



South Carolina  
Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation



Nikki R. Haley  
Governor

Richele Taylor  
Interim Director

110 Centerview Drive  
Post Office Box 11329  
Columbia, SC 29211-1329  
(803) 896-4390  
FAX (803) 896-4393

**For Immediate Release:**

Contact: Lesia Kudelka, Communications Director  
S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation  
(803) 896-4376  
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## **State Fire Marshal, Fire Service Urge You to Be Fire Smart During Extreme Cold**

As temperatures drop, State Fire Marshal Bert Polk and the state's fire service are asking for your help in protecting yourself, your loved ones, and others you know who may be most vulnerable to fire tragedy.

"We know that with lower temperatures, people are going to use whatever means they have to stay warm, and unfortunately, that is when we see fire deaths increase," Polk said. "With everyone's help, we can prevent these needless tragedies."

Historically, fire deaths increase about 63% in the winter months (December-March).

Governor Nikki Haley is echoing the State Fire Marshal's plea.

"One fire death is one too many," Haley said. "With the cold winter months ahead of us, we ask that you help us make every day a great day in South Carolina by using the fire tips offered by our state's fire service to be as safe as possible while trying to keep warm. We also ask that people around the state take the time to check on friends and neighbors who may be elderly or in need of assistance to make sure they are safe from fire hazards."

In 2014, fire deaths increased by 30 percent over the previous year, which makes getting the fire safety message to everyone even more critical, Polk said.

"Knowledge is power, and by simply heeding the fire safety tips below, we can and will save lives," Polk said.

### **Fire Safety Tips:**

- Check your smoke alarms to make sure they work. Replace any that do not work or that are more than 10 years old.
- If there is a fire, get out and stay out. Call the fire department as soon as you are safely outside.

### **Heating Safety**

- All heaters need space. Keep anything that can burn at least three feet away from

- heating equipment, like the furnace, fireplace, wood stove, or portable space heater.
- Keep kids and pets away from open fires and space heaters.
  - Turn off portable heaters when leaving the room or going to bed.
  - Never use an oven to heat your home.
  - Use heating equipment with the label of a recognized testing laboratory and automatic shut-off—if they tip over, they shut off.
  - Place space heaters on a solid, flat surface and keep them and their electrical cords away from things that can burn, high traffic areas, and doorways.
  - Plug space heaters directly into wall outlets and never into an extension cord or power strip.
  - Inspect any heater for a damaged cord, broken plugs, or loose connections. Replace them before using the space heater.
  - If you use fuel-burning space heaters, use the proper fuel as specified by the manufacturer.
  - When refueling, allow the appliance to cool first and then refuel outside.
  - When using the fuel-burning space heater, open a window to ensure proper ventilation.
  - If you smell gas in your gas heater, do not light the appliance. Leave the building immediately and call 9-1-1, the fire department, or the gas company.
  - Wood stoves should bear the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
  - In wood stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood. In pellet stoves, burn only dry, seasoned wood pellets.
  - Keep the doors of your wood stove closed unless loading or stoking the live fire.
  - Allow ashes to cool before disposing of them. Place ashes in a tightly covered metal container and keep the ash container at least 10 feet away from the home and any other nearby buildings. Never empty the ash directly into a trash can. Douse and saturate the ashes with water.

For more information about fire safety, visit our website [www.scfiremarshal.llronline.com](http://www.scfiremarshal.llronline.com) or contact the OSFM Community Risk Reduction team at (803) 896-1250.

The State Fire Marshal's Office and the Fire Academy make up the Division of Fire and Life Safety, which is a division of the S.C. Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation.