



## **BIG BEAR LAKE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE:** December 18, 2009

**CONTACT PERSON:** Michelle M. Caldwell, Fire Prevention Officer

**SUBJECT:** Big Bear Lake Fire Protection District Wants to Keep You Safe and Warm This Winter

**BIG BEAR LAKE, CA** – As the temperature drops outside, Big Bear Valley residents and visitors tend to take to the indoors for warmth. What they may not realize is that turning up the heat can increase the risk of home heating fires.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), nearly half of all home-heating fires occur during the winter months. On average, NFPA research show that heating equipment is involved in roughly 70,000 reported U.S. home structure fires, with associated loss of more than 600 civilian deaths, almost 1,600 civilian injuries and more than \$1 billion in direct property damage.

“These numbers are concerning, especially as these fires are preventable,” said Fire Chief Rod Ballard. “We can reduce the number of home heating fires in our community by taking some simple precautions and using heating equipment properly.”

NFPA and Big Bear Lake Fire Protection District recommend some simple home heating safety tips, so residents can help keep Big Bear Valley safe and warm this winter.

- Have a qualified professional inspect and clean heating equipment and chimneys each year.
- Use a sturdy fireplace screen to keep sparks from flying into the room.
- Allow ashes to cool before disposing. Ashes awaiting disposal should be kept in a metal container with a tight-fitting lid a minimum of ten feet away from the home and other combustible materials. Never use a combustible container such as a bag or box to store ashes.
- Keep rugs and other combustible materials off of and at least 3 feet away from floor furnaces.
- Space heaters need space. Keep all things that can burn, such as paper, bedding or furniture, at least 3 feet away from heating equipment.
- Turn portable heaters off when you go to bed or leave the room.
- Plug portable heater power cord only into outlets with sufficient capacity and never into an extension cord or multi-plug adapter.
- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. Test smoke alarms at least once a month. Replace smoke alarm batteries at least once a year.

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- Install and maintain a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area.
- Never use an oven to heat your home.

For questions regarding heating safety, contact your local fire department: Big Bear City Fire Department, 585-2362; Big Bear Lake Fire Protection District, 866-7566; San Bernardino County Fire Department – Fawnskin, 866-4878; or San Bernardino County Fire Department – Baldwin Lake, 584-9911.

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