

RANCHO SANTA FE
PO Box 410 / 16936 El Fuego



FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
Rancho Santa Fe, California 92067-0410

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CONTACT: Julie Taber
Public Information Officer
Office: (858) 756-6008
Mobile: (858) 775-7608

PREPARE FOR COLDER WEATHER, CHECK THOSE FIREPLACES

RANCHO SANTA FE – It's hard to believe with this week's heat wave, but Fall is here and cooler weather is on its way. As temperatures drop, fireplaces light up, creating warmth and a cozy atmosphere. With the use of fireplaces and wood stoves, however, comes responsibility for the safety of those within the home.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) states that 64,100 home heating fires were reported to U.S. fire departments in 2006. The fires resulted in 540 deaths, 1,400 injuries and \$943 million in property damage. From 2003-2006, 39% of all home heating fires involved fireplaces and chimneys.

Most fireplace, chimney, and wood stove fires are caused by the build-up of creosote, an oily liquid found in wood that can remain on the inside of the chimney and harden. The built up creosote can then catch fire. The best way to avoid this is to have a professional, certified chimney specialist inspect and clean your chimney annually. To keep your fire from spreading outside your fireplace, you should also:

- Clear the area around the fireplace of flammable materials.
- Always use a metal mesh screen in front of fireplaces to keep embers from blowing into the room. If a fireplace also glass doors, the doors should be left open while the fire is burning.
- Never restrict air supply to fireplaces.
- Use only seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup.
- Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes or trash in your fireplace.
- When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace on an adequate supporting grate.
- Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended. Completely extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house.
- Maintain defensible space of your home by stacking firewood 30 feet away from your home, keeping the roof clear of leaves and pine needles, and removing branches hanging above the chimney to protect from fire and keep mice and other pests away.

- Cover the chimney with a proper ½ inch mesh screen spark arrester.

Injury prevention is another concern when using fireplaces. Both gas fireplaces and wood-burning fireplaces pose a safety hazard. To help avoid injury:

- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use long fireplace matches to light the fire.
- Never place painted or stained wood in the fireplace.
- Keep the metal mesh screen in front of the fireplace closed at all times.
- Supervise children at all times.
- Remember that gas fireplaces can be hot before, during, and after the fire.
- Do not attempt to burn your Christmas tree in your fireplace.

By putting these safety tips into practice, you can help your family have a cozy, safe winter season.

For further information on fire safety, visit our website at www.rsf-fire.org.

The mission of the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District is “To protect life, property, and environment through prevention, preparedness, education and emergency response.” Formed in 1946, the Fire District now spans approximately 42-square miles and protects over 29,000 citizens. The Fire District currently operates out of four full-time fire stations and serves the communities within and surrounding Rancho Santa Fe and 4S-Ranch.

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