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## Heating

High correlation

Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires during the months of December, January and February, and trails only [cooking](#) equipment in home fires year-round.

**ALSO SEE:** "[Safe Heat: High fuel costs may pose a safety threat](#)", NFPA Journal®, Nov/Dec 2005, by John Nicholson



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### Facts & figures

- In 2002, heating equipment was involved in an estimated 45,500 home structure fires reported to U.S. fire departments. These fires caused an estimated 220 civilian fire deaths, 990 civilian fire injuries, and \$449 million in direct property damage.
- These fires fell 14% from the 2001 total to the lowest point since data collection began. Deaths from these fires fell 12% and injuries fell 11%.
- Fireplaces or chimneys rank first in the number of fires among types of heating equipment. Most of these were caused by creosote build-up.
- Portable and fixed space heaters, including wood stoves, caused a disproportionate share of the home heating fire deaths. Space heaters were involved in 25% of the home heating fires but 74% of the deaths.
- The leading cause of space heater fires was combustibles too close to the heater, except for wood stoves, where the leading cause was creosote build-up, and fixed electric space heaters, where the leading cause was equipment unattended.

Fires inv and oth heaters 1980 to began d of 56,10 average in 1999 decline a falloff stoves, possible graduall use ther

Source: Fire statistics were derived from NFPA's annual fire department survey. Detailed statistics were derived by NFPA from the U.S. Fire Administration's National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) and NFPA's fire department survey.

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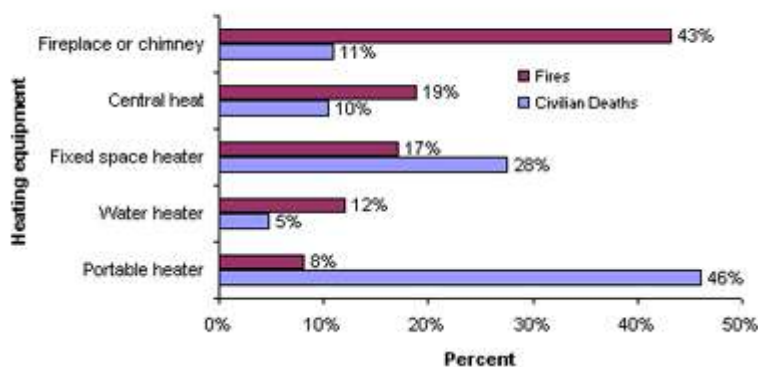
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FEA

Home Heating Equipment Fires by Type of Equipment Involved: 1999-2002



[Home Fire Checklist 6-Adults](#)

**Safety tips:**

- When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory, and be sure to have fixed space heaters installed by a qualified technician, according to manufacturer's instructions or applicable codes. Or make sure a qualified technician checks to see that the unit has been properly installed.
- Keep or maintain a 36-inch (1-meter) clearance between space heaters and anything that can burn.
- Portable space heaters should be turned off every time you leave the room or go to bed.
- Have any gas-fueled heating device installed with proper attention to ventilation. If unvented gas space heaters are used in bedrooms or bathrooms, make sure they are small and well-mounted. NFPA codes prohibit use of liquefied petroleum gas heaters with self-contained fuel supplies.
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, chimney connectors and all other solid-fueled heating equipment inspected annually by a professional, and cleaned as often as inspections suggest. Use only wood that is properly seasoned to reduce creosote build-up.
- When burning wood in fireplaces or wood stoves, it is important to use properly seasoned wood. The [U.S. Department of Energy](#) cautions that green wood has more moisture and is likely to smolder, leading to more creosote build-up. They recommend a moisture content of 20-25%, noting that wood that is too well-seasoned may also result in creosote build-up.
- Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container.
- Test smoke alarms monthly; install a [carbon monoxide alarm](#) in a central location outside each sleeping area.

[10 Tips Brochure](#)  
Count on eliminating dangers

[Electric Brochure](#)  
Avoid electrical shocks!

NFPA does not test, label or approve any products.  
Updated: 2/06

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