Antiperspirant, hair spray, makeup, shampoo, soap, etc.
- Landscape/Yard-Fertilizer, lawn care, swimming pool products, etc.
- Arts & crafts-Adhesive, glaze, glue, primer, varnish, etc.
- Pet care-Flea and tick control, litter, stain/odor remover, etc.
- Pesticides-Animal repellent, fungicide, herbicide, insecticide, etc.
- Auto products-Brake fluid, de-icer, lubricant, sealant, etc.
- Home office-Ink, toner, correction fluid, electronics cleaners, pens, etc.
- Commercial/Institutional-Cleaner, floor polish, lubricant, solvent, etc.

The database is updated at least twice per year and may involve adding or modifying the manufacturer, brand and SDS information. A modification date will be noted when there is an update to a product.

In case of a poisoning emergency, you should call the Poison Help hotline at 800-222-1222 to reach your local poison control center. The call is free, confidential and handled by medical experts. The database is not intended to provide therapeutic or clinical advice.

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"Respect the unexpected. Think through your risks." - Author Unknown

EHS Names its Employee of the Year



Whyndam Abrams, left, and EHS Director Peter Reinhardt

The Yale Office of Environmental Health and Safety proudly honors Whyndam Abrams as our 2016 Employee of the Year! As our Environmental Affairs Officer, Whyndam brings nothing but excellence to EHS every day. His attention to detail and uncompromising work ethic make for incredibly tight compliance within his programs, which minimizes the University's impact on

the environment.

Whyndam's duties include implementing and maintaining numerous regulatory requirements including Underground Storage Tank and Above Ground Storage Tank Programs, sampling and record-keeping requirements for permits, requirements related to the Toxic Substances Control Act, Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures, air emissions, stormwater management, environmental engineering and many others.

He has proved to be a great mentor with the ability to make time to discuss and explain his programs. He has developed trusted relationships with his colleagues, contacts throughout the University and the many outside vendors with whom he interacts.

Whyndam was also honored in 2011 with the EHS Excellence Award (now the Dariusz Czarnota Award of Excellence).

FDA Bans Powdered Gloves

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has banned powdered surgeon's gloves, powdered patient examination gloves and absorbable powder for lubricating surgeon's gloves after determining that these products present an unreasonable and substantial risk of illness or injury and that the risk cannot be corrected or eliminated by labeling or a change in labeling.

Although this ban is directed at surgical and clinical use of powdered gloves, it is also applicable to gloves used in laboratory settings.

If you have any such products in your clinic or laboratory, please discard them immediately.

Yale's Office of Environmental Health and Safety recommends using powder-free nitrile gloves.

Click [here](#) to read more about the FDA's decision.

If you have any questions, please contact Cathleen King, Chemical Hygiene Officer, at 203-785-5106 or cathleen.king@yale.edu.